30 DAY DEVOTIONAL - HILLSONG.CO.ZA

"And Abraham believed in the Lord, and the Lord counted him righteous because of his faith."

GENESIS 15:6 (NLT)

What is Faith?

We are very excited to explore the topic of faith over the next month. There is no better place to start than with the Father of our faith, Abraham. The Bible tells us in Heb 11:6 that it is impossible to please God (To live for him) without faith. What impressed God about Abraham was exactly this. He took Him at His word. That is the basis of what it means to have faith in God

God certainly appreciates our hard work, our honesty, and our purity. But these are the basics. It is our faith that is most capable of impressing him. Our faith starts at the point of salvation(when we give our lives over to God) but it certainly doesn't stop there. God desires for us to have faith thoughout our Christian walk; Faith to believe that God is who he says he is—faith in His attributes, faith that He can and will do what he says He

will do, faith that He cares, faith that He is sovereign, faith that He is good. The famous Bible scholar NT Wright says this about faith: "Faith is not the mysterious ability to sail through life with a secret key that unlocks all the doors. Faith is the willingness to think and act on the basis of what we know of God (which may be very little) and to trust him that He will not let us down. This is equally applicable to people who have believed in God for years but who need faith to see them through the next day, and to people who have never really been sure whether they believed in God or not and therefore need truly to have that faith for the first time."

Let's be the kind of people who take God at His word and have faith pleases our Heavenly Father!

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

HEBREWS 11:1 (NIV)

Confidence.

This verse is taken out of a chapter in the book of Hebrews that outlines all of the great men and women of faith in the Bible. The author says 2 things about faith:

1. Faith is the confidence in what we hope for. In the original language the phrase "confidence" comes from the greek word "hypostasis" which communicated the idea of substance, firmness, confidence, a collection of documents establishing ownership, a guarantee, or a proof. The amazing faith examples we read about in Hebrews 11 were people just like us who had firm confidence in the promises of God even though they

had not yet received the fulfilment of those promises.

2. Faith is assurance about what we do not see. In the original language the word "assurance" is the greek word "elenchos", which means a lively and active conviction. This shows us that faith is not some static or stale belief but rather a vibrant certainty that calls us to stretch out our hand and lay hold of the realities we find in Christ.

God has given us the ability to have a firm, confident, lively and active faith in Him. What and amazing gift this is!

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" **ROMANS 10:17(NKJV)**

Listen.

In our world we are surrounded by many voices. Often these voices seek to magnify the fears, doubts, anxieties and hopelessness already stirring in our hearts. As Christians we are called to live by the word of God not the word of the world. The antidote to our fickle hearts is to believe and obey the word of God. As we begin to see the Word for what it truly is, we will begin to see God for who He truly is. The influences of the world and even our own doubts and fears will begin to pale in comparison to the Truth of God.

Here are some practical things you can do to ensure that you are "hearing the word of God":

- 1. Make time to read the word of God daily
- 2. Memorise scriptures that are dear to you or stand out to you
- 3. Declare the word of God over different situations in your life
- 4. Find yourself in the house of God weekly

Doing these simple but powerful things will ensure that your heart is strengthened and your faith is strong.

See.

In John 11 we read the tragic story of Lazerus' death. The bible tells us that Martha, the brother of Lazerus, called for Jesus to come and heal her brother on his sick bed, but Jesus arrives on the scene a little too late. In her sadness Martha exclaims: "Lord. if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Matha is most likely sad, confused and might even feel a little disappointed in Jesus. But in her pain Jesus speaks a word of faith. He tells her that her brother will be resurrected. Matha is confused by this promise and doesn't understand how Jesus can accomplish this. She had faith to see Jesus heal but she didn't know that He could also raise the dead. At the end of John 11 Jesus is true to His word as He raises Lazarus from the dead.

You and I may have never seen God resurrect someone right before our

eyes, but we can still learn a valuable lesson about faith from this story. Martha came to Jesus so preoccupied with her own terrible situation that she could only see Him in the light of that situation. When Lazerus is raised, she no longer sees Jesus through the haze of her problems. She sees her problems in the light of Jesus.

Faith comes when we begin to see
Jesus for who He truly is. Our lives
do not suddenly become free of
problems, but in the company of
the living Christ we may be able to
look at them with humility and faith,
to cope with them with renewed
strength and purpose, and to live our
whole lives with holiness and with
hope.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" **2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 (NKJV)**

Walk.

As modern people living in a modern world we often fall into the trap of wanting everything right now. If we are honest with ourselves we sometimes get frustrated with the slowness of life. We prefer control. We prefer the spectacular. We prefer to have answers rather than questions. But God calls us to walk by faith, not by sight. Behind every Biblical success stories or spectacular moment there are usually weeks, months, years of patient, undramatic waiting on God, reading the Bible, learning to pray, worshiping with fellow Christians, finding out how to live for God in the little things of life. This is not the sort of stuff you write a book about. But very necessary as background work.

Our Christian journey is fundamentally a faith journey. This means that we will sometimes have to sacrifice our worldly ideals, worldly securities, worldly attitudes and worldly timelines to walk out this journey. We have to make peace with the fact that the road of faith might not be the popular one, and we should not expect the people around us to always understand it.

Walking by faith means that we: lives our lives differently, speak differently, think differently, spend our money differently, use our time differently, treat others differently. What an exciting faith adventure God is calling us to!

Go.

