Stay the Course: Growing Strong Through Life’s Challenges

Priscilla Shirer on Knowing the Father, Strength Through Trials, and Passing Faith to the Next Generation

Priscilla Shirer | Wednesday, October 28, 2026 | Host: Mark Burns

Program Summary

In this concluding Founders Week 2026 message, Priscilla Shirer builds on her call to remain faithful to Jesus through every season. She recounts a family safari in South Africa, using an impala’s limited sightline as a picture of spiritual vision and a zebra foal’s familiarity with its mother as an illustration of learning the Father’s character and voice. From 1 John 2:12–14 she traces three stages of spiritual growth: the early season of intimacy with God, the challenging season when spiritual strength develops through resistance, and the mature season when believers share what God has taught them with the next generation. Priscilla encourages discouraged listeners not to abandon the work God is doing. The message ends with a call to remain steadfast and to help others discover that following Jesus is worth it.

Key Takeaways

• Faithfulness is cultivated through remaining with Jesus, not merely visiting Him occasionally.

• Priscilla's impala illustration warns that restricted spiritual vision can hold us back.

• The zebra story points to the importance of recognizing the Father’s voice and character.

• Spiritual growth begins with intimacy: learning who God is before rushing into ministry activity.

• Scripture helps us distinguish the character of God from persuasive imitations.

• Hardship and resistance can become seasons in which the Holy Spirit develops strength and maturity.

• Being under pressure does not mean God has abandoned His work in me.

• Spiritual maturity is not just personal achievement; it equips us to nurture and encourage others.

• Older believers and experienced Christians have testimonies worth sharing across generations.

• Remaining faithful matters more than fame, followers, or outward recognition.

• Discouraged believers are invited to ask God for strength to continue, one faithful step at a time.

Scripture References

• 1 John 2:12–14

• 1 John 2:28

• John 15:4

• Psalm 78:6

• Isaiah 53:5

• John 10:27

• 2 Corinthians 11:14

• Philippians 1:6

• Philippians 3:12–14

• Hebrews 12:1–2

Quote of the Day

“Don’t throw in the towel in this season.” — Priscilla Shirer

Broadcast Notes

The program opens with 1 John 2:14 and Mark’s introduction to Part Two of Priscilla Shirer’s Founders Week message, themed 'Generation to Generation: The Unstoppable Gospel.' Priscilla continues her South African safari story, using the impala and zebra as spiritual illustrations. She then explains the importance of knowing God's character and of not rushing through the foundational stage of spiritual formation. Her analogy of adolescents developing strength through resistance frames difficult seasons as opportunities for spiritual growth. Finally, she calls spiritually mature believers to become mothers and fathers in the faith who tell younger generations what Jesus has done. Her closing prayer asks God to encourage listeners who are ready to give up. The animal details are preserved as illustrations from her talk rather than independently verified zoological claims.

❤■ Practical Applications

• Set aside ten unhurried minutes to read Scripture and become more familiar with God's character.

• Identify one distraction that has narrowed my spiritual vision and reduce its influence.

• Read 1 John 2:12–14 and reflect on the season of spiritual growth I am experiencing.

• During a difficult day, ask how God might be developing endurance rather than assuming He has left me.

• Remember a previous season when God strengthened me through adversity.

• Ask a mature Christian to share an experience of God's faithfulness.

• Encourage someone younger in faith with a specific story of what Jesus has done.

• Choose faithfulness over the desire to appear impressive or successful.

• Pray for someone who is discouraged and follow up with a personal word of encouragement.

• End the day by thanking God for the work He is still completing in me.

Today's Challenge

For seven days, practice three movements of spiritual growth: KNOW the Father by reading a passage of Scripture; GROW by bringing one difficulty to God and asking for perseverance; and SHARE by encouraging someone with a testimony of His faithfulness. At the end of the week, ask: 'Am I staying close to Jesus, and am I helping someone else remain faithful?'

