



Cross That Moat (to Your Destiny)!

Leap of Faith

The User's Manual

Adapted, with permission, by the North Brooklyn Vineyard

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Leap of Faith

Take a moment to dream with me.

Most people who've experienced something of Jesus' power find themselves, if only for a moment, dreaming of banding together in a church that really makes a difference in the world around them. In these dreams at least, that seems heartening and appropriate and even fun.

We all recognize that, at least in theory, a great church should make some real difference in the lives of those who *come* to it! We at least hope that enough great stuff can happen through the community and the prayer and the teaching and that great sense that the Holy Spirit is alive and active there that everyone is encouraged, and many are profoundly changed.

But, we wonder, what if enough of that great stuff was happening that it *spilled* over like a flood to the community around it? Maybe you'll hear about some amazing things like what's happening with our own Vineyard church in Columbus, Ohio. One of our largest Vineyards—led (by definition) by one of our great leaders, Rich Nathan—has been in ongoing talks with Columbus' mayor about how they can tackle—as a church!—the toughest problems the city faces. Over the years, they've discovered that a lot of the professionals in their church (lawyers, doctors, aerobics instructors, gym teachers, dentists, social workers) were eager to find a translation between what they did for a living and the mission of God's kingdom. So they just opened a community center that, to me, seems like Oz. It's probably the size of a city block and will offer a range of services (in all of those professional areas, plus dozens more) to anyone in Columbus who makes less than double the poverty level there. They're as well-loved in Columbus as any believing church I've heard about anywhere in the country.

Or maybe you know someone who experienced something so great in their own life that they couldn't help but dream bigger and involve others, similar to what happened with one of Becky Wulf's neighbors. Becky described, to me, how this neighbor – Sasha – started a window/terrace garden because she wanted fresh, organic veggies. She loved it! As she started getting other people interested in apartment gardening, she thought about how great it would be to have a community garden. So she made it happen. She got permission to turn an unused plot of land into a garden and then she got kids, neighbors, and older folks involved in creating it together, from carting away trash to preparing the dirt to choosing what to plant. Over time the garden grew great tasting vegetables, became a neighborhood gathering place, improved the block, connected people together who wouldn't otherwise be connected and was enjoyed by all.

Or maybe you've wondered, if only in passing, about your own neighbors. In some parts of the world, believers in Jesus are known as the most hospitable people on their street. They're the ones who have people in and help people know each other. They're the ones who befriend whoever will accept their friendship and then who love them and pray for their real needs in Jesus' name.

And yet...who actually *does* that? (Except, of course, for Becky's neighbor, the Columbus Vineyard and other churches like them.) Perhaps this really is part of the picture Jesus gives of the good life, the overflowing life, but how on earth does one get from here to there?

Here's an anecdote from a family in our church who has found a surprising benefit from their help in serving the Day Laborers:

We moved to Brooklyn for a new start but things have been hard for us. We've been struggling because we don't have enough money, have had to depend on other people and left behind our friends and everything familiar to us. It's been a hard adjustment. Going to talk with the women, as a family, was so good for us. After we went to talk with the woman day laborers and give them groceries, we all felt so good. The kids were really struck by meeting people who really struggle and who they wouldn't normally meet. We all realized how much we have, even if we don't always feel like it. We left that day feeling encouraged, grateful and connected...and we haven't missed going since then.

So, just for grins, why don't you dream with me about this for a moment? Because we've found that this Leap of Faith before Easter, traditionally called "Lent," is actually a fantastic time for dreaming.

This is a great time of year for dreaming!

Last year, at this time, we stumbled upon this surprisingly-powerful idea—that banding together as a whole church to believe God for new things in our own lives and in our church had a lot of power!

Perhaps we could have figured this out if we noticed passages in the gospels like those where Jesus says that where two or more of us band together to ask God for things, God will do them. Maybe that should have been a hint!

It seemed that we could sustain this level of agreed-upon big faith for about 6 weeks—40 days—and then we'd be served by a breather until the same time next year.