In the book of Ruth we read the story about Ruth and Noami. Naomi is an old widow who badly wanted to be a grandmother-not for her own sake but so her family could be carried on-and who had seen every chance of this snatched away from her as her two sons died childless. She was bewildered, sad and bitter. Ruth was a young widow, one of Naomi's daughters-in-law. Ruth is torn between the desire to stay in her own country, Moab, and her desire to go with her aging mother-in-law into the unknown world of the Jews. In these two women we have a picture of the people of God in every age, under stress, in difficulty, troubled in spirit, unable to see what God is doing in their lives, feeling even that there is nothing left to live for. We may not be feeling like this at the moment. But it is better to learn in advance how God walks us through difficult seasons by faith.

By the end of the story Ruth and Naomi end up back in Israel. Ruth takes a job as a farm hand, and miraculously finds favour with the farm owner, a man named Boaz. She ends up marrying him. Ruth and Boaz then have a child together named Obed. Obed ends up being the great grandfather of who we later know as King David. God ended up turning a grim situation for His good.

These two women together give us a tremendous picture of biblical faith. It is faith that looks at a dark past, and says, God is almighty. It is faith that looks at an uncertain present, and says, "We belong to God's people." It is faith that looks at a future without prospects, and says, "God will provide." We cannot tell in what strange ways God will work. But we can be sure that he is utterly worthy of our trust and that he uses dark seasons to teach us to walk closer to him.

We walk by faith, not by sight. But our faith, weak though it is at times, is faith in a great and sovereign God.

"He replied, If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you"

LUKE 17:6 (NIV)

Small.

This verse reminds us that the crucial issue in accomplishing great things to advance the kingdom of God is not the quantity of our faith, but the power of God. By referring to the tiny mustard seed after being asked about increased faith, Jesus deflects attention away from the quantity of faith to the object of faith. As Christians our faith isn't about an amount, it is about a person. Compared to the greatness of our God, all we need is

faith as small as a mustard seed.

We can rest assured that our God can move mulberry trees. And His action is not dependent on our ability but rather on His power, wisdom and love. When we understand this truth we will find our faith strenghened. We will stop worrying about our faith, but to trust God's initiative and power in our lives!

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God"

EPHESIANS 2:8 (NIV)

Through.

As Christians we always have to remind ourselves of how good our God has been to us. A deep understanding of the goodness of God will strengthen our faith!

The biblical story shows us that we are always God's debtor. And we will never be able to pay this debt, nor are we ever meant to (Jesus paid our debt). Therefore we will always be dependent on grace. We will never work our way up out of debt to a place where God is in our debt. That is the very definition of grace. Grace is being treated better

than you deserve. So it is with us in relation to God. We never treat God with grace. We never give him more than he deserves. Which means that he never owes us thanks. God never says "Thank you" to us. Instead He is always giving us more than what we deserve, and we are always owing him thanks.

In our lives we will have a firm faith when we understand the grace that God has so graciously lavished on us!

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

EPHESIANS 2: 8-10

Gift.

It is crucial as Christians that we understand the relationship between Faith and works. If we get it mixed up we can live feeling condemned, as a failure and lacking purpose. Faith is the vehicle through which we experience the grace of God. Here is the key thing – Faith is not something we work for, but rather something we work and live from.

If we are striving as Christians' then we live our lives barely surviving. We are trying to purchase something that was already won for us. You can rest today in what God has already done for you. You are his workmanship.

Created to fulfill his purpose. You do not need to strive. When you learn to depend on God's completed work of Grace in us through Jesus, we can be in perfect peace, fully calm, trusting, powerful, effective and accomplishing all things in Christ.

Jesus, thank you that I am your workmanship created to do good works. Thank you that your grace is not something I work for, but rather something we work and live from.

Lord empower me to be your workmanship today impacting the lives of many around me.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

JAMES 2:14-17

Works.

Faith without works is dead. We are God workmanship created to do good works. We have a purpose. A result of our faith is that purpose fulfilled in reaching the needs of those around us. James give us an example of someone in need, who experienced the 'faith' of a Christian with out the works. The need is still unmet. James encourages us that true faith is always accompanied by works.

What areas of your life are you believing for today? What is your corresponding action as a result of that faith? Faith and action are great dance partners because true faith is always accompanied by action. For example, your need may be for a family member who does not know Jesus. Why not write down a list of actions stirred by your faith to wit-

ness, encourage and lead them to Jesus? Whatever your declaration is today, write down the action in 2021 that is going to change in your life because you and I have a God who wants to meet your need through your faith... and action.

Lord, thank you that we can show our faith by our works. Show me any areas of my life where my actions are not lined up to my faith. Give me clear insight into where you want me to grow my faith, by exercising my action. For every faith goal in my life I ask you to reveal to me areas in which my thinking, my actions have not lined up to what you desire of me. Give me to the courage to overcome and move forward despite obstacles. Amen

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

New.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Confession: I am a new creature in Christ: old things have passed away, behold, all things are new.

There is power in your confession. A confession is declaring what we believe about who God is and what has done for us. Its is a tool to remind us of our identity and power in Christ and can be used every minute of the day. 2 Corinthians tells us that we are new creations in Christ. This is powerful. Your history, your past and your guilt no longer matter to God. It may matter to you but he has made all things new in your life. Are you living out of that today?