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for inviting me to remain in Jesus. Teach me to know Your character and recognize Your voice through Your Word. When distractions cloud my vision, turn my eyes back to You. When life's weight feels too heavy, remind me that Your Spirit is present and that You are still shaping me. Give me strength to endure without becoming bitter or discouraged. Help me see how You have been faithful in earlier seasons, and give me courage to share those stories with someone who needs hope. I want to grow into a believer who not only remains faithful but also helps the next generation know and follow Jesus. Keep my eyes fixed on Him. In His name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Priscilla Shirer is a Bible teacher, author, speaker, and co-leader of Going Beyond Ministries with her husband. A graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, she has written numerous Bible studies and books and appeared in faith-based films. In this Moody Bible Institute Founders Week 2026 message, she encourages believers to remain in Christ, grow through adversity, and pass the testimony of God's faithfulness to another generation.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With decades of experience in Christian radio and ministry, he shares biblical teaching, testimony, and encouraging conversations that help listeners grow in God's Word and follow Jesus.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter.

Knowing you're near. It's so good to see you. We hope that it's fair.

Everyone loves you. We're glad you're here. Reading from 1 John 2, verse 14.

You are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. That was 1 John 2, verse 14. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.

It's Wednesday, October 28, 2026, and welcome to Mark & Friends. Yesterday we left Priscilla Shirerr, describing a safari she and her family experienced in South Africa. Today we'll discover some fascinating spiritual lessons from the impala and zebra, and how God strengthens our faith through life's challenges.

We're continuing Priscilla's message from the Moody Bible Institute's Founders Week 2026 from a week ago, and it was themed Generation to Generation, the Unstoppable Gospel. Now let's pick up where we left off yesterday. Here's Priscilla Shirerr.

I remember he paused next to the African impala, and he began to describe them to us. They're very unassuming, underwhelming animals. And he pointed to a group of them that were stationed together, and he said, look at those African impala.

Most of the time when people see them, they misjudge them. And the reason why is because when most folks see them, they're in captivity. They're probably in a zoo or something like that.

And most of the time they are housed behind a fence line that is only about three feet high. But they have so much power and so much potential that they can jump 10 feet high and 30 feet forward in one jump. All that power and potential hidden behind such a lower level fence line, because its captors know that it won't jump to a place it can't see.

So all they have to do is block its vision. The enemy is trying to block your vision. You do know that.

Because you will not experience all that God has called you to be and do as long as your vision is blocked by lower level things. He also pointed out zebra to us. zebra we've seen before.

In fact, I would have rather talked more about the African impala, but he paused at the zebra, and I was thinking we've seen zebra before. But he said, but did you know that the stripes on a zebra are actually as unique, one zebra to the next, as fingerprints on human beings. He said, you can't tell by the naked eye, but they are all as unique as fingerprints on human beings.

And he said, one of the places where it's most marked, the distinction is most marked, is right in the centerpiece of their forehead. In the center of their forehead, the configuration of the stripes is incredibly unique. He said, look at the herd.

You see that baby that's there, that foal? He said, it's the first time I've seen the foal in about four weeks. He said, because the first four weeks of a baby zebra's life, the mother will take that foal off to the side, away from all the other zebra, away from all

the other configuration of stripes. And she will make it so that for the first four weeks, that baby is only looking at the configuration of stripes that exists on the one who gave life.

So that by the time they bring the foal, the mother brings the foal back to the herd. With all the other configuration of stripes, that baby is never confused about the configuration of stripes that belongs to his parent. And I'm afraid that if we skip this phase, y'all, where we're just taking time to get to know His stripes, because you do know that it is by His stripes that you are healed.

That if we're not taking enough time to get to know the voice of our Father, the character of our Father, the cadence of grace, of walking by the Spirit, that if we haven't actually taken the time to know who He was in the Old Testament, and to experience who He is in the New Testament, and by the power of the Holy Spirit in the church age, that if we don't get an opportunity to really know who our Father is, then we'll be confused by all the other configuration of stripes that are being presented to us as options of who Jesus is. If you don't know who He was, you have no opportunity of knowing who He is. Get to know His stripes.

Get to know the voice of your Father. Get to know the cadence. Get to know what He would say and what He wouldn't say.

