

EXTRA
**ORDINARY
FAITH**

30-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Get ready for your 30-day devo & fast!

Fasting Guidelines (Matthew 6:1-18)

“When you fast...” —Matthew 6:16a

Purpose – We fast “FROM, FOR”. We fast from food, but if that’s it, we’re just dieting or detoxing. Fasting FROM food is FOR God – it’s hungering for Him, showing desperation and dependence on Him. Instead of eating, spend more time on prayer and Bible reading.

Sacrifice – In the Bible, fasting is giving up food. But God may prompt you to give up something else you depend on – media, entertainment, a hobby. It IS challenging, but there is blessing that comes from stretching our faith.

Freedom – There should be no guilt or religion in fasting. There should be no pride or bragging. We don’t compare ourselves or judge anyone else.

Wisdom – Of course, you should practice wisdom if dealing with a serious medical issue. Be accountable to your doctor, family, and friends.

Obedience – As far as how the fast looks, each person should hear from God. Pray, ask, “LORD, what do YOU want from me?” Listen to how He leads you.

Fasting Options

Complete Fast – No food, only drink (water, juices, etc.) Examples: Moses (Exodus 34:28), Elijah (1 Kings 19:8), and Jesus (Matthew 4:2)

Partial-Meals – Abstain from specific meals each week. Example: all lunches, all dinners.

Partial-Days – Abstain from food specific days each week. Example: every Tuesday and Thursday

Partial-Foods – Abstain from certain food categories (meat, sweets, etc.) Example: Daniel 1:12; 10:2–3

Leisure Fast – Abstain from hobbies or entertainment. Example: social media, technology, video games.

Note to Parents

This fast is a great opportunity to lead your family in a shared spiritual experience.

Explain the heart and reason behind the fast to your children. *Read Jesus' example and teaching (Matthew 4:2, 6:1-18)*

Share with them which fasting option you will be doing and why. Help them pray and choose their own. Be wise about what each one can handle and appreciate. Children may benefit from a Leisure Fast. Teenagers might do a Leisure or Partial Fast.

Follow-up as a family, regularly sharing what each member is learning from their fast and what God is teaching them.

Pray together regularly. Keep track of specific prayer requests and answered prayers.

1. I want in!

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us. — Ephesians 3:20

Good...Better...Best. “Good” is an adjective. “Better” is a comparative. But the word “best” is a superlative. It describes something that is above everything else. When you use a superlative, you are saying that it is the best. Period. End of discussion. You only need one superlative to make your point. But what could be so great in the Bible that God attributes multiple superlatives?

The Word of God actually strings multiple superlatives together when it talks about God’s willingness to develop a believer’s faith that experiences God as never before. After Paul prays for believers to grow in their faith and experience the fullness of God in every possible way (Ephesians 3:14-19), he says that God can do this and so much more (Ephesians 3:20)!

If God is able to strengthen your faith to an unparalleled level, then why not tap into this amazing spiritual power and allow God to do His perfect work in your life today? Why not invite God today to demonstrate His unparalleled spiritual power to infuse you with courage to trust Him – even in situations and scenarios within which you used to struggle? Let today be the day you begin to allow the Holy Spirit to jumpstart your faith and empower you to experience faith in God that will exceed all that you could ask or think!

2. What if?

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? — Romans 8:31

Typically, the phrase “What if?” is spoken by a person who is experiencing anxiety or fear about the future. It usually precedes a stated fear or concern one has about not knowing what an outcome will be of a given decision or situation. “*What if* I make the wrong decision?” “*What if* I don’t have all the answers?” “*What if* I missed out on something better for my life?”

Yet, the Bible encourages believers to embrace this phrase with enthusiasm. When we put our faith in the Lord, we don’t have to carry the same level of anxiety that is experienced by those who do not know the Lord as their Savior. When believers trust the promises of God, they don’t need to worry about the outcome because God’s plan is always perfect. And while some outcomes to specific prayer requests may not turn out the way we prayed, believers can still rest assured that God’s plan is always perfect.

So, why not ask a few “What if?” faith questions of God today: “*What if* I took God at His word this year and increased my faith in Him?” “*What if* I shared my faith with those I know need to hear it?” “*What if* I began daily communing with God to grow in my faith?” If you do this, then your faith will elevate to a higher level than you have experienced before.