It can be easy to read scripture and pass over the power of it in our own lives. Faith is the ability to believe

what God says about you. It is the ability to bring what he has done for us through Jesus into our present reality. Often we can forget that we are new creations in Christ Jesus. We live out of our broken problems, identity and flaws. Today God has made you a new creation, it's a new day full of glorious possibilities. You do not need to live out of the past. All things are new in Jesus. The past is behind you and a bright future ahead of you today.

Jesus Thank you for making my life new. Thank you that you are the restorer of my past and my brokenness. I am a new creation. I do not need to live or think the way that I used to. You have made my life, my mind and my heart new. Thank you Jesus.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 PETER 5:7

Care.

Confession: I cast all my care on the Lord for He cares for me.

God cares for you today. Deeply. He loves you so much that he died for you. In fact, God loved you and I so much that he sent his son Jesus not only to take your sin but also to take each and every burden, care, worry, fear, disappointment and discouragement. There is nothing that you have that he cannot carry. Whatever situations you face he knows about it and he cares about it.

Casting you care on the lord is saying 'Lord, I give this situation to you, you are in control of it now, not me". When something is to big for us to carry we become anxious because

we can no longer control it. What is going on in your life or in your world that is too heavy for you to carry? Today, you can give it to God. You can place it in his hands. Often times I will write in my journal what is going on in my life and I literally hand each and every care and worry to you.

Thank you Jesus that you care for me and my family. Thank you that you know my needs and my fears. Today I give each an every worry (name them) to you. I place them in your care. I ask you to take any heaviness and anxiety from me because I trust you with them. I thank you that you are now in control because I have given it to you. Amen.

You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

DEUTERONOMY 28:6

Blessed.

Confession: All my household are blessed in all we do: we're blessed when we come in and when we go out.

In everything we do, in our coming and going, our workplaces, our social activities and our day to day lives we are blessed. We can confess that over our children, our families and our households. Blessing is favor bestowed on the life of a Christian by God the Father. As children of God we receive the blessing of the father each and every day. When we declare or confess his blessing over our lives, by faith we are choosing to trust him and live in his favor and strength.

Faith is the key to receiving the blessing of God in your life. Faith un-

locked the spiritual doors of blessing over you and your family. One of the first incidences of blessing in the Bible is in Genesis, 12:1–2 where Abraham is told by the God to leave his country and is told: "I will bless you, I will make your name great." Abraham trusted God through his obedience and therefore experienced blessing. When you have faith and trust God he will open doors that no man can shut and will always make a way in the wilderness.

Lord, today I receive your blessing over my life. I thank you that as a child of God I have an inheritance of blessing and favor of my life. Today I walk in that blessing. It is mine and my families in Jesus name. Amen.

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours.."

MARK 11:22-25

Mountains.

One of the most incredible sights to behold is the unmistakable outline of the iconic Table Mountain. It can be truly breathtaking to stand at its base and look up. But can you imagine if you were to see this towering table suddenly be detached from the foundations of the earth, where it has been formed over thousands of years, and be tossed into the sea as if it was a tiny rock.

In this passage Jesus is reminding the disciples that when we pray in faith, we have the ability to pray the most audacious prayers and trust that what the Lord has said He will do will be completed.

Maybe you are facing some big mountains in your life that you are believing God to move. It could be a prayer for a family member to come to know Jesus, for healing, for God to restore a broken relationship, for provision. Whatever it may be, why don't you take some time today to pray in faith, in accordance with the Word of God and BELIEVE that you have already received the miracle.

Steps to Praying in Faith

- 1. Declare it Speak to the Mountain
- What do you want God to do?
- 2. Believe it Have no doubt in your heart
- 3. Receive it Whether it happens immediately or 10 years from now you can thank God for the miracle and trust that it is in your possession.

Lord, today I want to see you move the mountain of _____. I believe without doubt or fear that you can do it in accordance with your Word. I trust you completely and I receive all that you have promised. Amen

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."

MARK 11:22-25

Forgive.

Yesterday we unlocked the keys to praying in Faith. But there is one critical step to praying in faith the Jesus commands his disciples to do - 'But.. first forgive'.

Unforgiveness is all consuming, heavy and at times overwhelming. It fills our hands and heart with burden and leaves no room for blessing. Imagine if someone was trying to hand you a gift but your hands were filled with coal. It would be impossible to receive it, try as you might, it will not be secure until you release

what is already there.

Today, as you pray in faith, ask the Lord to reveal areas in your heart of unforgiveness that need to be released in order for you to receive His blessing.

Lord, reveal to me areas in my life that I have held on to for long enough. Thank you that I can forgive others because you have forgiven me. I release these areas to you now and am open to receiving what you have in store for me. Amen

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

JAMES 1:5-8

Doubt.

Faith is an incredible gift from God that unlocks blessings in our lives. Yet often times we can find ourselves facing obstacles that hinder our faith. In this scripture James is reminding us that faith and doubt cannot co-exist. The waves of doubt in our lives that are driven by external circumstances can seem relentless and unstoppable. Where faith provides a firm foundation, doubt destabalises us.

Doubt allows the enemy to sow seeds of untruth into our hearts and spirit that cause us to question the truth of the Word of God over our lives.

So how can you move doubt from the equation? Through praise and thanksgiving. While you wait on your miracle you can assume a posture of praise. Thanking God for what He has already done will build your faith for what is to come.

Lord, I enter your gates today with thanksgiving in my heart and your courts with praise. I thank you for the blessings which you have already placed in my life. I am full of faith that if you've done it before you Will do it again. Amen

When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

HEBREWS 11:1 (NIV)

Turn.