Because the voice of the stranger is seeking to lead you astray. And the thing about the enemy is he doesn't show up with a pitchfork and say, Hey, it's me. Instead, he disguises himself like an angel of light.

He wants his voice to sound so similar to God's voice, his way to sound so similar to God's way, that unless you have actually taken time to get to know who your Father is, he can play you for the fool. This is why Spurgeon said we have to take the opportunity to pray, to say, Lord, help me not only to be able to discern between right and wrong, help me to be able to discern between right and almost right. You need a firm foundation.

Don't skip this part. Don't abort the developmental process where God just wants you to sit with Him, to get to know His voice, to know what it means to pray, to exercise spiritual disciplines, to not abandon the realities that are the foundation of our life with Christ, but to invest yourself in them. Don't grow up too soon.

Spend time getting to know who your Father is. I remember when my boys were little, being at the pediatrician, I would bounce them on their legs. She would tell me to be careful of doing that before they had enough strength in their muscular system.

She said if you put too much weight on their legs too soon, there will be a misalignment in their step, in their stride. Too much weight put on their system too soon, it might not be something you will see now, but later in their life there can be a little bit of a misalignment, a little bit of a limp, because there was too much weight put on a small body too quickly. And I fear, y'all, that we have a generation of believers that are growing up too fast, who didn't take this stage seriously enough, who didn't value the joy of just sitting with their Father, too much weight too soon, and you can't see the misalignment now.

But when they get older, there's a limp in their integrity, there's a misalignment in their cadence with God, because they didn't take time to build a sturdy foundation. Get to know who Jesus was. Get to know who Yahweh was in the Old Testament.

The one who called Abram out of Ur and changed the trajectory of his entire life. The one who whittled down Gideon's army, calling him out of obscurity and to victory for the nation of Israel. Get to know the silent God who arranged Ruth's circumstances and made her legacy one for the record books.

You need to know the one who brought refugees, slaves, out of Egypt and through the wilderness and divided the Red Sea and kept their sandals from wearing out and gave them cornflakes from heaven and fried chicken when they wanted some meat. You need to know Him. You need to know the one who brought them into the promised land.

The one who dispelled their enemies before them. You need to know who that God was, so that when the culture tries to present to you a new modernized version of God and the stripes almost look the same, but it's a God who no longer has the standard of holiness. And it's a God, the version of Him that is presented, that is silent against injustice.

You need to be able to say, no, that's not who He is because I know who He was. The reason why you're going to need this firm foundation in your young life, and again, I don't just mean that with age, I mean the stage of life where God is starting a work in you. You can see that He's just beginning a process in your life.

Don't abandon getting to know who your Father is. This is the good stuff of building a sturdy house throughout the course of your life. And the reason you're going to need a firm foundation, he says, John, in verse 13, is because you are going to grow up and become young men or young women.

In the original language, this is basically the phrase for adolescence. He says you're going to become a teenager. Puberty is going to set in.

And he says, you'll know you're in this stage, he describes it by saying in verse 13, you will know you're in this stage because you've overcome the evil one. In verse 14, he reiterates it and he says, you will know you're in this stage because you are strong and the Word of God remains in you. He talks about strength.

He talks about overcoming. He's describing spiritual muscle being developed, pushing against the resistance. He says, basically, you're going to need to remain through this stage because this is the stage where you're going to get some spiritual meat on your bones.

This is the stage where your spiritual muscular structure is going to develop because you're only overcoming because there's something to overcome. There's resistance. There's weight on you.

It almost feels like you can't handle it in this stage. He says remain here because this is when you're getting muscle on your face. My sons are big.

They're big boys. They're all like 6'3", 6'4", and they've been big for a very long time. I remember around the 12-year-old, 13-year-old, 14-year-old age that I realized they were stronger than me.

It happened always around that stage of their life. When each one of them came to about 12 years old, I'd be wrestling with them as I always would, tickling them, hanging out with them. But around 12, it's when they could pin me down on the couch, and I realized they had me.