3. Put God's greatness on display

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. — Psalm 19:1

God is wonderful (Psalm 139:14)! He is Creator (Isaiah 40:25-26), Sustainer (Isaiah 42:5), and the Giver of all good things (James 1:17). He blesses (Malachi 3:10), protects and provides (Psalm 121:7-8), and judges righteously (Psalm 18:24-25). As a result, all believers are invited to join the chorus of heavenly hosts who declare, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created,” (Revelation 4:11)!

Psalm 19:1 adds how creation puts God's greatness on continual display for all to see, revere, and praise Him. As a result, believers should join in with His creation in putting God's greatness on display in their daily lives. By living an observable life of faith, you will motivate others to join you in putting their complete faith in Him in all things and at all times.

If we serve such a great God, then let's not hesitate to show off His greatness by demonstrating to the world that we would stake our entire life on His truth and on His promises. Let's take Him at His Word. Let's take comfort in His character. And let's be empowered by His Spirit in order to live a life of faith that encourages others to join us to place our complete faith in Him!

4. If you believe, you will see the glory of God

Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” — John 11:40

God desires for you to make your own decision to trust Him regardless of what anyone else chooses to do. And when you do, you experience God in a way that is missed out on by so many people who choose to navigate the matters of their lives for themselves.

While surrounded by a huge crowd who doubted Jesus' power, Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus and turned to Martha and spoke a profound truth that no doubt stuck with her for the rest of her life. Jesus said, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” It is no surprise that both the words “you” are singular! Jesus wanted Martha to make her own personal decision to trust Jesus.

Jesus is speaking this same truth specifically to you. To see the glory of God played out in your life, it requires a believer to make your own choice to commit to live according to His truth and promises. And when you do this, you begin to see God's hand move in your life with perfect guidance and divine precision. You start to see how He blesses, guides, and provides for His own so perfectly. This will result in you seeing His great glory, and it will compel you to give Him great glory!

Sunday Notes

5. Faith that stretches and strengthens

But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!” — Mark 4:40-41

Jesus told His Disciples that they were going to get into a boat and sail to the opposite side of the Sea of Galilee. As they sailed, a storm arose and began flooding the boat. While the Disciples struggled to navigate the journey, Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. Believing they could potentially drown, they woke Jesus up by shouting a question, “Do You not care that we are perishing?” (v.38)? In Jesus’ humanity, He wiped the sleep out of his eyes. In His divinity, He calmed the raging storm. What once was a “great storm” (v.37) turned into a “great calm” (v. 39). Jesus then turned to His disciples and asked a very unexpected spiritual question, “How is it that you have no faith” (v.40)?

Not even in a literal sinking boat did Jesus accept anything short of His disciples having strong faith in Him. Probably what disappointed Jesus was that they didn’t even entertain the thought of asking Jesus in faith to perform a miracle. Rather, they concluded they were going to die and wondered why Jesus seemingly didn’t care.

Be encouraged that it is possible to have dynamic faith and still run to God for help, but dynamic faith never questions whether or not God genuinely cares for us, and it is never afraid to ask God to do a miracle.

6. Be a believer who is “full of faith”

*And Stephen, a man full of faith...being full
of the Holy Spirit... — Acts 6:6a, 7:55a*

Approximately three years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the church was faithfully reaching thousands of people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This upset the religious leaders and they threatened these Christians to stop preaching about Jesus Christ being the Messiah and risen Lord. One man named Stephen was bold enough to stand up to eloquently and powerfully articulate how Jesus was the Messiah and the Savior of the world (Acts 7:2-53). This bold move resulted in his stoning and death. His sermon was powerful and the Lord honored his faith. It serves as a motivation for all believers to emulate the same great faith with which Stephen lived his life.

Stephen’s bold faith was not because of his personality or oratorical skills. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit because he was a man “full of faith” (Acts 6:6a). He did not just know facts and details about Jesus he staked his entire life upon Jesus and was not ashamed to proclaim God’s truth to the world. That’s why in Acts 7:55a, Stephen is described as “being full of the Holy Spirit.” As believers, when we inculcate the Word of God in faith, the Holy Spirit empowers us (Galatians 3:5) to live a life of dynamic faith. And we too will turn into bold, dynamic witnesses of the world about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

7. Be rich in God's eyes

So [he] who lays up treasure for himself [is] not rich toward God... If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? — Luke 12:21, 28

A believer full of faith is rich in the eyes of God! And fortunately, spiritual wealth has nothing to do with one's physical net worth. A person's net worth in no way correlates with how spiritually rich and blessed he is by God. Sure, the Bible says that hard work pays off for people (Proverbs 14:23a), but only a person who has invested his heart and time to learn God's Word, to commune with Him in prayer, and chooses to live out his faith in everyday life is truly rich in God's eyes.