Many of us will be familiar with the story of Peter walking on the water with Jesus. Here were the disciples, out in a shaky boat, in the middle of the night, with waves crashing all around them. When suddenly, what looks like a ghost begins to approach them. Pretty scary! Jesus immediately recognises their fear and commands the disciples to take courage. Filled with confidence, Peter makes the brave and bold step to get out of the boat. When the waves begin to take his focus, fear creeps in and he begins to sink.

As we continue on our journey of faith there will be many times that we encounter moments of fear; fear of failure, fear of disappointment, fear of embarrassment, fear of loss. These moments have the potential to shift

our focus away from Jesus. Helen Howarth Lemmel shares with us in the well known hymn 'The Heavenly Vision' a beautiful reminder that when we keep our eyes fixed on Him, the fears and doubts become insignificant. Take some time to reflect on these lyrics today.

'Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face: And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace.'

Lord, thank you for the courage you have given me. Reveal to me areas in my life where you are calling me to step out in Faith. When fear seeks to steal my focus help me to give my eves fully fixed on you. Amen

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of hands. **2 TIMOTHY 1:6-7**

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

Runners.

Life is a race. Each day we are putting one foot in front of the other. Paul is writing to the church in Corinthians and encouraging but also challenging them. He is teaching them to not get complacent in the race of life and the race of faith. Complacency is a hindrance to faith. Faith equips us and encourages us to keep moving forward with purpose and direction. Complacency tells us we got there... in our own strength.

Paul reminds Timothy to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Faith is a free gift from God. What areas of your life has your faith got complacent? Maybe at one stage of your life you had great faith for a certain area, for a provision, an open doors, a changed

circumstance ... but over time you have stopped believing and trusting God in that area. Complacency may have set in. In 2021 what areas of your life and faith do you need to stir up and start trusting and believing God again.

God, thank you for the gift of faith that is in me. Thank you that today I do need to get complacent but I stir up those areas which I have grown cold or still in the race. I ask you to reinvigorate my life and heart again. For the areas that I need your strength and supernatural courage, I ask you for a revelation of your power so that my faith will continue to grow strong.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

MATTHEW 14:27-32

Crisis.

What an awesome account in the Gospels of Jesus walking on water, which also becomes the story of Peter walking on, then sinking into and finally being pulled out of the same water. The story starts of as a picture of God's absolute authority over everything, but in this case, nature. Jesus defies gravity as He walks on the stormy water. But when Peter asks Jesus to call him, too, onto the water, it becomes a story for humanity of what it looks like when people express faith in Jesus.

It is important to know that the lake they were on is not a massive body

of water, and yet they have spent nearly the entire night struggling to get across, which must mean the storm battered their boat. They were in a crisis! Why on earth would Peter want to go out there? Even so, his weird request to walk on water leaves us with some powerful reflections on how to handle every day, but especially moments of crisis.

As Peter steps out of the boat, I don't think he's trying to be Jesus, he's simply trying to be with Jesus. To be near the only One who remains unaffected by our circumstances. Peter's motive isn't to escape the storm, but

to get closer to the One who has full authority over the storm. In his humanness, he does for a moment take his eyes off Jesus onto the storm and starts to sink, and yet, Jesus is right there to pull him out. Nearness to Christ is the only way to do life.

We can encounter Jesus anywhere and at any time, He is right there in moments where you and I are overwhelmed by the waves of life, but it is my responsibility to keep my eyes and focus on Him and Who He is. A Crisis in your life can also be a "thin place," where our God is waiting to break through. It is in the nature of

those who are filled with a humble but active faith to throw themselves into Jesus in moments of crisis. Even when it's only "little faith". Today you and I are invited to do the same.

God, I thank you that you are not distant God, but that You are a God Who draws near to us as we draw near to You, every day, but especially in moments when the waves come crashing! I have faith in Who You are, help me in those moments when it is so human to look at the waves around me, to lift my gaze to the One who is unshakable! Amen

"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

MATTHEW 7:24-27 (NLT)

Standing.

The people Jesus was speaking to in during this teaching would have known exactly what He meant. Palestine was, to an extent, a land of hills and mountains and was subject to sudden and violent rains. When this happened, the Jordan and its streams would become rapid and furious and everything in the way of these torrents would be swept off. Even houses, but especially if founded on sand or on any unsolid basis, would not stand in the wake of these torrents. Rocks in Palestine were common, and it was easy to secure a solid foundation for their houses to withstand these torrents. From this

verse it's clear that these violent rains battered down on all houses, yet not all remained standing. The foundation made all the difference.

It's the same in life, storms of oppression or illness can batter the souls of all men, but it is what we build our lives on that will make all the difference too. Putting our faith in Christ does not miraculously make the storms of life pass us by, but knowing and standing on His Word does give us an unwavering foundation in times of crisis! Things happen so quickly, all can go well, you can feel safe, but in one moment health.

family, comforts can be lost. How wonderful, in those moments, to be secure & founded on something that cannot be destroyed by the storms of life! Our faith in Christ, our reliance on His promises, our confidence in His ways, and a hope of heaven through His blood, is what will keep us standing. No crisis can destroy these.

The beginning of the year is always a good time to inspect the foundations of what you will build your life on. You and I do not know what 2021 will hold. It will be filled with wonderful moments and God-given blessings,

but it might also hold some moments of rain, floodwaters, and torrents. Take a moment today to commit to building every area of your life upon the Solid Rock, Jesus Christ.

