

# FAITH



AGAINST ALL HOPE







# FAITH

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# X PROLOGUE

The mind struggles to comprehend. He was brought out to this field and now he finds himself staring up. The expanse is overwhelming. Bursting from over the mountains to the East and cascading down to the horizon of sea to the West, he could see the stars shining in the deep blue sky. “Count the stars,” God’s voice speaks, “if you can.” The demand seems comical, but even before he can ponder a response, God speaks again, “So shall your offspring be.”

The questions of how, when, and where nagged him, since he was old and childless and his wife was beyond her child-bearing years. However, one question—far more important—rose to the surface. Am I going to believe God or not? The other questions crumbled before that ultimate question. The decision that Abraham made that day, against all hope, has been teaching and challenging people for thousands of years.

Abraham is known as the father of faith, but what is faith? Is it necessary and, if so, how do you have it? As you journey through this workbook, we are going to be exploring what the Bible says about faith and whether you are a long-time Christian or looking at these verses for the first time, we strongly encourage you to lean in. There is some deep teaching for everyone.

In these trying times, where all seems a bit hopeless, you may find faith to be the very thing that you are looking for.



## NOBODY NOT CONNECTED

Community is an essential need of humankind. When the weight of the world comes down upon us, it is a community that enables us to stand. Consider the wise words of King Solomon,

*"Two are better than one,  
because they have a good return for their labor:  
If either of them falls down,  
one can help the other up.*

*But pity anyone who falls  
and has no one to help them up.  
Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.*

*But how can one keep warm alone?  
Though one may be overpowered,  
Two can defend themselves.*

*A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."*

*(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)*

Whether you are stumbling over habits, feeling the biting cold of destructive thinking, or being attacked, there is a security in belonging to a community that is for you.

With that in mind, we are strongly urging you to take ownership of the vision of making sure that everyone who wants community can find it. This is not something that leaders or hosts are solely responsible for; this is the conviction that must be woven into every person participating in this study. This means compassionately taking responsibility to walk alongside those you meet that are looking for a group. This means that groups must be more open to receiving newcomers. This means that new hosts and leaders must rise up from existing groups. This means that we need to be sacrificially thinking of the needs of others above our own needs.

Nobody not connected...



## A WORD TO HOSTS

Starting this 5-week community groups study, you likely have a wide variety of emotions going through your head and your heart right now. Some of you are beyond excited and rejoicing that this study is finally here. You have been looking up new dessert recipes, printed out custom prayer request charts, and already comprised your email and text distribution lists for the group! Some of you may be absolutely terrified and you are questioning why in the world you've decided to do this. Wherever you are at right now, allow us to share one thing we know with great confidence—you will be blessed and your group participants will be blessed because of your step of faith!

We have a specific encouragement for you: **YOU CAN DO THIS!** Our enemy, the devil, would want you to believe that you can't or that you should be afraid, but God is with you and He has great plans for you and each person in your group! That Bible states that *"[You] can do all things through Christ who strengthens [you]" (Phil. 4:13). The Lord proclaims over you, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9).*

In addition, you are not alone. Take full advantage of the Church that God has put around you. Reach out to fellow hosts, key volunteers, leaders or church staff. We all want to come alongside you and help you be successful! Don't try to do this in isolation, but rather link arms with your brothers and sisters!

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you as you host and shepherd the group of people God has entrusted to you! Blessings!

# A REPLICABLE TEMPLATE OF STUDY X

As you go through each week of this study, you will notice that the template for discussion is consistent and the primary questions are the same:

1. What do you think this passage teaches about God?
2. What do you think this passage teaches about us, as people?
3. What is think this passage is prompting us to do?

This consistency is very intentional as it is meant to equip. This model is being used all around the world to prompt discussion about the Bible. You will find that these three questions work with practically any passage and are conveyable to any age, background, or cultural context. These questions can be discussed in a matter of minutes or in a matter of hours, depending on who is in the group or what time constraints you have.

In discussing these questions, try and stick with using only the passage read, as it keeps everyone on the same page. Spouting off a bunch of cross-references can tend to distance people who may not be as knowledgeable of the Bible. Also, respectfully listen to the answers of others in the group, truly considering their insight.

Then, every week at the end of discussion, each member of the group will individually answer the response question: ***“What is one action you want to take over this next week?”*** Answers should remain practical and measurable, so that there can be effective accountability. This is a key part of this template, so be sure to not neglect this aspect.

The hope is that anybody who goes through this study will be able to take this template and use it in their homes with their kids, in their driveways with their neighbors, in the break rooms at work, on the field with their teammates or with a small group as part of their church. We want to be disciples that make disciples and that means that we, in faith, take God’s word into the world around us. Onward!

# HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS STUDY

Welcome to the exciting adventure of studying the Bible! In *Faith: Against All Hope*, you will be exploring the topic of Faith. Faith is central to the Christian life, but it is not always easy to have. In studying what the Bible says about faith and looking at the example of Abraham, you can gain insight about how to actively have faith in any circumstance and draw strength from that faith.

To make the most of this study, here are some important suggestions:

1. First of all, the best way to get the most out of this study is to ENGAGE. Come to your community group ready to listen and ready to discuss! If you are distracted or closed off, we can guarantee you that this experience won't be all that it can be for you.
2. Secondly, make an intentional effort to do the Daily Devotionals for each week. Each of these readings are designed to enhance your weekly discussions. They are written by pastors, ministry directors, and key ministry leaders serving within the church. These are men and women just like you and they write from a very personal perspective. You are likely to connect with these devotions in ways that are different than the other sections of the workbook.
3. Thirdly, come as you are and don't let this study burden you! This workbook has been put together to be a refreshing, thought-provoking, easy-to-use aid for discussion and study. All the Scripture references are already contained in the workbook. No need to access a Bible. Though, you certainly are welcome to bring your Bible to group and read from that.

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# SESSION 1

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WHAT IS  
FAITH?