And the good news is that there is no cap placed upon this spiritual wealth. Jesus promises that the more you "crave and have an insatiable thirst for righteousness, you will be completely filled up and left satisfied" (Matthew 5:6, original translation). God will empower you with faith commensurate with your desire to know and trust Him. God will never hold back His blessings from the one who desires to be rich in faith. And every time you trust Him, you will see His promises come true over and over again. Your faith in Him will grow daily, you will experience exponential growth in your spiritual walk, and you will serve as an encouragement to others to become spiritually wealthy, too!

8. True faith only follows one plan, God's plan

You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail. — Proverbs 19:21 (NLT)

In this world, it is wise to have contingency plans. To know what you should do in case of an emergency is always a good thing to do. To know what you will do if your transportation plans change on the way to your family vacation is also a good thing to do. In doing so, you won't miss out on any valuable family time. Even the Bible says that being a good planner can be very profitable (Proverbs 21:5a). But when it comes to growing your faith in God, you do not need any contingency plans. You should follow only one plan – God's plan – trust His Word and His ways.

A person of faith does not entertain any spiritual contingency plans. Never should a believer declare God's plan is not working out. Never should a believer entertain taking matters into his own hands. A truly wise believer takes God at His word, trusts the never-changing character of God, and rests in the fact that God's plan for his life is perfect and sure. A person full of faith in God realizes that he never has to worry about God leading him astray, if God is unalert or unaware, or if God is ever wrong. So, be a good planner in your daily life, but when it comes to having faith in God, just stick to the plan – His plan.

9. Living a life of faith may not always be easy, but God's got you

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. — Deuteronomy 33:27

When you are going through a difficult season in your life, it is always comforting to receive a warm hug from a special someone. The hug is nice but what really ministers to you is that you are being embraced by someone who sincerely cares for you, loves you unconditionally, and who has been there for you in many other challenging times in your life. You take comfort in knowing they have been there for you in the past and are here for you today.

The beautiful reality about God is that He has always been present when you needed Him and He promises to always be present for you today and for eternity. While living a life of faith in God is required of every believer, it doesn't mean that it won't be hard. Fortunately, God does not call on you to live a life of faith devoid of His ever-comforting presence. He promises that He will always be present to offer you His encouragement exactly when you need it. And the good news is that He will always be present to offer His warm embrace of encouragement when it needs to be felt the most. God's Word promises us that the eternal God to whom we are able to run to and within whom we can take refuge is always holding us with His everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).

10. Sometimes it's good to pray for something you know God is already doing for you

O Lord, You have searched me and known me....

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there
is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the
way everlasting. — Psalm 139:1, 23-24*

In Psalm 139, the Psalmist describes three great attributes of God – He is all-knowing, ever-present, and all powerful. He opens the Psalm by acknowledging that he knows God has “searched” his heart and “knows” him thoroughly and completely. But at the end of the Psalm, he makes a stunning prayer request. He asks God to “search me and know my heart.” The curious question is, why is the Psalmist asking God to do what he already knows God is doing?

The Psalmist did not forget what he acknowledged at the beginning of his writing. Rather, in asking the Lord to search him and to know him, the Psalmist demonstrates a *willingness* to submit to the will and the ways of his great God. The Psalmist realizes that God is going to do His perfect work in his life, so he was determined to let God know that he was going to go with God *willingly*.

The Psalmist has faith in his all-knowing, ever-present, all-powerful God. He knows that his awesome God loves Him unconditionally (Psalm 139:17). And he knows that willingly opening his heart and life to his God is for his spiritual safety and security. The Psalmist has what every believer should have today – a willing spirit to welcome God to do His perfect work in our lives in order to strengthen our faith.