God, I think You that You are unshakable, and that Your Word is truth and a solid foundation for me to build my life on. Today I commit afresh to make sure I continue to build my life in 2021 on that! I don't know what the year might hold, but I do know for sure that You hold me, and my reliance and confidence is in You alone. In Jesus Name, Amen.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

EPHESIANS 3:16-18

Strength.

In this scripture the Apostle Paul is asking God to strengthen our inner being with power out of His glorious riches. What a phenomenal request. Strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man; strength in the soul; the strength of faith. What a great blessing to ask of God. An inner strength, from God's Spirit is our portion, being firmly rooted in love. A love that is so wide it extends over all humanity, including me & you! It is so long, it is endless and eternal, so deep that it will sink into the valleys of my lowest days to surround

me, and so high it raises me to a perspective of Heavenly hope that is above any current circumstances we might ever face.

My husband used to have this little inflatable punching bag toy as a child. The other day he spotted one in Crazy Store and got it for our son. It's about a meter tall when its inflated, with a weight at the bottom. When you bump against it, or 'punch' it, it goes down to the floor, but because of the weight it immediately bounces back into an upright posi-

tion. It cannot fall flat and stay there. It is the same with us, even when our circumstances wants to push us over, even in moments of 'worst case scenarios', when our faith is in Jesus, we are rooted and established in the most unfathomable love. We can never fall further than His love, it will always put us back on our feet.

Today, take a moment to ask God for the blessing of strengthening your inner being with His power. By faith, this strength is your portion! And for an extra reminder that His love will always come rushing to you, why not make time today to read Romans 8:35-39 and allow the truth of that to put you back on your feet.

God, I thank you that I can ask You today to strengthen my inner man through the power of Your Spirit. It is my daily portion, and no circumstances can rob me of Your love for me! It is a truth I will cling to with everything. Thank you that nothing can ever separate me from that.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 PETER 1:5-8 (NIV)

Growing.

The words 'make every effort' stands out in the beginning of this scripture. When we become children of God, our new being is destined to grow into the likeness of Christ, but growth in the Christian life doesn't just happen to us automatically. We are supposed to give all diligence to our walk with the Lord. We begin our life with God with faith, but faith progresses into goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love — love being the 'cherry on the cake' of all God's work in us.

When we become Christians, we enter into a relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit that will cause us to grow. I have found that something on the inside of me is just not content with an incomplete Christian life. With the power of the Holy Spirit on the inside of us, we are called to become more like Jesus and to become more holy. It is this spiritual growth that becomes a birthmark of our faith!

Looking at the qualities we are to add to our faith, it's definitely something I need to be intentional about to grow into. Perhaps you can choose one today to grow in, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Make 2021 a year of actively pursuing spiritual growth.

God, I thank you that a life with you means a life of growth. I don't want to be passive about my spiritual growth in 2021, but by being grounded in my faith in You, help me to diligently and actively grow in the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

"And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour."

MATTHEW 9.20-22

Well.

What I love so much about the Bible is that God chooses to use the most ordinary, unseen, perhaps even "God-forsaken" people. He uses people who are broken, weary, ashamed, bruised, defeated & even sick. Yes, God's story is littered with the stories of the sick, & He uses them to tell us a story. He uses their broken pieces, their wearied footprints, their shame & their bruising, to shout down the timeline of history to our very own wounds. To our very own stories.

Today we read of the sick women in Matthew chapter 9. She's probably one of the most wearied women we read of in the scriptures, yet her story is one that shouts faith at us the loudest!

Why? Because even though she was sick for 12 years, even though her

illness keeping her isolated from her family, from her community, from her home - she never gave up. She kept pursuing what she knew was true in Her heart, & that was that maybe, just maybe, Jesus could heal her...

Remember, this is the women who was rejected by society, by her family, by her home – all because her sickness brought with it great shame. It was an "uncomfortable" kind of sickness. It was awkward, it was unflattering, & more so culturally, it meant that she was not good enough to be part of the inner circle anymore. Yet, in her sickness, she caught the attention of Jesus.

I wonder if you could relate to this? If you could relate to her. We do not know what her name is, but let's say it's your friend, or your aunt, or your sister, or your neighbour... or maybe even you.

Are you wearied? Burdened? Do you have an awkward, uncomfortable kind of challenge that wearies you down just like the sick woman who had to crawl just to get to Jesus? It could be something physical you need healing from, like an injury, or cancer, or an ulcer, or even an unknown disease. Or perhaps the healing you are after is crying out from your heart or your mind - you need the touch of Jesus to bring cure from the inside-out. Perhaps all of the burden & weariness you carry in your body or in your mind has excluded you from some of the most important things to you and you need hope today.

Well, there is good news! And that is that this story is not just one of pain. In fact this story is not just a story about the "sick women". In fact, the devotional today is called, the "spirit of the sick woman"...because this passage is not actually about her sickness, but about her spirit.

That's right — her spirit. This woman didn't just lose her health, in fact, her health caused her to lose everything—except her spirit!

It wasn't her perfection, or looks or wisdom that caught the attention of Jesus — it was her spirit. Her spirit to seek Him in her sickness.

So, regardless of your sickness today, what is the state of your spirit?

The same invitation is for you today — for your friend, your aunt, your neighbour. It is an invitation to remember that the sickness is not greater than your spirit!