# INTRODUCTION

The Bible says, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1) Confidence and hope make up the skeleton of faith. It is a hope for the future and a confidence in its reality. Faith is a necessary and essential ingredient to a relationship with God, but faith is not an exclusively religious commodity. Sports enthusiasts have faith in their favorite team; lovers have faith in their partners; economists have faith in the stock market and adventurers have faith in their dreams. It would appear that everyone has some degree of faith and some object of faith. Here are what some say about faith:

- “Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.” *Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- “Faith does not eliminate questions. But faith knows where to take them.” *Elisabeth Elliot*
- “Fear looks; faith jumps.” *Smith Wigglesworth*
- “Faith moves mountains, but you have to keep pushing while you are praying.” *Henry David Thoreau*
- “Doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.” *Dieter F. Uchtdorf*
- “Faith is like WiFi. It’s invisible, but it has the power to connect you to what you need.” *Anonymous*
- “Choose faith instead of fear and life will become a lot more fun.” *Dave Willis*
- “Faith is believing that what God says is truer than what I see or feel and then acting upon it.” *JP Jones*

These are some great perspectives on faith, which give us some deeper insight into what it is. In light of what we read in the Bible and what we learn from some wise teachers, one understanding of faith is...

Commitment without knowing which is always completed by an action.



## VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for *Session 1, What is Faith*.

### 2 WAYS TO WATCH:

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 99)
2. Go to [crosslinechurch.com/faith](http://crosslinechurch.com/faith)

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.

# CONNECT

Begin your group discussion by going around the room and answering the following question.

*Which of the above quotes most resonates with you and why?*

# READ

## **Hebrews 11:1-3, 6**

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. <sup>2</sup> This is what the ancients were commended for. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible...<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

# DISCUSS

Using the scripture from above, answer the following questions.

1. What does the passage teach about God?

2. What does the passage teach about us, as people?
  
3. What is this passage prompting us to do?



In response to what you read and discussed today,

***What is one action you want to take over this next week?***

Write down what people say, so that you can encourage one another and check back when you meet next week.



# FURTHER EXPLORATION

The following is made available to you If you would like to study or discuss this week's topic of "What is Faith" in greater depth.

## + SEE IT

Read the following passages: Hebrews 11:1-12, Romans 4:13-21, Galatians 3:1-13, James 2:18-26

1. What do these passages say about the nature of faith?
2. Why do you think Abraham is a key figure in the Bible's discussion of faith?

## + UNDERSTAND IT

3. From Abraham's example, what can you learn about the meaning of faith?



4. Based on these verses, how would you define faith and what do you think it would look like today for a person to live by faith in God?

## + LIVE IT

5. Go back to your favorite quote from above, if you applied that quote to your relationship with God, what would that mean for you?
6. When the Bible says, "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see", what does that mean to you about a faith relationship with God?



# DEVOTIONS

☒ READ

☒ STUDY

☒ PRAY

# Day 1: Action in the Hall of Faith

Luis Jonas

As a young boy, in the interior of Panama, I always dreamt of being a Baseball Hall of Famer, and part of my dream became a reality when drafted by the Montreal Expos in the 8th round of the 1972 MLB June Amateur Draft from Erasmus Hall HS in Brooklyn. Being selected my senior year in the eighth round by the Expos was quite a baseball feat, yet for me, it was a disappointing season due to injury. Nonetheless, this dream required action by my part to strive for the mastery of my baseball skills.

Just as there is a Hall of Fame for outstanding athletes who distinguished themselves in the world of sports, the Bible contains what we might call a “hall of faith.” It is located in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews—a fascinating record of names and events in which each individual modeled a faith-related accomplishment.

Pause right now and read

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)*

This is an amazing verse, isn't it? Better yet, read the whole chapter for yourself and you'll get a broader picture. Men & women who put their faith into action, based upon belief, supported and sustained by the infallibility of God's word. Faith compelled movement. One person after another, acting on faith, stepping out of the ranks of the ordinary and trusting God in remarkable ways resulting in everlasting impact.

When you read this chapter, you will learn of others who stood strong, men as well as women. Younger and older alike. Leaders and followers. Numerous categories: kings, prophets, judges, and warriors. Refusing to give in when the going got rough.

In 1973 at the end of the season the Montreal Expos gave me an unconditional release, no longer needed, all contractual obligations terminated. My whole world came tumbling down. My hope was shattered. I stand here today, because of my faith in Jesus Christ. If you believe that to have faith means you can just sit back and let God take care of things, then you have been seriously misled. Think about it: Christ

disciple's belief were tested by troubles. This was not a time for me to question my belief, but rather a time to lean on it. A faith that endures through trials is pleasing to God. The purpose of obstacles is not to separate us from God, but to strengthen us. It takes both faith and action to experience God's best. So, get out there and see what God has in store for you – in faith.



**A faith  
that  
endures  
through  
trials is  
pleasing  
to God.**

## **PRAYER**

Father, "I believe, but help my unbelief." We know, that without faith, it's impossible to please you. Please mature and empower my faith to stand strong, to run the race of life with discipline, diligence, steadfast, with a consistent testimony to your presence power and grace. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



# Day 2: A Faith Deposit

Donna Jones

"It finally arrived", JP hollered as he walked into the house from collecting the mail. The "it" was the stimulus check most everyone else received in response to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19. We weren't worried it wouldn't come, we just wondered where it was. I tore open the envelope and found what we anticipated, a check from the US government; free money simply for living in the United States during a time of national crisis. It seemed odd to receive a check I didn't earn the old fashion way--work--but neither did I feel compelled to call up the White House and volunteer to labor sufficient hours to make an even exchange. They would have thought I was crazy, even if I did. Instead, I gratefully accepted the money as a gift and trusted that when I deposited the check the funds would be transferred from Uncle Sam to me.

Grace is the check. Faith is the deposit. Righteousness is the bank account.

*Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.  
(Romans 4:3)*

What did Abraham do? He believed God. And what exactly did Abraham believe? The answer is found in Genesis 15. God tells Abraham to look up to the sky and count the stars. Then God makes what would otherwise be an impossible promise for a childless old man with a post-menopausal wife, had the promise not been made by God Himself: *"Then he (God) said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness."*

Abraham didn't simply believe; Abraham believed God--specifically God's promise. To him. What did God do in response to Abraham's belief? God kept His promise. Today we know Abraham as the father

of the Jewish people. Interestingly though, something spiritual happened to Abraham long before something physical happened to Abraham: God credited Abraham as a righteous person. In other words, God deposited righteousness in Abraham's account, based not on Abraham's behavior, but on his belief.