11. God's description of great faith

When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, “I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” — Luke 7:9

Can you imagine what the centurion must have felt in response to his request for Jesus to heal his servant? Jesus turns to the entire crowd and publicly commends the centurion's faith! What kind of faith does God consider “great faith”? It is clearly identified in His response to this centurion who came to ask Jesus to heal his servant.

Faith that acknowledges who He is – the God of all-authority (“But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed,” Matthew 8:8). Faith that trusts God unconditionally (“But say the word, and my servant will be healed,” Luke 7:7). Faith that takes God at His Word (“Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you,” Matthew 8:13). And faith that has a proper perspective of who we are in light of Who God is – we are “unworthy” (“for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof” Luke 7:6).

You can be a person who demonstrates God's definition of “great faith.” Point people to the person and power of God. Take Him at His Word. Live your life without doubt or fear. Trust Him with everything you've got. For without this type of faith, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 1:6). But with this faith, it is impossible not to please Him!

Sunday Notes

12. Work hard, pray hard

And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.” — Luke 10:41-42

It is a good thing to use our spiritual gifts and strengths to serve the Lord. Ministering to His people is what God has called the Church to do (Acts 2:42-47). But the Lord told one of His followers that there was one thing above all else that she had to make sure she accomplished in her day. The Lord emphasized to Martha that to sit at His feet, to learn His Word, and to commune with Him was absolutely necessary to grow her faith. In fact, He emphasized that if given the choice to serve or to glean truths from the Word of God, the better choice is to sit at His feet. And if she did that, Jesus said that it will be an experience that never leaves her memory (Luke 10:42).

Faithful people enjoy serving the Lord by serving His people. Faithful people are willing to perform these acts of service faithfully and can be counted on to be available when needed. But faithful people achieve this level of spiritual maturity because they make sure they do not sacrifice their communion time with the Lord. They are faithful servants because they first are people full of faith! Therefore, work hard serving the Lord but protect your individual time communing with the Lord in order to grow in your faith and to be able to be used greatly by Him.

13. Trust the process

[B]eing confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. — Philippians 1:6

After signing his name onto the cover page of a book or inside the cover of someone's Bible, Dr. Falwell Sr. would frequently affix the Bible reference Philippians 1:6 underneath his signature. This verse served as a reminder to the Bible owners that God is continually at work in their lives. It served as a comforting reminder that God will fulfill His divine purpose for every believer and that He will perform this supernatural work in believers' lives until the day He calls them home.

As a believer, you should take joy in the fact that there is not a day that goes by where God is not working in your life to convict you of sin, to reveal His Word to you, and to strengthen your faith in Him. When God provided you with the gift of His salvation, God started a maturing process in you that will not end until you are with Him in heaven.

Therefore, engage the process and see how the Lord takes your faith to new heights. Trust God's process of allowing challenging circumstances and difficult decisions to come into your life, knowing that He is lovingly conditioning you to cultivate strong and enduring faith. Trust that He knows specifically how to strengthen your faith. Trust His process, and you will come out as a person of supernatural faith!

14. Never doubt the power of God

[A]ll things are possible to him who believes. — Mark 9:23b

A father in the Bible brought his son to Jesus to be healed. He believed Jesus could heal him. Sadly, he first engaged Jesus' powerless disciples who were unable to heal him. After which, Jesus walks up to this man who was discouraged at the disciples' failed attempt. He then asked Jesus to heal his son, "if you can." He experienced powerless Christians and began to doubt the power of Jesus.

There is an important distinction to be made when it comes to how God views our weak faith. God *understands why* we may struggle with our faith in Him, but He never *excuses* us for not having unwavering faith in Him. The Lord had compassion on this father who had been watching his son convulse and harm himself all his life. But when the moment came when the father questioned if Jesus could do anything (Mark 9:22b), Jesus did not excuse his weak faith.

The words Jesus spoke to that father are the same words He speaks to us today. "What do you mean, 'If I can?'" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes" (Mark 9:23, NLT). We shouldn't allow the struggles of life or negative examples to discourage us from maintaining strong faith in God. Determine today that you will not allow anything or anyone to discourage you from maintaining unwavering faith in your all-powerful God.

15. Strong faith can weather any storm

Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. — Matthew 7:24

Everybody in this world experiences similar challenges in life. Jesus even said that “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). The difference is how a person endures these emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges of life.