This is an invitation to let faith rise up in your spirit & touch the truth of Jesus once more regardless of how you feel, of how your sickness has "marked" you, or of what you see in the natural.

And in fact, to realize that the position of your spirit - the attitude, the trust, the lean-in of this deepest part of you - could be the very ingredient to unlocking healing for your own story.

Why don't you finish this sentence for yourself today:

"THE SPIRIT OF ... (insert your name here), IS STRONGER THAN THE ... (insert any challenge or sickness here) I FACE!"

Lord Jesus, I thank you that you gave me a spirit of faith to believe that I could be well. Help me to focus today, not on my sickness, but on my spirit because I know that when I position my spirit towards you, just like this sick woman, you see & pay attention to my spirit — because my spirit is greater than my sickness, and is also the one part of me that will last with you in Heaven forever! Amen.

"While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well." When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately."

MATTHEW 9.20-22

Sleeping.

I'm not sure if you have read this passage in its entirety before, but let us set the scene for you: here we have a sick woman, who interrupts Jesus on His way to heal the synagogue leader's daughter. Both are sick. Both are women. It's interesting that the age of the synagogue leader's daughter, was in fact the length of time the sick woman had suffered. How does Jesus choose who to heal first & why? Was it the incredible spirit of faith of the sick women that caused the very power of heaven to leave Jesus' body? Or was the fact that this synagogue leader perhaps had doubts the deciding factor?

What makes things more complicated is that in this story we see Jesus choosing to heal the spirit of the sick women first, whilst the synagogue leader's daughter since passes away. The scene of this lost reality is heartbreaking. Bad news coming at a good time- just as Jairus had made his way to get the attention of Jesus, he finds out he has lost his child.

"Your daughter is dead. Do not bother the Teacher" – v 49.

These must have been the most earth-shattering words for the man that was on his way to healing.

However, this passage of tension reflects our own very real & raw questions to God. Why did you not heal me? Why did you not do it sooner? Where were you when this happened? How can I trust you?

Here Jairus is, he has tried to get an answer. He's done what he can. And it looked like it was too late. He's carrying the skepticism of those around him on the back of his shoulders. Now He is facing Jesus after He has just healed a woman right in front of him, claiming, "daughter your faith has healed you", only to leave his very own daughter for the grave. Have you ever felt like Jesus was too late? Like He had forgotten you in your weakness, sickness, heartbreak or abandonment? Have you ever felt like the clock is ticking & it just does not look like God is going to make it. This deadline. This request. This answer. As if, perhaps Jesus is busy with the sick women too, that He is somehow presently pre-occupied, that His healing ran out as soon as she loosened her grip from his cloak?

What is so remarkable about this passage is that from this angle, as we look, not at the spirit of the sick women, but rather the saving power of Jesus, we find another aspect of faith & healing that plants hope into our souls....We find Jesus, having worked in Jairus' weakness — when he wanted to give up, thought it was too late, could not believe any more, Jesus actually stepped in.

You see, when we have done all we

can & when we feel like the clock is running out on our healing, the truth is that Jesus is still in control. He is still the answer, & He is still the miracle worker. He does not need our perfection or our works to get Him to act on our behalf, only our trust in Him.

In the beginning of this devotional we read of the great tension of healing. We learn of a sick woman with a spirit that enabled her to touch the very healing hand of Jesus & get the restoration she so desperately needed. Then, we see the angle of the synagogue leader – Jairus, the man on his way to healing - someone who was also desperate for God's help when it seemed like it was all just too late. But if we look at this story carefully, we find that the spirit of the sick woman that caused healing to flow, is not absent from the synagogue leader's story either.

In vs. 50;55 in the bible says: "But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.... He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately."

Perhaps all Jesus is waiting for, is for YOU. He is waiting for you to let go of all you are doing, carrying, thinking over, so that HE can bring the spirit of strength that you need on your journey of healing.

This man had his doubts. You would definitely say, "he was on a journey ..." He did question Jesus. But the

moral of the story here today is that Jesus does not need perfect faith to make it perfectly work. He does not need your works to do His.

What areas of striving can you lay down at the feet of Jesus on your way to healing? What are some beliefs you need to surrender to Jesus, just like this man Jairus on his way to healing, so that He can interrupt your doubt and bring the healing that you need?

What fears, words from others can you cast aside, so that Jesus can visit the home of your sickness too, and revive your spirit that needs faith once again?

Dear Jesus. Thank you that you accept me just as I am, faith, doubts and all, as I am on my way to healing. Jesus, I know that everyone's story is so different - there are going to be moments when I experience your healing like the spirit of the sick woman – quick and powerful, and then moments when I am surprised by your attention of my needs, despite the state of my own spirit, because I believe that even there you can revive me. Help me to always have faith, even if it looks late, ugly, unwanted or imperfect, knowing that you use and work in all people to show us Your goodness on our way to healing. In Jesus Name, Amen.

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut."

MATTHEW 25.1-4

Ready?

Faith is a funny thing. It's unseen, yet it's hopeful. It's real, yet it's vague. It's personal, yet it's communal. It's present in the here and now, yet it's destined for the now & not yet. But one thing is for sure — faith is the key to living our lives filled up with God. It's the substance, the "sauce" of what makes our experiences with Jesus so vivid, so powerful. Without faith we cannot please God, we cannot move mountains, we cannot hope for. It is the grounding of our faith that enables us to believe the impossibilities of faith.