Abraham became more than the father of a family, he became the father of faith. Abraham didn't work for his righteousness—he couldn't have anyway. Instead Abraham simply, beautifully, gratefully accepted what God said was true. He believed. And God was pleased. Righteousness isn't something we earn based on our performance; righteousness is given to us based on God's promise. And God always keeps His promise. Righteousness from God is infinitely more valuable than a check from Uncle Sam. Have you allowed God to deposit righteousness to you by believing in His promise to save you through His Son, Jesus Christ? If not, you don't have to wait. The check of grace arrived in Jesus. By faith, believe.

## PRAYER

Lord, I believe your promise that those who call on the name of Jesus will be saved. I accept the gift of your forgiveness, your love, and your acceptance based not on my behavior, but on Jesus' death for sins that are mine. Thank you that when you look into the account of my life you see righteousness because I believe You. Help me never forget the surpassing value of your gift. Amen.

# Day 3: Avoiding Destruction

Greg Munck

The consuming, self-destructive nature of sin is like the technique used by Eskimos to kill wolves. First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another until the blade is completely concealed in a block of frozen blood. Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he realize that his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own blood. He just craves more and more until he drops dead in the snow.

The Bible warns us that like the wolf we can be consumed by our own lusts. It says in Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The bad news before the good news is that we are separated from God because of our sin, the good news is that God has provided a bridge (Jesus) between us who are unholy and a Holy God! We are made righteous because God has made a way for us and we are reminded of this in Romans 4:4-8

*Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of*

*the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them." (Romans 4:4-8)*

The apostle Paul is saying that no human work can save you, it's not by our effort that we are saved. (How much we give, worship, serve, do missions, attend, act good, etc.) Salvation is a gift (FREE) of God's grace, and all we have to do is BELIEVE, which means all we have to do is have FAITH! Jesus came to pay a debt He did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay! The sooner you recognize you're a sinner the sooner you can receive the Savior! Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2 in verses 7-8 above because it's a Psalm written by King David after his adultery and murder, and despite the enormity of his sin, the enormity of God's love was greater. He counted himself blessed to be forgiven. You can live in that confidence as well!

## PRAYER

Lord, thank you for making a way for me to be forgiven of my sins and for not counting those sins against me. I'm overwhelmed by your grace and love for me that gives me eternal life! Help me to rely on you for all things and not take things into my own hands. In Jesus name, Amen.

# Day 4: God of the World or of My Worldview?

Thomas Oh

Growing up in a traditional first generation Korean household, my brother and I had to perform in order to receive acceptance and approval from my parents. Works such as attending church every week, getting good grades at school, finishing chores on time, and treating them with respect were necessary for my parent's adoration. Due to my family culture, I saw my relationship with God the same way. I believed that I had to work to keep my salvation. I believed that I had to earn God's love by being sinless. I believed that in order to be seen righteous in the eyes of my Father, I had to do things that would please Him. It was the only way I knew how.

But it all changed when I began reading the Bible. I soon realized that Paul was speaking truths that were exactly opposite of what I believed to be true (*Gal. 3:10-13; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:20; Titus 3:5*). This revelation led me to believe that the god I worshiped was nothing close to the God of the Bible. Who you say that God is or what you believe about Him makes a world of difference in your faith.

It is possible that some believers are not believing in the God of the Bible, but in a god whom they might have created from a worldview.

Let's briefly look at John 5:1-17. During a Jewish festival, Jesus performs a miracle and heals a man who had been invalid for thirty-eight years. The healed man began walking with his mat only to be stopped by the Jewish leaders because the man was carrying his mat on the day of Sabbath. What's stunning about this story is that these leaders were so fixated on laws, traditions, and personal worldviews that have completely overlooked the work of Jesus.



**Who you say that God is or what you believe about Him makes a world of difference in your faith.**

This story reminds us that we, too, can be blinded by what God is doing in us and around us due to our own personal convictions. It is evidently clear throughout the Scripture that our righteousness and salvation aren't obtained by works but by faith.

*It was not through the law that Abraham and His offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless. (Romans 4:13-14)*

Paul could not have said it better. Our Father is not pleased by the results we bring to Him but He is pleased by our hearts that bring honor and glory to His name. Furthermore, if faith is not integrated, our hearts will never be in the right place. Our works will never transform our hearts but our faith in Jesus and what He had done for us will. Thank you Lord!

## **PRAYER**

Lord, help me to understand who you are. If I have a view or belief that is not true of you, please reveal it to me. Give me strength and courage to take heart and have faith in what you have promised me. Amen.

# Day 5: Fascinated by Context

Jordan Gash

I've always been a sucker for a free trial. I mean, "free" is my favorite word. Well, a while back, Ancenstry.com was having a free two-week trial and I jumped in! Okay, wow! I was consumed with fascination as I explored all the history and culture of my relatives. Seeing the pictures and learning their story illuminated so much for me, personally. I had context for who I was as one who bears the name "Gash". I am the offspring of pioneers! Hillbillies maybe, but pioneers nonetheless!

As we have been looking at the story of Abraham, he is sometimes called the "Father of Faith", but look who it says is his offspring,

*Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all...Against all hope, Abraham in hope believe and so became the father of many nations, just as it was said to him 'so shall your offspring be'. (Romans 4:16 &18)*

Those that have the faith of Abraham are considered the offspring of Abraham. The children of faith. It may seem strange to study an old guy from a long time ago, but in fact, his story is wildly relevant for your life! It gives context for who we are, personally, if we choose to have his same faith. Earlier this week, we looked at Hebrews 11 which further enforces that context as we learned about all of our heroic "ancestors" of faith.

So, how do we have the "same faith" as Abraham? Well, look there at v. 18. *Against all hope...Abraham in hope believed.* This devotional comes at a very interesting and challenging time in history and perhaps a challenging time for you personally. There is so much

that wants to deplete our hope and it may feel like all the odds are against you, but this is when faith can shine out the brightest. Take your example from the father of faith, who against all hope, chose to believe and act upon faith.



