

SUN STAND STILL: THE BONUS CHAPTER

**GIVE
ME MY
ROCKS**

MEDIOCRITY IS MASS-PRODUCED.
DESTINY IS CUSTOM DESIGNED.

STEVEN FURTICK

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Dear Friend,

I'm happy to share with you this bonus chapter to *Sun Stand Still*, "Give Me My Rocks." With this additional illustration of what it means to live boldly in the vision that God put in you, I pray that you'll begin to take action.

Because from my perspective, if the size of your dream isn't intimidating to you, there's a good chance it's insulting to God. So through the book, *Sun Stand Still* and through this bonus chapter, you're about to learn how to activate audacious faith...and watch God accomplish the impossible through you. Just as He accomplished the impossible when He made the sun stand still in response to a prayer by Joshua of Bible fame.

You see, audacious faith triggers level-headed people like Joshua—and like you and me—to live with unusual boldness. When you live this way, your eyes will open to see day-to-day life in vivid color. The routines that used to seem pointless will be infused with meaning. Your spiritual growth will accelerate at a supernatural pace.

Audacious faith is for schoolteachers. Stay-at-home moms. Seventh-grade girls. (Seventh-grade boys, too. Maybe.) Construction workers, bankers, hairstylists, college students. I've seen the sun stand still for all of them, just as I've seen it stand still for me.

You're ready for audacious faith too. You're ready for bold action and impossible prayers. You're ready to start a movement in your life, your church, your community. You're ready to see God change lives, change the world—change you. You're ready to make the sun stand still.

Be the change the world is waiting for,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven N. Swartz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "S" and "N".

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Give Me My Rocks

It was a big day for Elevation Church. Another record crowd, in the middle of the summer no less. Our consultant was in, perched on the second row, scribbling notes furiously. We would be debriefing with him all afternoon, and we'd instructed him to hit us with his best shot. Tell us everything we're doing wrong. Up until this point, it looked like he wouldn't have much ammunition. The service was cruising along, and for a 5 month-old church meeting in a Senior Center, we sure did have our stuff together.

Just as surely as we had our stuff together, about 3 songs into the worship set, our stuff started falling apart. The projectors went out. No lyrics and no video to replace them. The band completely bombed the song. I'm allowed to say that, because I was leading the music at the time. In church you can often hide a bad performance beneath the convenient fact that nobody knows what the song was supposed to sound like because they've never heard it. This particular week, we butchered a song that had been on the radio – in heavy, heavy, rotation. So everyone knew it. And to bring this exercise in humility full circle, the transitional bumper

just before my sermon failed to fire.

My confidence level neared an all time low. But as I bumbled and stumbled to the podium to start the sermon, God delivered a message to me that brought my dependence on Him to an all time high.

It's kind of like God grabbed me by my collar, lowered His voice, and let me know in no uncertain terms: *"You're going to have to preach your way out of this one Furtick."*

I had never thought of it that way. But come to think of it, I had preached my way out of some less than ideal situations before. I was a traveling speaker for eight years before we started Elevation. It was the epitome of glamour and allure:

Speaking at lock-ins to fifteen middle school boys who smelled like cheese after their third game of laser tag at 3am. And oh by the way, they need you to keep it under 15 minutes because Chelsea and her skit team have a really cool mime thing they do with dowel rods and they're going to debut it after your sermon. Plus, the 3-on-3 basketball tournament starts at 4:30am. So keep it short but give a thorough, compelling invitation...*Now, introducing our Guest Speaker, Steven...*(how do you pronounce this last name?) Most of the speaking engagements weren't so bad. I actually participated in some world-class events along the way. The point is I have been in front of just about every type of crowd you can imagine. Once, I had to hold the attention of an audience comprising an equal distribution of 8 year-olds to 80 year-olds in a football stadium with the visiting football team on the field warming up behind me.

So when God said: *You're going to have to preach your way out of this one...* His instruction had a familiar ring to it. I had *been here before*. **If I was going to preach my way out of this, I was going to have to find my stones.**

Having The Stones To Be Yourself

No, that last line wasn't random. It's inspired by one of the greatest and most well known stories of audacious faith in the Bible. And one that you probably know like the back of your hand, but just in case, let's review.

In 1 Samuel 17, on the day that David overhears an opportunity to kill a giant, the situation also has a familiar ring to it. David has *been here before*. Okay, he's never exactly faced a warrior of Goliath's caliber. But a few times, while keeping his father's sheep, he had contended with lions and bears. They were no match for David. With the help of his God, he had prevailed every time. Why should this challenge be any different? The *audacity* of this Philistine-to openly defy the armies of the living God! Good thing David has been stashing away some audacity of his own. Apparently none of Israel's fighting men have the stones to confront this enemy and avenge God's glory. David has stones. An anointing of courage shoots through the system of the teenage shepherd boy-a boy who isn't even old enough to officially enlist in the army. He only happens to be close to the action this particular day because his dad sent him to the battle lines on an errand. But there are no incidentals in the economy of God. The possibility pulsates in David's consciousness:

It's all been leading up to this. I'm perfectly positioned and uniquely equipped to defeat this foe. It's my time...to do my thing...for my God.