Jesus taught that putting your faith in Him is like building a house upon a rock (Matthew 7:24). When the rain and wind whipped against the house, this house remained standing because it sat upon a solid foundation. And a person that does not have faith in Him is likened to a house built upon a shifting and insecure foundation (v.26). But when the same rain and wind beat also against this house, it collapsed. Obviously, we should place our faith in Jesus who provides spiritual safety, security, and stability.

But Jesus made one more distinction of those who place their faith in Him. The person who has the wisdom to build his home upon the solid foundation is also one who “hears these sayings of Mine, and does them” (v.24). To have strong and dynamic faith requires that we both believe in Jesus *and* demonstrate our faith in action. Protection comes when we actively live out our faith. And the more we live out dynamic faith, the more protected we are in the storms of life.

16. True faith never lets go of the hand of God

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. — Proverbs 16:9

Just as a toddler begins to walk, with her arms being held straight above her head by a loving parent walking behind her, the Lord guides our steps and helps us along our journey in life. And even though the toddler is making the steps, the parent is safely guiding the child along the entire time. At times, the child's legs give way, and the parent lifts her off the floor only to place her back comfortably standing once again. After which, they can continue on their journey together. But after a while, the child turns and reaches for the parent. She wants to be picked up and carried the rest of the way. And to every parent, those hugs are the best!

Likewise, we as believers should place the same child-like faith in God as we go throughout our lives. As we develop strength in our legs and become able to walk on our own, may we never believe that we no longer need to hold onto the hand of God. In every step we make, may we never make the mistake of placing our faith in our own strength. For as long as we live, our faith should always be placed in the One Who will never forget us (Isaiah 49:15), Who guides us (Deuteronomy 32:11), and Who loves us unconditionally (Luke 13:34).

17. Get out of the boat

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. — Matthew 14:29b

What kind of faith does it take to ask the Lord to empower you to step over the edge of a boat and successfully walk on water in the middle of a raging storm? What would make Peter believe that Jesus could even accomplish such a task? Probably because Peter saw the Lord perform many astounding miracles before and thought there was nothing impossible for Him. Peter saw the Lord feed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish the day before (Matthew 14:13-21). He knew that nothing was impossible with Jesus. So, Peter exclaimed, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to You on the water” (Matthew 14:28). And he did! Peter actually walked on water! But it was short-lived. Why? Because Peter’s faith quickly turned into fear.

Jesus told his disciples from the beginning, “Do not be afraid” (Matthew 14:27). But when Peter saw the physical conditions, “he was afraid” (Matthew 14:30). Jesus saved him and said, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt” (Matthew 14:31)?

God is able and willing to show Himself to you in powerful and unforgettable ways, but it only comes through a heart that maintains unwavering faith in Him. No matter the circumstances or conditions of life, never fracture your unshakable faith in God. Live in confidence knowing that no matter what life throws your way, nothing is impossible with God!

18. Faith that experiences resurrection power

[T]hat I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. — Philippians 3:10

After Paul became a believer and began spreading the Gospel all over the Roman Empire, he frequently shared his testimony (Galatians 1; Acts 22, 26; Philippians 3). Paul would regularly share how the Lord saved him and how he was now called to proclaim the Gospel to non-Jewish people (Gentiles). But in Philippians 3, Paul went one step further and shared what his life's ambition was now that he was a Christian. He stated that he now wants to know God intimately and strive to get to know “the power of His resurrection” (v.10). Paul wanted to live his life being empowered by the same Holy Spirit power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Did you even know this was possible? But it's true! Believers today can experience God's resurrection power in their prayer life, thinking, praises, worship, and in their daily faith! What does it mean to be empowered by God's resurrection power? Just like how the resurrection of Jesus Christ conquered sin and death, His resurrection power can empower you to overcome anything that hinders you from developing dynamic faith. It can empower you to no longer give into familiar sins and to infuse you with a faith you never thought possible. So, the issue is not if you can have dynamic faith. The question is, will you choose to tap into His resurrection power to actually realize it?