Just look at this parable that Jesus used to highlight the reality of the

Kingdom of Faith to His disciples. He wanted to help them understand the importance of living their lives ready, to live their lives with a sense of faith-filled preparation.

You see what we have in this story are two groups of people: we have the virgins who lived their lives ready, prepared & stocked up on the faith that their hope was coming; and then, you had the virgins who had a sense that hope was on its way, but they just did not have faith enough to be ready for it.

It sounds sad doesn't it? It wouldn't be hard to jump in here & ask you

which group you would like to say you are a part of? Which philosophy of life & of faith you live by...those who live their lives ready, or those we wait to see if it was worth being ready for?

But the reality is that we can all live our lives on either spectrum. We have most likely all experienced seasons where we feel full of faith, ready & expectant for what God has instore for us. And we have also experienced moments in our lives of a kind of barrenness in our faith: the kind that we knew with our heads, but we did not carry in our hearts - just like the second group of virgins who knew the groom was coming, but could not receive what they needed to in order to be ready for Him.

The only difference was the heart.

One group chose to receive the oil, the other chose to wait.

Are you waiting today to receive something from God? I want to encourage you to join the first group of wise virgins & receive it! Do not wait for something to happen, for the stars to align, for someone to confirm it, for you to feel "better" or to be "different". Ask God for what you need, for the oil your story longs for & receive it by faith! All the wise virgins had to do was go & get the oil...I want to encourage you to go to the Holy Spirit so He can fill you up with His oil of power, of wisdom, of hope, of courage, of answers.

Living a life prepared is living a life that receives the fullness of what God has for you NOW so that one day, you can say, "I did not wait. I received & I was ready!"

Lord Jesus, thank you that I do not have to wait for your power. Thank you that you have hope, freedom, solution, change, inspiration, promises for me TODAY, NOW, RIGHT HERE, that I can grab hold of & that can act as oil to light the way in my present reality. Thank you that I can live my life at the ready, just like the virgins who received the oil, filled up with Your Holy Spirit, & ready to receive all that it is you have for me today. In Jesus Name, Amen.

"The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut."

MATTHEW 25:8

Open.

Have you ever felt like the door has been shut? Perhaps you are on the other side of a miracle you've been praying for, an answer you have been hoping for, an opportunity you've been waiting for, or a dream you've been believing for. But, it feels like the door is closed & you have been shut out.

Where do you go from here? Can you imagine how those virgins felt? There they were, on the other side of the miracle, of the promise, of the well awaited hope — after all the effort & energy of their, I'll be it, delayed journey, to make sure they have what they need for this well-awaited,

unprecedented moment, & they get locked out. Out of the promise. Out in the cold. (It's after midnight remember ...)

Have you ever been here in your faith? Those blizzard type moments where you find yourself on the backend of the promise & you know you should have, could have, would have, done something a little bit different. That you could have tried harder, prayed more, hoped more... done something MORE just to open the door of this promise one more time to say, "I get it now! I'm not going to do this my own way again!"

If I have to think about these poor virgins on the outside of the door in the cold & darkness of their misgivings, & ask them how they got there, I am pretty sure they would be able to explain themselves. They knew the promise was there, but why couldn't they receive it? They knew the bridegroom was coming, but why couldn't they be prepared for Him?

We know what God has promised us. It's in His word. We know the truth that He died to give us. We hear it preached so often. We believe the power that He has to save & heal us. We sing those anthems daily. So why can't we receive it?

It's these kinds of blizzards in our faith that leave us feeling stranded. We know what should be, but it is not. We know what the bible says on its pages, but we cannot see it in our lives. I've got the lamp in my hand, but it's empty & I cannot find the answer I am looking for...even though I know it is there, right on the other side of this doorway. These foolish virgins were stranded in the cold of night, knowing the truth that the bridegroom was right there, however they were not able to open the door. to realize the promise, to welcome the bridegroom...

You know, another word for the word "receive" in the English language is the expression, "to welcome". And the word "welcome" in the English

language is, "to relinquishing the control or possession of something to someone else.".

Woah. Isn't that eye-opening?

I wonder if we have looked at our ability to receive by faith, to receive all the goodness & glory that God has for us – all the stories we've heard, words that have been preached, songs that we have sung...if all of it could be, would be, unlocked in our lives if only we chose to relinguish control to God? ... That truly what He was waiting for, the reception He so desired from our hearts, would be that we would give up our timing, our journey & our pathway to happiness, only to gladly welcome in the One we have been waiting for all along.

What do you need to release to God today as a sign of you actually receiving or welcoming Him?

Lord Jesus, thank you that when I release the control of my life into your hands I communicate to you that I am receiving by faith all that you have for me. It seems so strange to me that to "receive" is to "release" or "give up" but I know that often what is stopping faith from standing in my door way are the walls I put up in my own heart & head. Help me today to freely receive by faith what I know by your word to be truth, & open up this door in front of me, as I welcome you into my story. In Jesus Name, Amen.

'A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

MARK 2:1-5 (NIV)

"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" '

MARK 2:11-12 (NIV)

Others.

We can spend a lot of time focusing on developing a strong faith for our own lives, and if you've stuck with this devotional throughout the whole month, you've definitely been flexing your faith muscle. Well done, that is amazing but it's clear from this scripture that our faith isn't just for us but for others too. It's comforting to know that our faith has the potential to completely change someone else's life!