**It may feel  
like all the  
odds are  
against  
you, but  
this is  
when faith  
can shine  
out the  
brightest.**

## **PRAYER**

Lord God, Your words to us are true. You are faithful to fulfill your promises. When things are difficult and disorienting, it's easy for me to lose hope. Help me to draw my hope and my strength from You. Help me to have faith to act upon Your words. Thank You for the example of Abraham and thank You for your grace. Be glorified through me. Amen.







## **SESSION 2**

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# WHY FAITH IS IMPORTANT?

# INTRODUCTION

For many people, to believe something is nothing more than to give intellectual agreement. It is the kind of classroom acceptance of facts and data. According to Hebrews 11, Biblical faith involves far more than intellectual acceptance. Faith is conviction; it is commitment put into action. This kind of faith pleases God. Hebrews 11:6 says,

*“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

Faith is an inseparable part of one’s pursuit of God. The belief that God exists motivates a life-response of faith. Why is faith important? Ultimately, it’s because faith pleases God. Moving forward, it must be understood that every step in the Christian life is a step of faith.



## VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for *Session 2, Why Faith is Important*

### 2 WAYS TO WATCH:

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 99)
2. Go to [crosslinechurch.com/faith](http://crosslinechurch.com/faith)

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.



Begin your group discussion by going around the room and answering the following question.

***What does it usually take to convince you of something?***



### **Galatians 3:5-11,14**

*So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? <sup>6</sup> So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

*<sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.<sup>8</sup> Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”<sup>9</sup> So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

*<sup>10</sup> For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” <sup>11</sup> Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”...*

*<sup>14</sup> He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

# DISCUSS

Using the scripture from above, answer the following questions.

1. What does the passage teach about God?
2. What does the passage teach about us, as people?
3. What is this passage prompting us to do?

# RESPOND

In response to what you read and discussed today,

***What is one action you want to take over this next week?***

Write down what people say, so that you can encourage one another and check back when you meet next week.



# FURTHER EXPLORATION

The following is made available to you If you would like to study or discuss this week's topic of "What is Faith" in greater depth.

## + SEE IT

1. The following verses describe the benefit or blessing that God gives based on faith. Look up each passage and describe what it is that we receive by faith:
  - Ephesians 2:8-9
  - Romans 5:1-2
  - Galatians 3:1-6
  - Mark 11:22-24

## + UNDERSTAND IT

2. Since God is a rewarder, what is the reward of faith in each of these passages?
3. Faith is the means to receiving or appropriating the promise of God. Why do you think God wants us to live by faith?

## + LIVE IT

4. When we live by faith, we are relying on God and not ourselves. Who has more wisdom, resources and love to take care of your life, you or God? Based on this, why do you think faith pleases God?
5. Faith is the means to receiving or appropriating the promises of God. If I deposited a million dollars in your checking account and promised you access to those funds for personal use, what faith response on your part would indicate that you believed what I promised? It is when you write a check or go to the ATM machine that your faith is truly expressed. With this in mind, read over the above Scriptures: *Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 5:1-2, Galatians 3:1-6, Matthew 11:22-24*. What reward is God promising in each passage and what is the appropriate act of faith for each of the promises?
6. In your own words, how would you try to persuade someone of the value of living by faith?



# DEVOTIONS

☒ READ

☒ STUDY

☒ PRAY



## Day 6: Jump?

By Jacqueline Champlin

As a newlywed, I joined my husband's annual family trip to Bass Lake. It is a picturesque lake near Yosemite. We spent a few days tanning on the dock, splashing in the warm water, fishing and cruising on the boat. The only thing we had not checked off our list was the hike up The Falls. We began our trek alongside a stream that created a series of bustling, raging waterfalls and watering holes. We arrived at our destination which was a small pool of water called The Washing Machine. I stood at the edge of the intimidating hole. A strong flow of water was dumping into the dark abyss with steep walls creating a torrent of whitewash below. My husband told me once I got below the swirling surface, I would see a lit arch in the rock which would lead me out to a peaceful pool of water. From the edge of the dim hole, all I saw and heard was the unruly whitewash. I took a deep breath and jumped. Sure enough, I dove underwater, found the arch and swam through to safety.

There were a couple of things I had to have faith in (or be fully convinced of) for me to jump. First, I had faith my husband loved me and was not trying to harm me. He knew I was capable. Secondly, I had to be confident that even though I could not see the safe passage, that my husband's description of the arch was true and that he was not lying or delusional. Lastly, I had to believe the experience of The Washing Machine was worth overcoming my trepidation.

*Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had*

*power to do what he had promised.  
(Romans 4:19-21)*

From my perspective at the top of the jump, I couldn't see the safe passage below the surface. Likewise, from Abraham's perspective, he could not see the way God was going to fulfill his promise of fathering many nations. It wasn't humanly possible but Abraham was fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That's what faith is. He had faith in God's character of being a promise keeper; he had faith God loved him and had a plan for him, and he had faith the experience God had in store for him was worth any perceived obstacle that came his way.

What's guiding you today? Is there a circumstance in your life that you are giving more weight than God's word, His character or His promises for you?



**He had  
faith in  
God's  
character  
of being  
a promise  
keeper**

## **PRAYER**

God, remind me of all that is true of you, your words and your promises for me. Help me not to waiver as I follow you. Thank you for the gift of faith you have given me and let it grow as I choose to give you glory through my actions and my words. Amen.

# Day 7: Amazing Peace Treaty

Richard Perez

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)*

The key word that stands out is “justified”, which means as believers in Jesus, God has declared us righteous and cleared us of all charges (punishment) by His grace. We are “justified” the moment we repent of our sins, “cross the line” and commit our lives to Jesus as our LORD and Savior. One of the hurdles in the process of becoming a believer is that most people feel they will go to heaven when they die. I felt I was a fairly good guy and that should be enough. As if God grades on the curve. However, like most people I failed to understand the character of a Holy and Righteous God and my depravity as a sinner. I also didn’t realize that I was an enemy of God in my sinful nature. My true standing was not evident until after I crossed the line, when I realized what a big problem I had been living with. Sin!