During last year's Easter celebration service, we heard from several of you about the amazing God-experiences you had during Leap of Faith. We heard stories such as:

I took Leap of Faith to heart and decided to just go for it and see what happens. I was having problems talking to God because I didn't know how to do it. Through the 40 days of Leap of Faith, and with the help of a friend at small group, I feel that I'm now able to connect with God through prayer.

Or:

My Leap of Faith prayer was that God would help me to be a good example to others. Though I didn't always succeed in doing so, even the failures felt exciting because God was giving me many opportunities to practice and was answering my prayer.

Or:

I had been praying for a big career certification test, but not feeling too much from God as part of Leap of Faith. Near the end of the 40 days, the Bible Study stories began speaking directly to my situation and started to give me hope in God and trust his care and love for me and that he'd provide for me. During the test I knew that I had failed and felt discouraged. So, I prayed some of the themes from the Bible Study that had comforted me, hit the final submission button for the test and actually ended-up passing the exam!

Or:

During Leap of Faith, someone in my small group had prayed for me and shared an impression, which he felt was communication from God, intended for me. The words he shared struck a really deep chord in me as I realized that I was trying to find my identity in many different things like work, being a husband, etc. What I came to understand and feel was God telling me that those things didn't define me, but that he just simply loves me and likes me as I am. I feel that now, I don't have to "be" anything because I'm his kid and he's crazy about me.

And there have been many more of those type of stories. So, all to say, many of us have found quite a bit of power in this process!

And, *also* to say, many of you *haven't* had your Leap of Faith prayers answered. That's one of the perplexing and challenging things about faith, isn't it? We put ourselves on the line with it with no guarantees. But many of us find that, if we persevere through all the encouragements and all the disappointments, things very much do take a good turn for us.

My Leap of Faith prayer, last year, actually didn't pan out. But what it did do was awaken me to my need to continue to develop myself as a person outside of my pastoral role which, you could say is a very good thing. So, I guess you might say God answered my prayer tangentially in this unexpected way.

Many people report that though they didn't "get" *exactly* what they asked for in prayer, they did have a very positive and fulfilling interactions with God, during Leap of Faith, and greatly value that experience on its own merit. So, all to say, it may take some persistence and some willingness to risk disappointment, at least in the short term. And the hope is that you'll richly experience God along the way, whatever the immediate "result" of your prayer.

These are big journeys for our whole church.

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Along with the personal benefits many of us have found, we've also taken these times to dream some big things on behalf of our whole church. Often these have been dreams we've had to learn about together during each Leap of Faith.

As last year's Leap of Faith began, the North Brooklyn Vineyard found itself in a uniquely challenging position: rebounding from the departure of many beloved friends and NBV family, who were pursuing 'next steps' in life, in other geographical locations; navigating the economic environment along with each of you in our congregation and the nation as a whole; and welcoming many new faces to our NBV family.

So we invited our whole church to pray for:

- Growth in attendance and influence for the Kingdom
- A fresh sense of unity and purpose
- Financial health for the church

And, what did we find?

We experienced a bit of a mixed bag as far as growth and influence in the Kingdom. While our congregation attendance actually *declined* in 2010 versus 2009 (due to the aforementioned 'next step' group), we have added *many new* faces (including YOU, if this is the first time you're reading about Leap of Faith) to our community, increased the number of small groups offered throughout the city and have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of volunteers who are active, participating and contributing to the life of our church. So, though we didn't experience 'growth' in the way we had originally expected, God pulled a fast one and 'grew' us in more important and qualitative ways. This unexpected way of meeting our needs is not only a hallmark of God, but something to be looking out for during your Leap of Faith experience this year.

Easily the biggest impact of last year's faith experiment, for our church, was the sense of unity and purpose that was produced through the 40 days. It wasn't uncommon to hear, weekly, how impactful and exciting the daily Bible readings were, how encouraging it was to know that everyone in our church was (literally) on the same page every day, how powerful it was that we were all praying for the same things and heading in one, unified direction. The fruit of this unity was made evident in our summer rooftop prayer sessions where dozens of NBVers met to worship and pray, while finding a renewed sense of trust that "God is in control," the saying "Everybody gets to play" became reality, and a fresh commitment to the NBV mission of our unique style and call to be a safe place for non-religious types. This renewed unity and re-focusing came through an organic, unplanned and non-programmatic sense of God's activity in each individual life and in the life of the church.

