

WALDON FENSTER

WINNING

FAITH



A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY AND
TRANSFORMATION IN A CASINO

WALDON FENSTER

WINNING FAITH

INTRODUCTION

THE STAKES WERE NEVER MONEY

I did not expect God to meet me in a casino. If you had asked me where a person should go to hear from Him, I would have named a church, an altar, a prayer room, or some quiet place far away from the noise. I would not have chosen a room built to keep people awake, surrounded by lights, money, celebration, disappointment, and the constant pressure of one more decision. Yet that is where some of the most important questions of my faith became impossible to avoid.

A casino has a way of reducing the world to the moment directly in front of you. The past disappears, the future feels negotiable, and everything seems to depend on what you do next. For a few seconds there is no lawsuit, no business pressure, no outside opinion, and no room for pretending. There is only the decision, the risk, the outcome, and whatever you believe about yourself while you wait for it.

This is not a book about how to win at gambling. It is not a defense of every decision I made, and it is not an attempt to place God's name on every risk simply because I wanted the risk to work. If anything, this book is about how dangerous it becomes when faith, appetite, fear, confidence, ego, and obedience begin speaking at the same time.

I entered this journey believing that faith should move. I still believe that. Faith that never costs anything, risks anything, changes anything, or requires anything can become little more than a comforting idea. God had already asked me to move when I did not have enough information, enough support, enough money, or enough certainty. He had asked me to trust Him beyond what felt reasonable. Then the risks became bigger, the outcomes became louder, and the place where I believed I was learning faith became the place where everything I believed would be tested.

At first, winning felt like confirmation. A successful outcome can make the entire path behind it look correct. The questions disappear, the warnings get quieter, and people who once doubted begin treating confidence like wisdom. Winning creates its own evidence. It tells you that you heard correctly, moved correctly, and believed correctly. When the result is large enough, it can even make you believe that the result itself proves God approved every step.

But an outcome is not always proof. Sometimes a win reveals faith. Sometimes it reveals skill, timing, discipline, or opportunity. Sometimes it simply reveals that the outcome went your way. The hardest part is admitting that success can hide things failure will eventually expose.

That became one of the central questions of my journey: Was I following God, or was I asking God to follow me? Was I taking a risk because I had been directed, or because risk made me feel powerful, alive, important, and in control? Could I recognize the difference between conviction and desire when they both arrived with the same intensity?

Some people believe faith should make life safer. They imagine obedience as a protected road where every door opens, every investment multiplies, every relationship survives, and every enemy is defeated before the damage reaches them. That was not the road I found. My God is good, but He is not safe. He does not promise to protect the version of me that needs to be burned away.

God will ask for things comfort would never surrender. He will lead you beyond the approval of people who need your decisions to make sense. He will allow your confidence to be tested until you discover whether it was rooted in Him or rooted in the outcome you expected Him to produce. He may even let you lose something you were certain faith would help you keep.

That does not make recklessness holy. Radical obedience and reckless desire can look similar from a distance, but they are not the same. One begins with surrender; the other begins with appetite. One is willing to obey without applause; the other needs the outcome to prove it was right. One can survive losing; the other begins chasing whatever will restore its identity.

The difference is rarely obvious while the lights are flashing and the wins are arriving. It becomes clearer when the room goes quiet.

There were victories in this journey that changed what I believed was possible. There were moments that felt too precise, too timely, and too personal to dismiss. There were risks other people would have called irresponsible, yet I believed I was being asked to take them. There were also devastating losses, lawsuits, consequences, and seasons of refinement that challenged everything I thought I knew about hearing God.

Winning made it easy to speak about faith. Losing forced me to decide whether I actually had it. Anyone can celebrate trust when the result provides immediate evidence. The real test begins when obedience and outcome appear to contradict each other, when the prayer seems unanswered, when the money is gone, when the accusation arrives, or when the decision that once felt clear becomes difficult to explain.

If God was with me, why did I lose? If I heard Him, why did the road become more painful? If He asked me to take the risk, why did He allow the fire that followed it? And if I was wrong, how could I learn to recognize His voice without becoming too afraid to move again?

Those questions could not be answered by another win. They required something winning had never demanded from me: surrender. I had to face the possibility that faith was not a way to guarantee the outcome I wanted. Faith was the willingness to trust God with the outcome after I had done what I believed He asked me to do.

That is what I mean by Winning Faith. It is not faith that wins every bet, closes every deal, avoids every lawsuit, or escapes every loss. Winning faith is faith that cannot be defeated by losing. It is confidence in God when confidence in yourself has been stripped away. It is knowing that loss may write a chapter, but it does not get to write the ending.

The casino did not create every weakness, desire, or conflict inside me. It exposed questions I had been able to avoid everywhere else. How badly did I need to be right? How much of my confidence depended on recognition? Did I want God's direction, or did I want His endorsement? Could I remain obedient when no one celebrated the decision and nothing about the result made me look wise?

The fire of refinement is not gentle with false answers. It removes the explanations we use to protect ourselves and the identities we build around being successful. It exposes the difference between possessing money and being possessed by what money represents. It reveals whether peace came from God or from believing we had control.

You do not need to enter a casino to understand this story. Everyone eventually stands at a table where something real is at risk. For some it is a business, a marriage, a diagnosis, a calling, a move, a relationship, or a decision no one else understands. The surroundings change, but the questions remain: Whose voice am I following? What am I trying to prove? Would I still obey if I could not see the ending? Would I still trust God if the result looked like loss?

These pages will tell the truth about the victories and the devastating losses, the moments of confidence and the moments of confusion, the lawsuits and the refinement. I will not polish every painful decision until it sounds like part of a perfect plan. I will not pretend that faith removed every consequence or that I understood every lesson while I was living through it.

I am also not writing to convince you that I was right every time. I am writing because the difference between being right and being faithful matters. Being right protects the ego. Being faithful requires surrender. One needs the result to provide proof; the other keeps trusting when the proof has not arrived.

God met me in a place defined by risk, but He did not meet me there simply to make me better at winning. He met me there to challenge what I called faith, expose what I trusted, and refine the man making the decisions. The greatest transformation was never the amount won or lost. It was learning that God remains God on both sides of the outcome.

My name is Waldon Fenster. This is the story of bigger risks, major victories, devastating losses, lawsuits, and a faith tested by fire. This is not a victory lap. It is an honest account of what happened when God met me at the table and refused to let the outcome become my god.

This is Winning Faith. Let's begin.