When preparing for this devotional, the following came to heart. Years ago, when I was a little boy, my dad was arrested for a DUI. Sometime after the DUI, the police came to our house to arrest my dad on an outstanding warrant on the DUI. I remember being very scared. Over the years, I found out my dad was from the wrong side of the tracks, but my mom came from a rather affluent family. So when the cops said they are here to arrest my dad, mom picked up the phone and called one of her older cousins who was a judge. With my mom’s pleading, the cops got on the phone with the judge. After a series of calls, it ended up my dad was not taken to jail. Even more shocking, when my dad went to court the charges were dropped! My mom’s cousin put his job and reputation on the line for my dad even though he had broken the law.



**I felt I was  
a fairly  
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and that  
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enough.  
As if God  
grades on  
the curve.**

To go further to help illustrate the benefits of justification through Christ, imagine if the judge stated the following, “Mr. Perez, in breaking the law you are basically an enemy of the court, but because of your relationship to my fellow judge, here are the keys to my second home in Hawaii and to my Porsche. There’s a Learjet waiting for you at LAX and here is a credit card with no limit to cover expenses.” The judge slams the gavel down and states, “Case closed, court adjourned.”

Obviously, justification is amazing beyond words, but you get the idea.

John 3:36 states:

*“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”*

## **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, thank you for the amazing peace treaty provided through Jesus! Help us to live in peace with You and in the full depth of justification through Christ for Your glory. Amen.

# Day 8: A Power Greater Than My Own

Taylor Jones

I knew what had happened as soon as the palm of my hand hit the court. The pop. The pain. It was obvious: my arm was broken. The day before, I had gotten a cast removed after breaking my arm at about midway up my forearm three months earlier. And after sitting out of most physical activity for three months, I was eager to get back to pick-up basketball with some friends. I meant to take it easy on the court that afternoon, but just a few minutes into the game another player tripped and fell into my feet just as I was jumping up to grab a rebound. As I fell over the other player, I put out my arms to brace my fall and...pop! Three more months in a cast, courtesy of one goofy play.

My fall that afternoon was the result of an inescapable force: gravity. No strength of will and no power in my vertical jump could have prevented me from crashing back down to the court. There was nothing I could do in my own power to overcome gravity. The only way for a person to overcome gravity is if they have access to a power greater than what they can produce themselves.

There's an important principle here that relates to our journey toward spiritual maturity. The Apostle Paul frames the issue in the form of a question in Galatians 3:3:

*"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3)*

Every follower of Jesus has been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who supplies everything we need for life with Jesus. Yet we often think that the power of God was only necessary to enter into a relationship with God, but after that we must now muster our own strength for obedience. But the power of sin in our lives

works exactly like gravity; we can't overcome it in our own will, efforts, strategies or self-control. The only way for a person to overcome the power of sin is if they have access to a power greater than what they can produce themselves. This is why Paul says that it's so foolish to try to reach maturity "in the flesh"—that is, in our own self-driven effort. So how can we grow toward spiritual maturity? Only through partnering with the Holy Spirit by faith. He supplies us with the power to overcome sin.

Therefore, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you for obedience. Resolve to confess sin and surrender to the Spirit's influence. Tune your heart to hear from Him by regularly spending time reading Scripture and in prayer. Choose to obey by faith, knowing that the Spirit has given you everything you need for life with Jesus. I had no power to overcome the power of gravity as I careened toward the court that day after I had my cast removed, but everyone who trusts Jesus has the Spirit of God with them to overcome the power of sin.

## PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for sending the Holy Spirit. I can't overcome the power of sin through self-driven effort, but I can through trusting in you and obeying by faith. I'm sorry for how I've tried to follow you in my own strength. Holy Spirit would you empower me to live for you today? Would you fill me, help me surrender to your influence and produce the character of Jesus in me? It's in Jesus name I pray, Amen.

# Day 9: : You Gotta Have Faith

Josh Johnson

*Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. (Galatians 3:7-9)*

When I read this passage, it is faith that is the identifier here. "It is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham." God is making it clear that it is faith that separates us; from one another, from him, and from receiving his blessing for our lives. For me, my faith is something that my soul relies on and soothes my heart in times of need. I have complete confidence that the God of the Bible is real, that he has a plan for my life, and that I want to receive his blessings.

Growing up, my father never lacked wise words when I needed them. My favorites among them were always, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." and "Hey, the birds don't worry..." As a child I never really understood what he was trying to say. I mean they sounded profound and deep, which was cool, but I didn't fully grasp what he meant. But as an adult these are both principals that have strengthened my faith. In short, he was saying, "Keep your eyes fixed on God and you won't need to worry about a thing." Need an even shorter version? "Have faith."

Those close to me might say that faith is one of my spiritual gifts. I mean, I have a fairly "steady Eddie" personality already so it takes quite a lot to get under my skin, but there are things that happen in life that could easily get me to "shed the Ed" and go completely crazy with trying to control circumstances and

make things go my way. But it's my faith that keeps me grounded each and every time something in life goes a bit awry. Don't get me wrong, I get anxious at times. I try and control situations. I react inappropriately when I get stressed or overwhelmed. But it is my faith that keeps me from going off the rails in those moments.

"So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer." Time and time again, I am the recipient of God's blessing. He continues to provide for my family while I am out of work. He continues to put opportunities to serve him in my path. He continually provides me opportunities to talk to others about him. And he continually gives me opportunities to discover things about myself that are used for His purpose. I believe that I can't do more than He can, and that He does have a plan for my life. I have faith in Him that those things and so much more are true, and so should you.



**It's my  
faith that  
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grounded  
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something  
in life goes  
a bit awry.**

## PRAYER

Father God, give me immeasurable faith that will set me apart from those around me so that I can be fully used for your glory. Thank you for the examples in my life, seen and unseen, that point me back to you and prove that you are who you say you are... and so much more. Teach me, Lord, to focus my eyes on you so that I can be who you've created me to be, all the while pointing others to who you say you are. Amen.



# Day 10: A Very Different Way

Gigi Johnson

*So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says "It is through obeying the law that a person has life." (Galatians 3:11-12)*

I've always been good at being good (I know, it sounds like I'm bragging, but just wait—this actually doesn't bode all that well for me). Growing up, my sweet parents were eager to share their strong moral compass with me (and at a very loud voice in my high school days, I might add). Being the youngest of three kids, I quickly realized that learning from those who'd gone before me was the smartest way to go. My intrinsic fear of breaking the rules and disappointing authority added to this "quality" of mine, and somewhere along the line, I came to realize I was a "One" on the Enneagram, also referred to as—you guessed it—the Moral Perfectionist. Yikes.