And finally, the church's financial position has been greatly improved over the last year, thanks to your continued generosity and several cost-cutting measures implemented throughout 2010. Some of the significant steps that were taken on our journey toward financial health include: exiting the office lease on Lorimer, enlisting Eric Callahan as our dedicated financial manager, modifying the monthly and yearly budget, entering into the beginning of 2011 debt free.

We're well on our way to realizing the prayer that we become not only financially healthy, but that the North Brooklyn Vineyard will become a generous giver of resources to the poor around us and that

we'll be able to serve our neighbors to a greater degree. Some of the progress in this area is due not only to our improved financial position, but in community events like the Crest Hardware Fair, in which several NBV members (spearheaded by Grace and Tony Colon) made impactful and lasting connections to many families and businesspeople in the community. Another example of this is our weekly hot dog giveaways during the summer at Trash Bar.

We're excited for all the wonderful blessings that God has shown us over the last year – many of which were prompted and put in motion through Leap of Faith.

Our church dream for *this* year? Utter transformation!

Here are a couple of scriptures that are formative to, and helpful for, this year's Leap of Faith:

The first is a parable Jesus tells in Luke.

¹⁹ Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed and who lived each day in luxury. ²⁰ At his door lay a diseased beggar named Lazarus. ²¹ As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores. ²² Finally, the beggar died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham.* The rich man also died and was buried, ²³ and his soul went to the place of the dead.* There, in torment, he saw Lazarus in the far distance with Abraham.

²⁴ "The rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in anguish in these flames.'

²⁵ "But Abraham said to him, 'Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish.

²⁶ And besides, there is a great chasm separating us. Anyone who wanted to cross over to you from here is stopped at its edge, and no one there can cross over to us.'

²⁷ "Then the rich man said, 'Please, Father Abraham, send him to my father's home. ²⁸ For I have five brothers, and I want him to warn them about this place of torment so they won't have to come here when they die.'

²⁹ "But Abraham said, 'Moses and the prophets have warned them. Your brothers can read their writings anytime they want to.'

³⁰ "The rich man replied, 'No, Father Abraham! But if someone is sent to them from the dead, then they will turn from their sins.'

³¹ "But Abraham said, 'If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even if someone rises from the dead.' "

(Luke 16:19-31, NLT)

Clearly there are some crucial justice questions that Jesus raises here (which, if they grab you, you'll have the chance to address a bit during this Leap of Faith). And there are some warnings! Part of our Leap of Faith experience will be an opportunity to read through all of Luke's gospel, so you'll have a chance to take more time with this parable as it arises then.

But for our purposes here, I'd mostly like to draw your attention to this **chasm** separating the rich man from Lazarus. That's why he can't get the small thing he asks for in the afterlife (a drop of water) and

Jesus' point seems to be that this chasm actually mirrors *another* chasm that was in place during their times on earth—namely, the *gate* that separated them.

If I can press the image a bit: Jesus, along with much of the rest of the New Testament, seems to make the case that—if you will—all of us live on an *island*. And, let's say, this island is surrounded by a **moat**. On our island is *everyone we relate to*—our family and friends, maybe people in our church, maybe some really close friends from work. **Over the moat** is the entire rest of the world. These are people who are, as it were, *optional* for us. We *could* take the initiative, say, to meet that person who lives two houses down from us, but we by no means *have* to. We don't *need* that stranger to be our friend—we *have* friends, and they're all on our island.

Jesus seems to make the point that a good deal of the meaning of life, an irreplaceable component of what will fulfill us (as per the excerpt from the family's response to helping the day laborers, above) comes as we cross over the moat in his name.

So, for instance, he says seemingly harsh things like this (from his Sermon on the Mount):

If you love only those who love you, what good is that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.

(Matthew 5:46, 47, NLT)

I don't think he's saying here that we *shouldn't* love those who are "on our island." I think he's saying that *of course* we love those people! But perhaps the real power comes as we start to notice and love people who are *over the moat*, who are *optional*, whom we don't *need*.