Sunday Notes

19. Develop dynamic faith together

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. — Hebrews 10:24-25

Hebrews 10:24-25 encourages us to grow in our faith and not just keep it to ourselves. We ought to think of ways we can encourage other believers to also grow in their faith in God and love for the Lord. As we grow in our faith, we should also encourage others to honor God through their actions. God can use our faith to motivate others to have strong faith. And being able to witness the strong faith of other believers can also encourage us on the days we need to be reminded of the importance to maintain great faith in the Lord. This is done by meeting together regularly at church, participating in life groups, and engaging with other believers on a personal level. Strong and vibrant faith is cultivated and nurtured by growing in faith in the community of other believers.

Be on the lookout for people who you believe would be uplifted by your encouragement to stay strong in their faith. Think of people you could minister to and be intentional about doing or saying something to lift their spirits in their faith journeys. Also, identify believers that you believe would be a good source of encouragement to you. Identify people that could motivate you to maintain a life of dynamic faith. And together the Body of Christ “causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16).

20. Dynamic faith reveals itself in action

*When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic,
“Son, your sins are forgiven you. — Mark 2:5*

If you've ever thought about it, faith is invisible as it resides in a person's heart. One's faith is only truly known by God Himself (I Samuel 16:7). Yet, the Bible teaches that when a person has true faith in God, he will demonstrate his faith in action (James 2:17-18). A believer who is weak in his faith will only occasionally demonstrate it in his actions. But a person whose heart is full of faith and conditioned to trust God unequivocally will frequently demonstrate his faith in action. The stronger the faith, the more he will unashamedly live out his faith in front of people.

Five men of faith devised a plan to get to Jesus to heal one of the five who was paralyzed. They believed Jesus was the all-powerful One who could heal him. They climbed on to the roof of a crowded house, dug through the thatch roof, and lowered the man down in front of Jesus. Knowing that the hearts of these five men were full of genuine faith and seeing them demonstrate their dynamic faith, Jesus healed the paralyzed man.

We, too, are to be people of strong and dynamic faith. We should unashamedly manifest our faith to the world so our “light [will] shine before men, that they may see [our] good works and glorify [our] Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

21. Grow in faith every time you witness a person come to Christ

*And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed
and were baptized. — Acts 18:8b*

God is still performing spiritual miracles every time a person gets saved! Whenever you witness a person come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, your faith should be strengthened and your heart encouraged that God's power is still overcoming the power of sin. Every time you witness one of these new converts by baptism testify to the world that they have placed their faith in Jesus Christ, you should become more fortified in your faith in God.

Paul's faith grew when he reflected upon God's saving power. In Acts 18, Paul was discouraged and needed to be strengthened. He was tired and frustrated because he had experienced slander and persecution. He never lost faith in God, but he experienced the very normal emotion of discouragement. But Paul continued to preach the Gospel and witnessed "many of the Corinthians, hearing, believ[ing] and [being] baptized" (Acts 18:8b).

Something about these new converts' testimonies restored the joy in Paul's heart and strengthened his faith to continue preaching. Acts 18:8 does not tell what the testimonies of these Corinthian converts were or what their lives were like prior to accepting Christ as their Savior. But I Corinthians 6:9-11 does! Take a moment to read about the lifestyles from which people were saved and see if your faith in God's miraculous power isn't also strengthened by their testimony!

22. Living contagious faith

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him.” — Daniel 3:28

It is difficult to point to another passage in the Bible that illustrates bold and contagious faith than the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. These three young men stood for God in the face of imminent and painful death. They were bold witnesses of who their God is, how powerful He is, and how He is the only one worthy of worship.

The faith of these young men was tested in ways not many today will experience. Yet, in the harshest of conditions, they stood their ground. They boldly put their faith on display even moments before they were to be thrown into a fiery furnace. And after the Lord miraculously delivered them from experiencing any harm, the ruler declared that their God was the true God, and all should worship Him alone (v.29).

When you take a stand for what you believe, the Lord often puts that demonstration of faith on display for people to see. Often, it seems like no one ever notices the stand you take for the Lord. But more often than not, people have taken notice of your strong faith. And it is not uncommon for someone to approach you many days later to let you know that your testimony inspired them to begin living a life of strong faith. So, live out your faith boldly and watch how God uses it for His glory.

23. How big is God to you?

[A]bove all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. — Ephesians 6:16

In Ephesians, Paul encourages believers to embrace “the shield of faith” (6:16) to withstand the fiery darts of the devil. He likens one’s faith to a shield that can “quench” or extinguish “fiery darts.” The application is that without this spiritual shield, we are left exposed to very dangerous darts that are clearly being shot at us.