King Saul is understandably apprehensive about giving the ball to a freshman running back with the game on the line. If David loses, the whole nation loses. If David wins, the whole nation gets the W. That's the way this works. Sort of like the Olympics-One man competes to represent the whole nation. Only, this isn't for medals and accolades. It's life and death.

If Saul is going to send in the second string-down by 6 points with 4 seconds on the clock-he isn't going to take any chances. Time to suit the rookie up. The king instructs the equipment manager to bring out the best armor and heaviest artillery Israel has to offer. David tries it on, takes a test lap, and turns up his nose.

"This is nice. But this isn't me. This isn't familiar. So this won't work. I've got to go with what I know. Somebody help me change out of this awkward armor. And, would one of you cowards on the sidelines (paraphrasing) mind fetching my sling while I go find my stones?"

Sling? Stones?

"That's what I do. I kill lions and bears-and hopefully Philistine giants-with my sling and my rocks. That's just how it is. That's how I roll. Give me my rocks."

It's a dumb move, really. David is about to fight a battle he's already outmatched for. He needs every advantage he can get. But he opts for his Junior Varsity equipment instead of the king's best. He prefers his BB gun to the heavy artillery.

David must look undignified, outdated, and beyond silly. Who chooses a moped over a Maserati on the autobahn? But he stays true to his skills and anointing. He plays to his strengths, draws from his experience, and refuses to compromise who God has made him to be.

The strategy pays off. Audacity always does. Armed with nothing more than 5 smooth stones (he only ended up needing one-he was a good shot-and over-prepared), David kills the giant and saves the day. The crowd goes wild. David is catapulted into the national limelight. The God of Israel is vindicated.

All because David had the stones to be himself.

This is the key to personal greatness. This is the crucial element that you're going to have to embrace if you want to take your place in the middle of a move of God and see the sun stand still before your eyes. You're never going to amount to half of what God has dreamed you becoming unless you embrace the unique person God made you to be in the first place. He's made you on purpose for a purpose. You have a unique DNA with unique talents, passions, and experiences that no one else on this earth has. And this applies to everyone. Soccer moms. Doctors. Students. Executives. Whoever you are and whatever you do, God has given you precisely what you need to do precisely what he's called you to do. And make no mistake, he's called you to do great, impossible things.

Audacity is all about having the stones to be yourself. I want to help you find your stones.

Finding My Stones

On that summer day that the technology died at Elevation, I started finding mine.

You're gonna have to preach your way out of this one, Furtick.

But did I have the stones to do it?

Starting a church forces you to sort through a lot of insecurities. It also affords you the opportunity to take an intense inventory. You get to examine your quirks, passions, deficiencies, assets, motivations and intuitions up close, closer than you ever cared to look. It's uncomfortable when God starts unearthing your ugly inconsistencies. But there's valuable treasure under that dirt if you keep digging.

Even though I had more preaching experience than a lot of

ministers twice my age, I was really having a hard time finding my voice those first few months we held public services. So what if I had what it took to preach at a youth rally in a small town in the middle of nowhere. Would I be effective preaching to dignified adults in a metropolitan city like Charlotte? As an itinerate evangelist, I only had to have 5 or 6 good sermons. Now I had to prepare a fresh, insightful, and most of all, new message every Sunday. Was my well deep enough?

All the innocent inquiries of the first time guests after the service “*Oh, so are you are the **youth** pastor-filling in for the **real** pastor?*” didn’t help either. It started to make me wonder, do I really have what it takes? Do I really even *know* what it takes?

One church planting coach gave me an assessment that didn’t exactly lift me up on the wings of eagles. He suggested that people in Charlotte these days weren’t going to relate very well to my preaching style. I was confrontational and abrasive. They wanted conversational and inviting. He predicted moderate success, but suggested I dial it down a bit if I really wanted to grow a church. Maybe I should “communicate” my “messages” sitting on a stool instead of running around. Keep my voice down-no one wants to be yelled at. Above all else-and this was the skeleton key-keep it short. It’s a sitcom society. You preach over 30 minutes, they’re not coming back.

If you listen to my earliest sermons you can faintly detect the identity crisis. The sermons aren’t bad. They’re just slightly schizophrenic. They aren’t intentionally phony. They just aren’t unapologetically unique. I was sincerely trying to be who I thought I needed to be to reach the people God wanted me to reach.