This innate desire of mine to "keep the law" has proven, at times, uniquely dangerous in my life of following God. You see, for me, it can be somewhat easy to trust in myself and in my own efforts, rather than to choose to trust in God and count on His power to save me from my sin. But that's not faith—that's just my attempt at "being good" which, according to Gal. 3:11-12, can only get me so far.

This passage reminds me that I am not, nor will ever be, justified, or made right before God, by keeping the law. Nope, never. Instead, this passage says what truly justifies me, or puts me in right standing with God, is my faith—and more specifically, my faith in Jesus.

So, how does someone who easily “keeps the law” resist the temptation to just go along “being good”, and instead live a life of real faith in Jesus—a faith that actually justifies? For me, it was in my “Jesus is enough” moment. I realized that if I lost everything I ever had or was, owned or loved (yup, I went there in my mind—and I mean all the way there...), that I would still choose to trust and believe that my God, my Creator, my Savior, and my Lord, would show up to care for me, love me, guide me, and comfort me all the way into eternity, no matter what. I chose to believe His death on the cross was all I really needed in this life.

Learning to live from that place of trust and belief became “the way of faith”—a way very different than “the way of law”. The way of faith holds a power that the law doesn’t—an all-powerful, death-defeating, completely-loving, miracle-working power of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior.

## PRAYER

Lord, I boldly ask that you would give us eyes to see if the way we are living truly is the way of faith, trust, and belief in your saving power. If it's not, I ask that your grace would kindly show us the way to get there. Thank you, Father.  
Amen.





# SESSION 3

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## FAITH HAS AN OBJECT



# INTRODUCTION

As we have established previously, everyone lives by faith. It's what they have faith in that differs. NASCAR drivers put their faith in their driving ability and the reliability of their race car. Mountaineers put their faith in their equipment and the skills they bring to mountain climbing. Entrepreneurs put their faith in the business model and the product they are selling to not simply break even, but turn a profit. Even atheists have faith! They believe that there is no god and put their faith in the evidence they think will substantiate their claim.

Conscious or not, everyone lives by faith and stands upon some evidence as an object for their faith. However, regardless of the conviction of the subject, some evidences are simply untrustworthy or weak. With this in mind, the question becomes what is the object of faith for the Christ-follower and is it reliable?



## VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for *Session 3, Faith has an Object*

### 2 WAYS TO WATCH:

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2. Go to [crosslinechurch.com/faith](http://crosslinechurch.com/faith)

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.



Begin your group discussion by going around the room and answering the following question.

*What is something you have faith in? (And Christians, although I know you are eager to do so let's answer something other than Jesus. There are no gold stars or Bible-bucks to be won here.)*



### **Genesis 15:5-6**

*[God] took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."*

*<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

### **Romans 4:18-22**

*Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." <sup>19</sup> Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. <sup>20</sup> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup> being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup> This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."*

# DISCUSS

Using the scripture from above, answer the following questions.

1. What does the passage teach about God?
2. What does the passage teach about us, as people?
3. What is this passage prompting us to do?

# RESPOND

In response to what you read and discussed today,

***What is one action you want to take over this next week?***

Write down what people say, so that you can encourage one another and check back when you meet next week.



# FURTHER EXPLORATION

The following is made available to you if you would like to study or discuss this week's topic of "What is Faith" in greater depth.

## + SEE IT

1. Based on your observation and experience, what does the average person trust in? What do people most rely upon as the object of their faith?
2. Read Hebrews 11:6-12, according to this passage, what should be the object of the Christian's faith?

## + UNDERSTAND IT

All throughout the Bible, Abraham is presented as an example of faith. Compare *Genesis 15:1-6* with *Romans 4:16-21*.

3. What was the object of Abraham's faith?
4. What did God communicate to Abraham?



5. When Abraham believed God's promise, what was it that he believed? Whom did he trust?
  
6. Since believing God's promise is tantamount to believing God, if we were to follow the example of Abraham, what would be the object of our faith?

## **+ LIVE IT**

7. What do you think it would be like if a person were to live by faith in God and His Word?
  
8. If you were to make God and His Word the object of your faith right now, what areas of your life do you think would be immediately impacted?



# DEVOTIONS

☒ READ

☒ STUDY

☒ PRAY

# Day 11: Not Perfect BUT Perfected

Jason Park

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (Galatians:3:13-14)*

My father was a great baseball coach. Once after some hitting drills, he asked me, "you know why we are doing this, right"? I responded with, "because practice makes perfect"? He laughed and said, "practice makes better, not perfect". He said something I will never forget. "You cannot be perfect at baseball or anything else in life. If your goal is perfection, you will spend all your energy thinking about the things you did wrong as opposed to the things you did right". He would remind me of that many times over the next 37 years of his life.

Just as my dad had to remind me on occasion, Paul is reminding the Galatians of their true identity. In verse 1 when he referred to them as "foolish Galatians!". They believed false teachers and were falling into their old ways, hoping to sustain their relationship with God by following the law. In verse 10, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law". They needed a reminder they could not be perfect BUT Jesus, who was perfect, rescued them and took on their curse.

Look closely at the first three words of Galatians 3:13. "*Christ redeemed us*". Redeemed literally means "to buy off," "to set free by the payment of a price". The New Living Translation reads, "Christ has rescued us". Both are powerful images of how

a ransom was paid for our sins with the blood of the Son of God and we are FREE!

As a result of our redemption and our rescue, Paul describes two things that occur:

1. The blessing of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Christ and
2. The promise of the Spirit might be bestowed by faith.

Amen to that! The same blessing provided to Abraham, one of the most faithful men in the Old Testament, would be provided to us? WOW! In addition, we would receive the “promise of the Spirit”? That is amazing. The Message translation reads, “we are able to receive God’s life, his Spirit, in and with us”.