All throughout the Scripture, faith is described as depending on God’s Sovereign power to save us and to strengthen us in our daily walk as believers. All of Scripture teaches that the faith that believers are to stand behind is really standing behind God Himself in Whom we have placed our faith. He has saved us, strengthened us to stand amid the battle, and someday will take us home to be with Him away from any possibility of spiritual attack. Therefore, our spiritual protection comes by means of the One upon whom we place our faith.

Knowing this, why would we live our lives having weak faith in such a powerful, loving, Almighty God? The strength of our faith is in direct correlation to how we view God! If we believe He is all-powerful, all-knowing, Almighty God, then our faith in Him will be bold and courageous. If we question His power and care, we will waver in our faith in Him. We should demonstrate that we actually believe Him, trust His Word, and believe that we will be victorious in any spiritual battle because of Him!

24. Strengthen your faith by embracing God's forgiveness

But [Peter] denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him”...[Peter said,] “But you denied the Holy One!” — Luke 22:57; Acts 3:14

If you have ever witnessed a rocket launch from the earth to space, it is an unforgettable experience. When it has been “cleared for launch,” you know that the next scene is going to be unforgettable as it hurls itself into space. The same thing occurs when God forgives and restores a believer to get back to doing what he should be doing – proclaiming the Gospel and once again living a life of dynamic faith.

Peter experienced God’s forgiveness after denying the Lord three times (Luke 22:54-62). As a result, Peter wept bitterly in regret of his sin (Luke 22:62). But after His resurrection, He forgave Peter for his sin (John 21:15-17) and called “cleared for launch” three times by instructing Peter to get back into the game and continue living a life of strong faith in Him, in front of the watching world (John 21:15-17). And Peter did exactly that!

In the subsequent days, Peter turned to the people who once cried, “crucify Him” and *preached against their denial of Jesus!* Peter shouted, “you denied the Holy One” (Acts 3:14)! What gave Peter the right to preach against the very sin he himself committed? God’s forgiveness! Likewise, search your heart today. Confess your sins. Embrace His forgiveness. Then go out and demonstrate dynamic faith to the world that desperately needs a strong witness to preach the Word of the Lord.

25. Call to God and He will answer in mighty ways

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. — Jeremiah 33:3

God is accessible, He is receptive to our prayers, and He invites us to commune with Him through prayer. And God does not only promise to listen, but He also promises to respond to our prayers. And not only will He respond, He says He is able to put into motion things that are beyond our comprehension.

God saved us to bring Him glory and He desires to receive His due glory through the faithful and loving hearts of His children. He takes joy in fellowshipping with believers and revealing great and mighty things to them. These great and mighty things include new insights into His divine plan for our lives. It includes reassurance that He is in control (as evidenced by these words being spoken to Jeremiah during a challenging time for Israel). And also, it includes a comforting reminder that we can always call upon Him whenever we need or want to. He demonstrated to Jeremiah and to all believers that He is always present and supporting them in their lives and empowering them to live an ever-growing life of faith in Him. Therefore, living a life of great faith is not elusive or impossible. It is achievable through the power of the Holy Spirit and it is achievable today – should we only call on Him.

Sunday Notes

26. Never stop growing

[B]ut grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. — II Peter 3:18

A beautiful characteristic of God is His loving patience (Psalm 145:8-9). It is a quality that many people lack and need the Spirit's help to produce in their lives (Galatians 5:22). Fortunately, God gives us time to grow in our faith, and He provides the Holy Spirit to teach us His Word and His ways. Without His wonderful patience and His empowering presence, no one would have the ability to grow in their faith to any acceptable level. So, when we experience little spiritual victories in our lives, we can't help but thank Him for being so incredibly patient with us.

Peter probably felt the same when he wrote the very last sentence of his very last letter. Nearly 30 years after Jesus forgave Peter for denying the Lord three times (John 21:15-17), Peter began to grow strong in his faith. He preached, performed miracles, and embraced Gentiles unlike ever before. God allowed him to grow and mature in his faith and empowered him to reach many people with the Gospel. God also provided him with an eternal opportunity to write down some of the most comforting forms of encouragement to believers through the ages; namely, that it's okay to grow in your faith (II Peter 3:18)! This sentence serves as an encouragement to us today, that we don't have to be perfect, we just have to be growing in our faith.