The plan for this year's Leap of Faith:

The plan for this Leap of Faith falls into **4 action steps** and **2 questions**.

One hopes that these steps and questions will do three great things for us. They'll empower you to believe God for something *big* and *concrete*, something big enough that it would *require* six weeks of sustained faith and prayer. Our hope is that, every Lent, as many of us as possible will be reminded that there is a *real, living God who is eager to encourage us, to empower us, and to meet our needs*. Nothing we talk about or believe in this church amounts to anything unless the last sentence is true! Sure, we have modest amounts of folk wisdom that are probably helpful on their own terms. But the sum total of that could most likely fit into a pamphlet. Everything rises and falls on a living and active God who loves you and is eager to act on your behalf. This Leap of Faith is your chance to plunge into those waters in a fresh way. Don't miss that chance!

Second, we're hopeful that you can *encounter God devotionally* during these 6 weeks in a fresh and lasting way. So we'll provide a wonderful Bible devotional and we'll resource our small groups to see if that could indeed happen!

Third, we have the big dream that this Leap of Faith could transform us still further into a church that, member by member, loves to cross over the moat and into our destiny. That we could be a church where love for those over the moat is every bit as common and natural for each member as is, say, a belief in God's Holy Spirit to speak to and work through us.

So, the action steps and questions.

These six weeks, could you consider 4 action steps?

- 1. Ask God each day for your concrete Leap of Faith personal dream.**
- 2. Take daily advantage of the Leap of Faith Luke Devotional.**
- 3. Be generous with money toward—or show extravagant hospitality to—one or more of your 6 during the Leap of Faith.**
- 4. Cross the moat with your whole small group at least once during the six weeks.**

I'll explain each of those in more detail in just a moment. But, before I do, let me flag the two areas of prayer that we'll be considering as a church during the Leap of Faith.

Two questions we're considering as a whole church during the Leap of Faith.

- 1. How can we best serve the Williamsburg day workers, with whom we've recently started a relationship?**
- 2. How can we develop a culture of risk-taking and crossing the moat as a natural part of NBV life?**

Ask God each day for your concrete Leap of Faith personal dream.

One of the strange, wonderful truths of faith in Jesus is that he wants us to come to him with the things we want and need, knowing that if we don't, we *will* go elsewhere. Off the top of my head, here are a few of the places where we're told that. (These quotes will all be from the New Living Translation unless noted.)

*You do not have, because you do not ask.
(James 4:2, ESV)*

*"Keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for. Keep on looking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And the door is opened to everyone who knocks. You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."
(Matthew 7:7-11)*

"I also tell you this: If two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you."

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(Matthew 18:19)

*"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."
(Matthew 21:22)*

*"You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, because the work of the Son brings glory to the Father. Yes, ask anything in my name, and I will do it!"
(John 14:13, 14)*

So take a moment, pray if you want or just get still. And then jot down:

What do you want Jesus to do for you during the Leap of Faith?

(Possibly even ask Jesus if there is anything that he'd like to do for you during this Leap of Faith, and jot down any thoughts/feelings that surface from that, as well. Keep track of these items.)

Now what?

First off, congratulations! You've done a key thing—you've crystallized in your heart and on paper what you want God to do for you, a very important thing. Having done that, can I encourage you to do a few things in order to take advantage of the Leap of Faith in reference to the things you've just written down?

1) **Ask God for these things every day during the Leap of Faith.**

As you ask, he might speak to you about what you're asking for. Obviously, pay attention to that! But, in the spirit of Matthew 7, God gives good gifts to people who "keep on asking" him for them!

2) **Tell someone else what you wrote down and ask *them* to pray for you about those things too.**

This might be your spouse, if you have one and/or someone in your household or your small group, if you have one.

And it would be neighborly of you if you prayed about *their* things! Jesus says he's uniquely present and at work when two or more people come before him with things (Matthew 18:20). Your chances of seeing something happen go way up when someone else is praying too—and they might even have more faith than you do, so you can leech off of them!

Take daily advantage of the Leap of Faith Luke Devotional.