I realized it was over. I realized I wasn't going to be able to overpower them because they were strong boys. Their strength, their height, their ability to have so much power utilized has been good for them because they're all athletes.

And their dad has been very careful about monitoring their athletic development through the years. He would say to coaches and trainers when they were in those 12, 13, 14-year-old years, he would say to them, listen, they can actually use their body weight to exercise, but they're too young right now to add weight to the training process. Let's wait for that just a little while longer.

Then they would get to a stage where he would say to the trainers or the coaches, it's okay now to add weight to their training. I would never be a part of those conversations with the coaches and the trainers, those particular ones, and yet I always knew when it had happened. Because whenever that conversation had happened with the coaches or with the trainers, these are the seasons when my boys would start walking around the house with their shirts off.

These were the seasons they would start walking through, and anytime they would catch their reflection in a mirror or in a window, I would see them pause looking at their own selves. They would be walking through the house with a little swag, you know. They could see where their arms were getting a little bit chiseled, their voices getting deep.

Mom, can I have a sandwich? No, boy. And put your shirt on, that's nasty. That power, that strength had already been in them since they were 12, but it didn't start to take shape on the outside of them until weight was added to the training process.

John says, you'll know you're in this season when the Lord allows weight, when there are trials, when there are issues, when there's struggle, and it feels like it's too much for you to carry relationally or financially or in your ministry or your business. You feel like you can't squat all this weight. You can't lift all this weight.

He says, don't throw in the towel in this season, and this is when a lot of believers do. Don't throw in the towel in this season. This is when the strength that is in you is getting ready to take shape on the outside of you, where the fruit of the Spirit is going to come pouring out of your life, where the gifts of the Spirit are going to be matured so you can edify the body of Christ.

This is going to be the season when you look in the mirror and you don't even recognize the person that is looking back at you because you can see evidence that the Holy Spirit of God lives on the inside of you because a year or two ago this time, you

would have said that. You would have done that. You would have responded this way.

You would have made that kind of decision, but now, after walking with God, after allowing the Holy Spirit to bolster you up through hard things, you realize the scaffolding of your house now has some strength it would not have otherwise had. This is why Paul said, I press on, pressing because there's resistance, because life is hard, because the struggle is going to come. Don't wave the white flag when it's hard, y'all.

Don't throw in the towel. Don't jump ship. Don't become skeptical of the church or embittered against the body of Christ or decide to deconstruct your faith to the place where you don't even have anything resembling a faith anymore at all.

Keep on lifting the weight and know that the one who started the work, he's faithful to complete it and that he has given you the Holy Spirit to help you carry what you can't carry in your own strength and in your own power. So until he releases you from that season, know that there is muscle coming. Know that he's given you strength.

Know that the scaffolding of your house is being shored up and the reason you need a strong foundation, the reason you need a strong scaffolding, he says, is because prayerfully, you're going to become a father, a mother. You're going to come to spiritual maturity. He says, I'm writing to you fathers.

I'm writing to you mothers. Please notice that he doesn't say, I'm writing to you adults. He says, I'm writing to those of you who hopefully prayerfully will be in the position that you can pour your life into somebody else.

That's what parenting is. That you can duplicate the work that God has done in you in the life of somebody else. Infancy is for intimacy and adolescence is for accruing power, but spiritual parenting is supposed to be about one generation declaring God's works to the next generation.

That this is supposed to be the goal for all of us. Those of you who are students right now and the Lord is starting to begin to develop in you not only a personal relationship with himself that has some depth, but also the beginnings of maybe the vision, the calling that he has assigned to you in your life, the likes of which when I was 20, 19, 21 years old, I could not have any reckoning of what it was that God was even designing for me to do. It was just the stirrings of the Lord's assignment.

And even as that starts to begin in you, would you just listen to your auntie Priscilla for just a moment? The goal is to stay with God long enough till you become a parent. The goal is to walk with God long enough so that when we all go to church, y'all, we're not supposed to go to church and everybody's a millennial. We're not supposed to go to church and everybody's Gen X, everybody's Gen Z, everybody's Gen Alpha.