27. When dynamic faith becomes second nature

I will remember the works of the Lord; surely, I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work and talk of Your deeds. — Psalm 77:11-12

If you don't want to forget a particular detail, it helps if you frequently repeat the detail over and over again. This approach is adopted by first responders and military individuals so that when they need to respond immediately with precision, they know exactly what to do. Frequent repetition creates muscle-memory. It conditions the mind and body to make what was rehearsed one's default reaction. Once established, trying to break this habit takes a lot of reconditioning of the mind because the rehearsed action has turned into a strong habit.

The same is true of being a person of strong faith. The more we rehearse God's Word and meditate on His faithfulness, the more we condition our hearts and minds to trust Him by default. The more we ponder the great things God has done in the past, the more we will immediately default to trusting Him in the future. Fortunately, the Bible provides for us many vivid examples of God's power and faithfulness. But we can also look back in our own lives and recount the many occasions where God demonstrated His faithfulness to us in very obvious ways. Take time to remember all the times God has shown Himself faithful to you and see if it doesn't strengthen your faith in Him both now and in the future!

28. A faith that can endure all of life's challenges

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. — Philippians 4:13

Unwavering faith in God can literally condition a believer's heart to be at perfect peace and fully content regardless of life's circumstances. In Philippians 4:13, God promises that a believer can endure through any situation that life throws him with the power of God sustaining the believer.

In the previous two verses before Philippians 4:13, Paul testifies that he is already experiencing this amazing reality, "I am not speaking from a position of lacking the proper spiritual perspective or physical needs, I have increased in my spiritual growth that in whatever condition I am in, I am in a complete state of spiritual contentment. I know how to be brought low in challenging times, and I also know how to enjoy and abundance of blessings in life. In all circumstances I have been conditioned how to be satisfied or be in need, whether having an abundance of blessings in life or feeling I am lacking" (4:12-13; original expanded translation). The result is that I can do this thing called life with God's help and nothing can steal my contentment in Him!

Believer, you *can* make it! You can endure! The more you "draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (James 4:7). Unwavering faith in Him is what will produce supernatural contentment in your heart that can be experienced in all of life's circumstances.

29. Dynamic faith goes the distance

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. — II Timothy 4:7

Dynamic faith is characterized by not giving up on the faith. Anyone can know the tenets of Christianity and demonstrate temporary enthusiasm about the details of Christianity. But true faith is substantiated by the fact that you remained faithful to the Lord to the end and never abandoned your faith.

Just a few months before Paul was martyred for his faith, He wrote his dear friend Timothy and testified that he had remained faithful to the faith. This testimony of Paul found in II Timothy 4:7 must have encouraged the younger Timothy in the same way this popular verse has inspired millions of believers since the penning of these words.

These words are even more poignant when we realize they are shared in the context of learning that another member of Paul's team has not kept the faith. Just two sentences after II Timothy 4:7, Paul laments the fact that his former team member, Demas, had "forsaken" the faith because he had "loved this present world and has departed" (v.10). It is sad when we hear about someone who claimed to have dynamic faith only to find out that their faith was not even close to the size of a mustard seed. The sign of true faith is faith that finishes the course. Commit to fight the good fight today with the goal to finish the course having kept the faith!

30. It's our turn!

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. — Hebrews 12:1

Hebrews 11 refers to many named and unnamed believers in the past who demonstrated great faith. Their faith in God was extraordinary. Some are described as obeying God when His instructions at the time didn't seem to make sense. Others are described as enduring such intense persecution, the likes of which many people would cower and run. Still others are described as having steadfast faith to live according to God's Word regardless of the outcome or if they were all alone in doing so.

The purpose of Hebrews 11 is for believers today to ask if we too are going to exhibit the same dynamic faith in our own unique life situations. Are we too going to have strong faith in the same great God that they loved with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength? Because the very next verse after Hebrews chapter 11 poses that same question to us today. After reading all of the faith-filled testimonies of the followers of God who have gone before us, Hebrews 12:1 asks us what we are going to do.

It's our turn! We are called to run the same race and to live a life of supernatural faith. We are to be living examples of contagious and dynamic faith. May God receive great glory from the choice we make...today!

Additional Notes