A few years ago I'd come through a season of seeing God do miracle after miracle. My faith was strong and I believed that God could do anything. I noticed that a close friend, after many years of unfulfilled prayers, was starting to wonder if their miracle would ever come to pass. I totally understood why they felt this way and realised this was my chance to be that friend that lowers them down to Jesus. I didn't do much, I just gave them a gift as if the miracle has

already happened. I had no doubt that God would come through. They were slightly perplexed by the gift but I gave it and reminded my dear friend that we live by faith and not sight and even if they didn't have faith, I had faith for their miracle. Within the year, their miracle came to pass! I'm not saying I am the reason it happened, but I truly believe that I played a part in seeing this person's life changed forever. Who needs your faith in your life today? When you're full of faith, remember to be generous with it.

Father, thank you for the measure of faith that You've given to me. I pray that I won't just use it for myself but that You'll continually show me who needs my faith in their situations. I pray for courage and compassion to step out, even if it doesn't make sense because I trust that You will see my faith and be moved to intervene. In Jesus name, Amen.

'Most of all, I'm writing to encourage you to pray with gratitude to God. Pray for all men with all forms of prayers and requests as you intercede with intense passion. And pray for every political leader and representative, so that we would be able to live tranquil, undisturbed lives, as we worship the awe-inspiring God with pure hearts. It is pleasing to our Savior-God to pray for them. He longs for everyone to embrace his life and return to the full knowledge of the truth.'

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4 (TPT)

Salvation.

There can be no doubt here that we have a very clear directive to pray for the salvation of all men; our families, our friends and even political leaders. The Passion Translation reminds us that it's not a wishful request but an intercession of intense passion. We can have this passion because we have faith that Jesus is true to his word — He longs for EVERYONE to be saved. No one is beyond saving.

Hands up if you have a whole bunch of people in your life who need Jesus? My hands are up. Maybe you've lost all hope that they will come to know Jesus? If you're reading this right now, Jesus wants to remind you that He is MIGHTY to save. Why not pray right now for that loved one who is lost. Pray with passionate faith and persist, fully convinced that Jesus is calling them home. Be reminded that even if they don't ask for it or even

know it, for some people, our faith is the only bridge out of their land of brokenness. Below are some specific prayers that you can pray.

Father, I come before You in prayer and in faith, believing. Your Word says You long for all men to be saved, so I bring (name) before You this day. I break the power of the enemy in (name's) life in the Name of Jesus. Now, while Satan is bound, I ask that You send people to share the good news of the gospel in a way that (name) will listen and understand it. As the truth is shared. I believe (name) will open his/her eyes to the gospel, come out of the snare of the enemy and make Jesus Lord. Therefore, my confession of faith is: 'God has begun a good work in (name's) life and He will perform it and bring it to full completion, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

'Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and he is the one whom Timothy, Silas, and I have preached to you—and he has never been both a "yes" and a "no." He has always been and always will be for us a resounding "YES!" For all of God's promises find their "yes" of fulfillment in him. And as his "yes" and our "amen" ascend to God, we bring him glory!'

2 CORINTHIANS 1:19-20 (TPT)

Amen.

We're living in a time where the future is very unclear. In the natural, life seems so uncertain but if we're honest, is anything in life certain? The bible reminds us that heaven and earth will pass away but the word of the Lord remains and praise Jesus, (literally) His word has always been and ALWAYS WILL be a resounded yes! Maybe everything else feels uncertain, but we can be very certain of one thing: We can have faith for the future because ALL God's promised find their fulfillment in Jesus.

Take a moment and write down all the things that are waiting for you in the future. You'll find that there are some things that you feel at ease with but make a mark next to the ones that make you feel a little anxious. Now do the work. If faith comes by hearing

the word and the word never fades, the word is what you need to build faith for the future. Find at least one promise — a resounding yes — in the word and write it down to remind you that it will be as Jesus says it will be in that situation.

Jesus, I am so thankful for Your promises. I know that You will not fail me and I stand upon Your word, trusting that You always were and will always be faithful to Your promises. I am committed to searching out the promises in Your word, to allow Your word to be written on my heart so I can live it out as I face the future with faith. I chose to swap my anxiety for your peace and as I see your promises fulfilled, I will bring you glory. In Jesus name, Amen.

'In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.'

JAMES 2:17 (NIV)

Action.

Faith without action isn't actually faith at all. In fact, the Hebrew word for faith is emunah. The word emunah is not a passive word, it means "to take firm action", so to have faith is to act. Faith is not an intellectual. decision; you can't just know there is a God, and therefore have faith. The word emunah is less about KNOWING, and more about DOING. It's kind of like a staircase; you may intellectually know the stairs go up to the next level, but until you climb the stairs you won't experience the next level. What you do is more important than what you know. Don't just believe in the stairs, climb the stairs.

What would you need to change today to ensure your faith was defined by what you did, instead of what you know? There are some extraordinary things waiting for you in your future that will only be unlocked when you start "faithing" it out in your actions, trusting that God will never fail you. You've already started to act out your faith by completing this devotional. Now all that is left to do is... fly!

Jesus, I declare that I have faith for my future. I won't just sit back and wait for you to move but I will take action, even if I'm afraid, because I trust that you will not fail or forsake me. Holy Spirit, give me wisdom and courage to take steps in the right direction, so that you can take my life to the next level. I desire even more faith so that your will can be done. In Jesus name, Amen.