No, there's supposed to be some people with silver hair. There's supposed to be some folks who've gone with God a distance, whose house is still intact, who has testimony and stories that serving Jesus is worth it, not just because they've heard it through the grapevine or through other folks' testimony, but it's because they've walked with him long enough to tell you that walking with him is worth it. Stay.

Be committed to spiritual maturity. We need some folks whose house is still intact that could show you where the hail hit in one season and where the wind blew in another season and where a renovation project was needed in that season, but they're still in the same house and they have the wherewithal, the willingness, to open the front door of their house and to say to somebody else, come on in here and have a seat in this living room. And let me tell you who Jesus is.

This is what John says. He says, I'm writing to you when you're a spiritual parent because you have come to know the one from the beginning. He says in verse 14, you've come to declare who Jesus is.

The one who was in the beginning, this is John we're talking about, the same one that gave us the gospel, who said in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten, full of grace and full of truth. He's talking about Jesus. He's saying we need some people who have walked with Jesus long enough who can bear witness to the fact, who can testify to the fact that he's a waymaker.

And not just because they heard it as a church cliche, but they saw him make a way. We need some folks who can testify. He's indeed the chief cornerstone.

He actually is the lily of the valley. He is the bright and morning star. He is the one of whom the prophets spoke.

He is the one that was raised from the dead because that same resurrection power I've seen evidenced in my life. He is the one, and his name is Jesus Christ. The name at which every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We need some people who can tell, who can tell us that serving Jesus is worth it. So stay. Remain.

Decide that as for me and my house, I'm going to serve Jesus. That whether I'm popular or not, whether I have followers or not, whether I have the ministry that in my mind I expect that I'm going to have, and yet Jesus calls me to something that maybe doesn't look as bright and flashy and Instagramable as I thought it would. Decide you're staying.

Hands to the plow. No looking back. Eyes on Jesus.

Fixed. Because he's coming back. I don't even want you to bow your heads.

I want you to, with your eyes open, make a decision that you're going to stay. If you are in this room, and you're at a point right now in your life where honestly you're about to throw in the towel, no matter which stage you're in, in the assignment that God has entrusted to you, you're particularly discouraged right now, and you're wondering if staying has been worth it, and you can hear the Holy Spirit whispering to you, remain. If you know this is a moment where the Holy Spirit has brought you into this room or on the other side of the radio you're listening to or the screen that you're watching, and you know the Holy Spirit is calling you to stay, then I'm just going to ask you to stand where you are so that I can pray for you.

Even if you're by yourself in a room, stand. Let us be the body of Christ and encourage you in the Holy Spirit tonight. Lord, I call out to you on behalf of myself and every brother or sister on the other side of my voice that has stood up tonight admitting, Father, that there is an area of discouragement.

I am asking you right now that the Holy Spirit will speak to them, lead them, guide them, encourage them, provide for them. I am asking, Father, that you will do exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond anything they have asked, thought, or imagined. I am praying, Lord, that you would open up the windows of heaven over their life and pour out encouragement over them for the journey ahead.

Father, I'm asking that you would bring the right people with the right voices, with the right statements of encouragement that give them the guidance that they need to continue to move forward in the assignment that you've entrusted to them. Father, every scheme of the enemy to discourage them, to derail them, to point them in the opposite direction of what you have assigned for their life to do, we just pray that that assignment would be canceled in the name of Jesus Christ and by his blood that has been shed on Calvary. Father, we are determined, not by our strength, but by yours to fix our eyes on Jesus.

Thank you that you are able to keep us from falling. Thank you that you are willing to keep us from falling. And Lord, when we see you face to face, your children want to hear, well done.

In Jesus' name and for the sake of his glory and kingdom. Amen. You can find more information on social media or at foundersweek.org. Again, that's foundersweek.org. And by the way, next Tuesday and Wednesday, you're going to hear from Dr. Tony Evans, as we'll be sharing his story with you.

And his message as heard last week during Founders Week in Chicago. Thanks for listening. Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family.

This is Mark Burns with the Ministry of Great News Media. God bless you and have a great day and night.