One of the great gifts during our past Leaps of Faith has been a devotional guide, broken down into daily chunks, around a part of the Bible, though with a focus on the things we're all looking at during the six weeks in question. This year it will focus on a source you just can't beat—Luke's Gospel. I mean, if you're going to spend six weeks as a whole church looking at one great biography, could you do better than to look at one about Jesus? And Luke in particular has been the source of a good deal of what's motivated us into the things we're looking at this year. This will be a key way for you to feel like a part of the whole experience—and for you to have a great encounter with Luke's Gospel!

Be generous with money toward—or show extravagant hospitality to—one or more of your 6 during the Leap of Faith.

First, a word on “your 6.”

Our thought is that each person in our church knows at least 6 local people who, as best as we can tell, aren't experiencing much from God. These, for the most part, will be people “over the moat,” people we choose to pray for and love as best we can who are not in our inner circle. That said, if your best friend at work fits this profile, go for it! Put them on “your list of 6.” Largely what we do is pray for these folks that they would experience the power and love of God, and might perhaps even come to follow him themselves—hopefully among a great community of faith! Our theory is: if your impression is that they aren't experiencing much from God, most likely they have no one, or very few people, praying for them. So perhaps *you* can offer them that great gift!

Here are some thoughts that might help you **pray** for them.

- 1. Initiate social time with one of your 6.***
- 2. Ask one of your 6 for prayer requests.***
- 3. Tell a story about how Jesus has blessed you.***
- 4. Pray for one of your 6 in person.***
- 5. Invite them to Sunday service or your small group.***
- 6. Invite them to get together to talk about Jesus.***

In keeping with the spirit of Crossing the Moat, I'm sure it's easy to understand that these folks you're praying for are not just abstractions whom you're hoping Jesus will bless, but you're too busy for! If God would be so gracious, certainly it would be great if you could be part of the process, take time out and loving them in Jesus' name.

In terms of (5), experience among churches, and our experience here, tells us that people who ordinarily don't go to church often *do* want to go to church at Easter. (If we customarily run, including

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kids and both services, at about eighty people each Sunday, we had over 100 last Easter. People like to go to church on Easter!)

In terms of (6), we'll be running a special small group following Leap of Faith, called **Seek**. This 10-week small group is specifically for anyone who considers themselves new to exploring faith and would like to consider how Jesus might fit in to their faith journey. It emphasizes practical aspects of faith, offers ample opportunities to ask questions and provides an environment for informal discussion. You'll be hearing more about this group as Leap of Faith progresses, so maybe you can pray about bringing one of your 6 to Seek, if that would be helpful for either of you.

So don't miss out on connecting with this deepest of all purposes during these 40 days! Believe God for your 6 and go for it!

So! *Who are your 6?*

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

But what about this "be generous with money toward—or offer hospitality to—your 6" idea? Here's another parable from Luke that you'll get much more about in the Leap of Faith Devotional. But it's pretty helpful here.

Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

"The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg— I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

"So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

" 'Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied.

"The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.'

"Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?'

" 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied.

"He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

"The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

(Luke 16:1-12, TNIV)

This is one of my absolute favorite of Jesus' parables, because—to me at least—it's utterly shocking.

What seems shocking about this parable is that the master *commends* the "DISHONEST manager." By all appearances, this guy is openly robbing his employer for his own selfish gain. He's buying friends for himself so that, when he is kicked out of his house, they'll give him a place to stay. And then Jesus not only *commends* this, he *amplifies* it. "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourself, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." And then his seeming point is that *we're* all in the position of this manager, managing money that is not our own, that has been entrusted to us to manage by God, the actual owner of all the money we have. And God is looking to see if we manage it well. And the way we'll do that is by extravagant generosity towards people who, otherwise, would not be in heaven. What a twist!

One form this generosity to peoples' 6 often takes is in **hospitality**. For example, Char and I have been praying for the friendships we've made with the staff at the Trash Bar. We don't get much opportunity to hang out with them much outside of Sundays so we've reached out to them by throwing occasional dinners and barbeques at our house to show them how much we appreciate their help. In turn they now see us as friends and opened up opportunities for God to move in one or two of their lives.

So... which of your 6 do you want to be generous with money toward or show hospitality to during these six weeks?