What a great reminder from Paul. He says the promise of the Spirit is received when we have faith. Romans 10:17 provides a great reminder from Paul regarding faith, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” What does that mean? When we spend time in God’s word, we strengthen our faith.

## PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father. Thank you for taking on our curse and paying our debt. Thank you for rescuing us. Thank you for extending the same blessings that was provided to Abraham and thank you for the promise of your Spirit. Thank you for the word of God and its ability to restore our faith. AMEN!

# Day 12: Breaking the Cycle


Michael Ann Nameroff

When my brother & I were young, we had a pyromaniac streak in us. We loved to strike matches (lighters were not plentiful in the '60's!) and burn all kinds of things. We knew that we were breaking a rule laid down by our parents, but we thought that their law was mean and arbitrary. However, we reaped consequences for our transgression when our dad rapped our knuckles with wooden pencils! It hurt! We stopped, but sure enough we had additional episodes.

As we got older, we realized that our parents loved us, and wanted what's best for us. We would go to them for financial advice, or relationship advice, and would try to do what they told us – not because we would get punished if we didn't, but because now we trusted them.

Man's relationship with God is like a child's relationship to their parents. Whether we grew up in a Christian family or not, God gave us a sense of what's right and what's wrong. But often our nature leads us to WANT to do the wrong thing. And after we do that wrong thing, we feel guilt and shame. How does Paul explain the way out of this cycle?

Remember the Law of the Old Testament was given to reveal sin in its true light. (in other words, the sinfulness of sin). When God gave the Law to the Israelites they could know when they were violating an explicit law of God because God had written it out. Paul in Galatians 3 is clarifying the relationship between the gospel of blessing by faith promised to Abraham and the Law given to Moses. How do these two covenants work together?



**Only faith  
in Jesus can  
break us  
out of sin's  
confinement.**

*The first part of Galatians 3:22 says this, "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin".*

Sin is like the bars of a prison cell that confine us. The Scripture put us in jail because it pointed out our sinful condition. And the bottom line is we are imprisoned by sin and the law can't free us because it is what put us in the prison!

*Fortunately, there is a second half of Galatians 3:22... "that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."*

Only faith in Jesus can break us out of sin's confinement. The law served its purpose by showing us our problem and God's standard, but it can't give us the freedom that the grace of Jesus gives. This is the promise by faith!

The Law was given to drive us to grace, because the Law causes us to see our need for Jesus. In other words, if I want to be declared righteous, but I can't keep the Law, what then? The Law drives me to grace and the need to put my faith in Jesus!

## PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father. Thank you for taking on our curse and paying our debt. Thank you for rescuing us. Thank you for extending the same blessings that was provided to Abraham and thank you for the promise of your Spirit. Thank you for the word of God and its ability to restore our faith. AMEN!

# Day 13: Copycat for Christ

Nancy Matossian

What started out with disappointment quickly became more memorable than anyone could have imagined. Father's Day was coming and at 9 years old, she had big visions of giving her dad custom socks with her face and smile looking back up at him from his toes. When the order didn't come on time, mom suggested they head to a store to find a backup plan. The backup plan was a fill in the blanks book, where she would complete the sentence prompts about her dad. With 50 to write, she went to her room determined to complete it on her own. She was successful. Not only did she complete all 50 sentences about her dad, as he sat and read each one out loud they shared a beautifully memorable family time. One of the answers in particular they decided to share with me. The prompt: I hope to be...like you one day. The filled in sentence: I hope to be teaching kids at church like you one day.

*Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. (Galatians 3:23-26)*

In Galatians 3:23-26, we are reminded to live a life that shows



**Is your life  
of faith  
producing  
copycats?**

evidence we are children of God. Living a life of freedom through our faith. Is your life of faith producing copycats? Is your faith so evident that people's lives are changed through Christ? Are there children currently in your life who see you model a life of faith? Should there be? If you want to know more about impacting kids for the Kingdom on Sunday's - reach out!

Let's all be in the business of showing what it looks like to live a life of faith as children of God!

## PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for making a way for me to live life as a child of God. Help make my faith strong. Help make my faith contagious to others. Give me places and ways to model to others, living a life of faith. It is an honor to be your child! In Jesus name, Amen.

***\* Well done, Dad! David is one of Crossline Kids Sunday leaders. Karis is his 9 year old daughter who watches him live and model a life of faith as a child of God!***



# Day 14: By Grace Through Faith

Dave Brodsky

Growing up in a Jewish home, I didn't celebrate Christmas and I didn't believe in Santa Claus. Although I became accustomed to the experience, December 26th was always somewhat overwhelming when my friends invited me into their homes and my eyes began a visual inventory of all the new toys my friends had received. I just didn't have a category for that kind of abundance. But over time, I came to realize it wasn't excess or extravagance – I was witnessing generosity. Parents and grandparents were giving their children and grandchildren presents because they loved them and wanted to express their love. It wasn't about Santa's naughty or nice list – it wasn't about how the kids performed or anything that they had earned; they were in a relationship with people who loved them and were generously expressing that love. In fact, once I discovered the true meaning of Christmas, I learned how the Father gave His Son because He loved us.

God has always been the best Teacher on generous giving and on grace, because He always models it for us. He gives generously to us and He is gracious to us when there is no obligation on His part. We aren't worthy of salvation, earthly treasures, or even comfort or joy. Yet He offers us heaven, peace, grace, mercy, rest, and His presence! In this passage, Paul instructs the Church at Ephesus in an absolutely essential pillar of our faith:

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

The Lord wants us to be crystal clear on this truth – there is

nothing we can do to earn or achieve salvation. We aren't saved by being good, we aren't saved by apologizing, we aren't saved by being baptized, we aren't even saved by saying the sinner's prayer! We're only saved by God's grace. He saves us by His grace through our faith in Jesus Christ.

God is so generous and He offers us His grace every day and in so many ways. If you aren't experiencing His grace, it might be time to double-check who is doing the heavy lifting in your relationship with Him. Are you trying to carry the weight? Are you acting like it's up to you? Have you been relying on your works or choosing to rest in the lap of your Father? He is so gracious and generous. And you can turn to Him at any time.