As it turns out, God only needed me to be me all along. He

already had hundreds of wonderful ministers in Charlotte who preached in a conversational tone while sitting on a stool, clocking in at 29 minutes, 59 seconds and not a moment more. What He needed me to be was the best Steven Furtick the world had ever seen. I could do that.

And on that summer worship service D-Day, I was forced to do it. I didn't even bother with the stinking stool. I pretended like the time clock in the back wasn't even there. I decided I would preach just like I used to preach to the 15 pubescent boys at the lock in. Or the narcoleptic 80 year olds at the football stadium. With authority and energy. With passion and edge. Loud and fast. And long.

I shucked the corn that morning. An hour and fifteen minutes of vintage Furtick. I walked the aisles, stood on chairs, threw my Bible at a guy, spit all the way clear to the second row, and screamed my larynx raw. It felt good. I had ditched Saul's oversized armor. I had found my stones.

A liberating realization flashed inside of me: God has been preparing me all my life for this. Every experience and circumstance has culminated in this calling-to preach and lead at Elevation Church. My anointing flows fully and freely when I tap the vein of my unique abilities and my distinctive passion. I was finally embracing my uniqueness.

You're Not Normal

Wearing somebody else's armor doesn't protect you. It paralyzes you. Trying to fit into the mantle that God has designed for someone else will weigh you down and wear you out. The mantle God has placed on your life is custom tailored. You can tell it's yours because it fits just right. Your destiny is divinely designed.

And the thing that makes you different from everyone else is the thing that makes you powerful.

This reality is so comforting. Acting on it is even more challenging.

It's comforting because it takes away the pressure for me to fit in.

It's challenging because we live in a culture of carbon copy that makes it almost impossible to boldly *stand out*.

Nevertheless, the fact remains: those who discover what they're uniquely gifted to do - and build their lives around a hyper focus on that contribution - are rewarded. Those who insist on being similar to the point of blending into the background are ignored.

Slumdog Millionaire didn't win an Academy Award because it was just like the other movies... it was recognized because it was different. Quirky. Off-beat. Abnormal.

Kurt Cobain didn't spark an entire musical movement because *Nevermind* sounded just like all the other albums of the early nineties. His legacy was his uniqueness. Stripped down. Melody driven. Angst ridden. Guitar solo-free. I didn't marry my wife because she was just like the other girls. I married her precisely because she stood out in the crowd. Pure. Secure. Focused. Virtuuous.

Peculiar People

The old King James version of 1 Peter 2:9 calls Christians a *peculiar* people. The dictionary definitions of peculiar include: strange, odd, uncommon, and unusual. The closest approximation of the original meaning of Peter's phrase, peculiar people, is more like: *a people for his own possession*. I think both descriptions very accurately depict the kind of people God designed us to be. Strange. Uncommon. His and His alone.

You are peculiar. Take that as a compliment. You're not normal. And that's a good thing.

God did not create you to *fit in*. He intends for you to *stand out*.

It's too bad that our educational systems and parenting books are typically more focused on uniformity than uniqueness.

Mediocrity is mass-produced. Destiny is custom designed. If you ever put your finger on what makes you different-maybe even a little bit strange- you've just discovered the reason you were born. And you're well on your way to greatness.

So what makes you peculiar? What is the unique thing that God has put you on this earth to do? It might help you to think about it like this: where do my experiences, talents, and passions converge? It's in the place where those elements meet that you will find your calling and your destiny.

You might be great with numbers and spreadsheets and love working with them, whereas most of us hate them. Who cares if people think you're a nerd. God might desire you to be one of the greatest accountants this world has ever seen. And guess who's going to be coming to you when it comes time to get their finances in order.

You might be able to listen to people, analyze problems and visualize solutions without breaking a sweat. Congratulations, God has probably called you to be counselor or work in HR. Don't be ashamed of your uniqueness. Embrace it, and watch God use it for His glory.

Cookie cutter Christianity dials down your distinctions. Audacity amplifies them. **Uniqueness emerges when you**

become intentional about your idiosyncrasies.

Imitating Faith And Mimicking Miracles

Let me clarify something: There's nothing wrong with aspiring to be like the people you admire. We need heroes. Imitation is actually integral to the formation of your faith. Hebrews 13:7 commands that we *imitate the faith* of those who have gone before us. Paul told the church at Corinth to *imitate him* as he imitated Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). We should emulate the integrity of other believers we respect. It's wise to duplicate the patterns of devotion that are proven to produce spiritual fruit. We're even on good Biblical ground when we implement techniques and methods that didn't originate with us.

A friend asked me one time if he could use one of my illustrations in his sermon. I told him: *If my bullet fits your gun, shoot it.* I also told him that I got that line about the bullet and the gun from somebody else. There's nothing new under the sun. Borrow the strengths and imitate the faith of others, by all means. To fail to do so is pretentious and wasteful.