What do you propose to do?

Cross the moat with your whole small group at least once during the Leap of Faith.

If you're not a part of one of the small groups in our church, can I encourage you to join up with one, even if it's just for the Leap of Faith? (Seriously, feel free just to join in for 6 weeks, if that's what would work best for you.) Most people find that the ability to pray with each other about our personal dreams from God, and then to pray with and take steps with each other about the larger dreams gives the time a lot of the power and effectiveness that it has. If you're going to try the Leap of Faith anyway, I think you're cheating yourself if you don't join in with a small group for that time.

At the beginning of the 40 days, we'll provide you with a list of the various small groups that will be participating in the six week faith experiment.

Decide on an idea of how your small group can cross the moat, by selecting something that is personal and meaningful to your specific small group, then do that activity during at least one of your small group meetings during the Leap of Faith. And then you might want to spend the next small group meeting debriefing the experience.

Two areas of prayer that we're considering as a whole church during these six weeks.

1. How can we best serve the Williamsburg day workers, with whom we've recently started a relationship?

Here's another thought that has really gripped our Advisory Team along these lines, but which would require more faith and passion than we could provide. This would really have to be something we were excited about as a whole community.

The team that's been going on Sunday afternoons has developed an understanding of how discouraging and difficult life is for the women day laborers. They spend hours outside waiting for work and often leave empty handed, without the money they need to provide for their families and without other options for work. They have little time for themselves, as each day's struggle merges into the next day's struggle. The team is meeting in March to dream about how our community can provide some concrete help and "treat" the women in some way. Stay tuned as the team comes up with and shares a plan – it's going to be a "Leap of Faith" - to be present in a loving way to the larger women day laborer community on a Saturday in April. You won't want to miss it!

We'll talk lots more about this on Sunday mornings during the Leap of Faith! But, just to say, this will be a fun thing to find out together.

Why don't you ask God if he would have you give to such a thing? And, if so, in what way and/or how much? We'll plan—unless the process derails us—to take an offering towards this. And we'll let you know what the offering amounted to at the end of the six weeks.

2. How can we develop a culture of risk-taking and crossing the moat as a natural part of NBV life?

Our 'me-first' culture, coupled with the overcrowded and hectic pace of big-city living, has a way of inoculating us against noticing the needs of people around us. So in an attempt to develop "crossing the moat" as a type of lifestyle, why don't you try asking the Holy Spirit to make you more aware of the those you come in contact with each day, especially the invisible people around you (the pan handler who props himself/herself in front of your subway station, the bus boy/girl at your local lunch spot, the elderly couple that live down the hall from you), and to increase your sensitivity to their needs. Ask the Lord to give you courage so that the next time he nudges you to cross that moat and respond to their needs, you become adventurous and do it and see where that leads you.

So...there you have it! This year's Leap of Faith!

I'm praying that this will be a life-changing time for you—and for us all as a community!

If I might throw in one final tip that some people who are trying to believe big often find helpful.

1) Consider fasting in some way.

You might have noticed that when people really wanted something from God in the Bible, they almost always fasted.

What does fasting do?

Fasting tells God and our own spirits that we really are desperate for *God* to meet some need or hope that we have.

Though fasting—in any fashion (and we'll talk about some options in a minute)—is, by definition, *hard*, it's actually meant to be a *joyous opportunity*. Suddenly we're really serious about something with God; we're really expecting him to come through; we aren't just playing around. That can often be exhilarating!

What are options for fasting?

Well, first off, fasting often involves abstention from food in some way. In shorter fasts, that can be a total abstention from food. These are usually called "**water fasts**," because water is the only thing going into us. For the most part, I don't recommend these at any length beyond a week's time, because after that, health problems can ensue. (Clearly God can speak and

call you into anything—but I'd just be aware of the risks if you water fast for more than a week, and be in good touch with a doctor.)

Also, I do not recommend water fasts if you've ever suffered from an eating disorder.

Those in our midst who've suffered from eating disorders historically have a difficult time separating this sort of fasting from the very motivation that drove them to the disorder, and thereby risk serious health problems. There are other great fasts that will do you a lot of good, if you've been in this situation, and can I ask that you'd pursue those?

Other food-abstention fasts involve imposing some sort of **conditions** on our eating over a period of time. (Some folks prefer not to call these "fasts"—reserving that title for water fasts—but prefer to call things like I'll suggest here "**consecrations**." Choose whatever terminology works for you!) This can involve anything from giving up some beloved food item for a time (desserts being a popular favorite) to something more challenging, like the so-called "**Daniel fast**," which involves (as it did for Daniel in the biblical book bearing his name) abstaining from everything but vegetables.

For longer fasts, I've sometimes done a "**one meal a day**" fast. It's pretty much what it sounds like. The key is to actually eat a *smaller* meal than you normally would at the time, and to make that "it" for the day. If you ever know I'm on a "one meal a day" fast and it looks after awhile as if I haven't lost an ounce, have a little talk with me.

People often pursue "**juice fasts**." Again, this would customarily apply to *shorter fasts*, but it's just like a water fast, except you're allowed to drink juice, which will keep your blood sugar up and actually allow you to function at near-normal capacity.

Are there any non-food-related options?

You bet! Fasting from **television** is a popular choice for folks who aren't fasting from food.

These can really involve, under God's direction, doing without *anything* that feels costly to give up for a season. I've heard about fasts (or, again, "consecrations") from *criticism* or from *catalogs*!

The point of fasting is that, under God's direction, we're feeling desperate for something and we direct that desperation towards God. It's just hard to truly be desperate for God and what he might do for us when our bellies are full and all our needs are abundantly provided for.

What does it mean to fast "for" something?

If you fast, I'd encourage you to let God know, frequently, what it is you're fasting *for* which, I'd think, would at least tie into the "what do you want Jesus to do for you during the Leap of Faith?" category. Be on the lookout for feedback from God - which could take the form of an impression, intuition, recurring thoughts or just a specific "gut feeling" – that will help direct your prayers or give you new insights in what to pray for.

Does fasting help us lose weight (and I know you're asking that on behalf of a friend)?

Isn't this one of life's colossal bummers? The answer, from all reputable sources, is, "No, not really." There are 2 problems that keep this from being, for most people, about weight loss. First, once we've fasted (from food) for awhile, our metabolism slows way down (a good thing if we were ever to face famine!). Second, sadly, it seems to be human nature that, whatever weight we lose in fasting, we quickly put back on once we resume our previous diet. One national level leader who's known for his frequent long fasts actually seems to have gotten significantly *more* overweight as the years have rolled on.

Now, the upside of this truism is that we really *can* let God know that we're doing this because we want deeper desperation for and connection with him. This really is about more than body image.

Here's to one of the great 6-week stretches of your life!

I'll include a summary sheet (for your refrigerator, if such things help you) after this one.

Cross That Moat (to Your Destiny)! *Leap of Faith*

These six weeks, could you consider 4 action steps?

1. **Ask God each day for your concrete Leap of Faith personal dream.**
 - a. Ask God for these things every day during the six weeks.
 - b. Tell someone else what you wrote down and ask *them* to pray for you about those things too.
2. **Take daily advantage of the Leap of Faith Luke Devotional.**
3. **Be generous with money toward—or show extravagant hospitality to—one or more of your 6 during the six weeks.**

How might we pray for our 6?

1. **Initiate social time with one of your 6.**
 2. **Ask one of your 6 for prayer requests.**
 3. **Tell a story about how Jesus has blessed you.**
 4. **Pray for one of your 6 in person.**
 5. **Invite them to Sunday service or your small group.**
 6. **Invite them to get together to talk about Jesus (possibly via Seek).**
4. **Cross the moat with your whole small group at least once during the Leap of Faith.**

2 areas of prayer that we're considering as a whole church during the Leap of Faith.

1. How can we best serve the Williamsburg day workers, with whom we've recently started a relationship?
 - a. Ask God if (or how much) He'd have you contribute towards this.
 - b. Unless something derails us, we'll take an offering towards this during the Leap of Faith.
2. How can we develop a culture of risk-taking and crossing the moat as a natural part of NBV life?

One final thought:

1. Consider fasting in some way.