But there's a big difference between imitating faith and mimicking miracles. Audacity isn't about originality. But it does require ownership. You don't have to be the first to think of an initiative to authentically pull it off. But whatever you do must first be a part of you. Or it will never work.

When I was first learning to play the electric guitar, I learned exclusively by mimicking the styles, sounds and songs of other guitar players. I copied "Stairway to Heaven," "Purple Haze," and "Smells Like Teen Spirit" note for note.

But as I began to grasp and master some of the fundamen-

tals of guitar playing, such as standard chord progressions, scales, and basic song format, I was able to branch out and create my own sounds. My own songs. My own guitar solos.

And no doubt, my “original” stuff was heavily influenced by the artists I started out copying-and, in my case, it wasn’t nearly as good. But by blending my favorite techniques and approaches from many different players, and executing them in my unique context, I created some unique sounds. My very own music.

When you start out in the ministry, or in a business, or your personal walk with Christ, you have to copy a lot of what other people are doing note for note. And that’s okay. In fact, it’s wise, because we all have to learn the fundamentals: leadership, systems, administration, personal devotion, etc. No need to reinvent the wheel.

But after we’ve gotten a grasp on the fundamentals, hopefully we’ll begin to experiment with our own tones and melodies. Our own approaches and takes on ministry, work, and life. Our own signature riffs that will serve as our unique contributions to the body of Christ. And we’ll never stop going to conferences, reading books, and drawing inspiration from the music of those who have gone before us, any more than a great rock guitarist would ever stop listening to and gleaning from the legends.

But by staying tightly connected to God, and staying in sync with our distinctive Spirit-filled, Christ centered passions, strengths, and intuitions, we’ll make our very own music. We’ll develop our very own voice, becoming one-of-a-kind peculiar people, remade in the image of God.

After all, cover bands may be able to find a gig in some bar, somewhere, every night of the week.

But no cover band ever changed the world. And audacious faith isn't looking for a gig. Audacity wants to change the world.

Imagine if Joshua had attempted to mimic the miracles of Moses. In the heat of the battle against the Amorites, time is running out. Israel needs more daylight. So Moses' protégé picks up the nearest stick, stretches it toward the sky, lifts his voice and commands, just like Moses did:
"Oceans part!"

The title of this book would be *Sun Goes Down (on Joshua's leadership career)*.

Joshua didn't have a Red Sea to part. He had a sun to stop. So he sized up the situation, **imitated Moses' faith**, and experienced his very own move of God.

God doesn't do re-runs. He only directs season premiers. He's always doing a new thing. And I want you to experience your very own move of God.

Set Free To Be Yourself

I'm not normal. I've suspected that for a long time.

And the church I started isn't normal either. Thank God.

Sometimes the way we do church at Elevation feels unconventional and yes, even ridiculous to me. It's downright over the top to set the kinds of goals we set. To take the kind of risks we take. To invite the kinds of criticism we endure.

But we choose to embrace the destiny God has called us to, even if it seems preposterous to some.

Just give us our rocks.

I preach too long, scream too loud, sweat too much, and say things that would get most pastors fired almost every week. I've tried to adhere to other models of preaching. I've read all the books. I even bought a stool.

But Saul's armor just doesn't work for me.

So give me my rocks.

Just let me preach the Gospel the way God called me to preach it. Old fashioned and raw...meets new school and youthfully naïve. Not everyone will love my preaching. And I'm quite all right with that. I believe God will set my unique personality on fire for the glory of His name, and use my foolish preaching to bring down giants and break strongholds.

He'll use your uniqueness too. Whether you preach, teach, sing, or manage. Whether you sit behind a desk all day or fit joints and drive nails.

You're not normal. I suspect that you've suspected that for a long time.

Audacity calls out for peculiar school teachers to invest in students. Peculiar students to save sex for marriage. Peculiar dads to lead their families with strength. Peculiar churches to violate the norms and forcefully advance the Gospel.

The day I preached my first one-hour plus sermon, I went home depressed.

Now I've done it. The church has been growing steady for 5 months, and I just had to swing for the fence. They don't come back if you preach over 30 minutes. I preached over an hour. They're going to run me out of town."

The next week, we grew by 40 extra people. So I celebrated by preaching another hour and 20 minutes. That summer day wasn't D-Day after all. In retrospect, it was my personal Independence Day-the day God set me free to be myself.

Audacity doesn't add up. It doesn't blend in. And it doesn't sell out.

You need to release the creativity that God has invested in you, no matter how ridiculous it may look to others.

Just say, *give me my rocks. And my sling. I'm ready to fight.*

Strip off Saul's suit.

Be yourself. Stay in your zone. Do your thing. Let 'em laugh.

Bring down giants.

Be yourself. And find your stones.

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Find out more about Pastor Steven Furtick and Elevation Church

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