## PRAYER

Father, thank You for the free gift of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. There is nothing I can do to earn Your love, but You love me anyway. I am Your child, and because I accept the payment on my behalf that Jesus paid by dying on the cross for my sins, and rising again from the dead, I will never be separated from You. Help me to remember never to boast in my works, because there is nothing I've ever done to earn my relationship with You. But instead, let my life, my words and my deeds always reflect the grace You give, and may I be a bold testimony to Your grace wherever I am. Amen.

# Day 15: Don't Miss Out

Grant Gunther

In 2001 we were blessed with the classic film *Rat Race*, which is a movie that follows around a bunch of different Las Vegas tourists who have been given the opportunity by a casino owner to collect a \$2 million-dollar cash prize. However, the catch is that the prize is actually in a locker in Silver City, New Mexico, meaning, they will all have to race against one another to be the first ones to the locker. What makes this movie so amazing is watching how this journey unfolds for all of the various people racing to claim the prize, because absolutely nothing goes according to plan for anyone. But, could you imagine how lame the movie would have been if, after being told about the

\$2 million prize, everyone declined the opportunity? We would have missed out on some of the most iconic movie scenes in the last twenty years, and the prize would have stayed unclaimed in the locker.

“

**We tend to leave those promises locked in the locker.**

When it comes to all that God has for us -- the vast myriad of promises that He has woven into the New Covenant and desires to lavish upon us -- it can sometimes seem that our actions, thoughts, and words often communicate a posture of rejection. We tend to leave those promises locked in the locker. Rather than receiving the promises of God with an

active faith, we turn away from Him and choose to do what we want to do. In the opening verses of Hebrews 4 we are given a warning based upon the Israelites in the Old Testament. Here is what these verses say:

*Therefore, while the promise to enter His rest remains, let us fear that none of you should miss it. For we also have received the good news just as they did; but the message they heard did not benefit them, since they were not united with those who heard it in faith... (Hebrews 4:1-2)*

These verses recall the promise of rest God had made to His people in the OT, and how that promise remains for Christians to take hold of presently. However, the author exhorts his readers to not follow the example of the Israelites, because the message of rest did not benefit them since they did not respond in faith toward God. Rest is one of many promises God has made to His creation, but unless we choose to turn to Him in faith and receive them we are going to miss out on all He has for us. So, let's heed the words of Hebrews 4 and turn to the Lord in faithful obedience that we might benefit from all that He has for us.

## PRAYER

Lord, You tell us that You are someone who desires to bless, You are someone who desires to give us Your good gifts, You are someone who wants us to experience all of the promises that You have made to us. Praise You and thank You Lord for wanting to give to us.





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## SESSION 4

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FAITH  
EXPRESSED  
IN ACTION

# INTRODUCTION

I had a conversation some time back with a young man I met at the gym. I was sitting in the jacuzzi after working out and he was swimming laps in the pool. It was obvious to me that he was a competitive swimmer and so when he finished his laps, I asked him if he was on a swim team. As it turned out, he was on the Water Polo team of a local college. Our conversation progressed and we began to talk about faith and his understanding of Christianity.

He was a Philosophy major and made a comment about a particular philosopher. I responded by adding that the philosopher in question was famous for saying, "Christianity was a blind leap of faith". Interested, he said that he too had always understood faith in the same way. At this point, I knew we were in the midst of a great conversation!

I explained that Biblical faith took facts, an acceptance of those facts and then an action step based on the facts. Intrigued, he asked me to explain what I meant. I looked over at a nearby bench and said, "What if I told you that bench could support the weight of a 300 pound man, would you believe me?" He looked at the bench and said, "Sure that makes sense". I asked him, "Do you have faith in what I said?" He looked at me and said, "Yes I do. I believe it". Again, with more intensity I said, "Do you really believe the bench will support your weight?" Again, he said, "Yes I do". Looking right at him, I said, "Really?" Now, a little confused, he looked over at the bench. Suddenly a smile came on his face and with confidence, he walked over to the bench and sat down. "Yes, I believe", he said. Smiling with recognition, I responded, "Now you are living by faith!"



## VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for *Session 3, Faith has an Object*

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# CONNECT

Begin your group discussion by going around the room and answering the following question.

***Why do you think faith requires an action?***

# READ

## **James 2:14-17, 21-24**

*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? <sup>15</sup> Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

*<sup>21</sup> Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. <sup>23</sup> And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,"[and he was called God's friend. <sup>24</sup> You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.*



# DISCUSS

Using the scripture from above, answer the following questions.

1. What does the passage teach about God?
2. What do these passages teach about us, as people?
3. What are these passages prompting us to do?

# RESPOND

In response to what you read and discussed today,

***What is one action you want to take over this next week?***

Write down what people say, so that you can encourage one another and check back when you meet next week.



# FURTHER EXPLORATION

The following is made available to you if you would like to study or discuss this week's topic of "What is Faith" in greater depth.

## + SEE IT

1. Biblical faith is always expressed in action. Why do you think faith requires action?
2. If a person says they believe something but there is no action to back it up, how would you describe their belief?

## + UNDERSTAND IT

Read *James 2:14-26* and answer the following questions:

3. What do you think is the controversy that James is addressing?
4. If you were to summarize the big idea of this passage, what would it be?

5. A correct interpretation of this passage hinges on *James 2:14*. James is not contrasting faith and works but true Biblical faith with a false faith. How did Abraham demonstrating a true Biblical faith? How did Rahab demonstrate a true Biblical faith?
6. Based on this teaching and its examples, what is your conclusion about true Biblical faith?

## + LIVE IT

7. What do you think it would look like for a Christ-follower to act upon what they say they believe?
8. If you were to act upon your faith, what actions do you think God would lead you to take right now?



# DEVOTIONS

☒ READ

☒ STUDY

☒ PRAY

# Day 16: Take A Drink

Kristin Jardine

I don't know about you, but I sometimes feel like I am fighting the same old battles that I have been fighting for years. Comparison to others and the desire to be satisfied are two of those battles for me. I look back at my younger self and I can hear my voice in my head saying, "Once you get married, you'll be satisfied. Once you buy a house, you'll be satisfied. Once you have kids, you'll be satisfied. Once you book that job, you'll be satisfied." But then, once those things were achieved, my soul still pined for more. I would get so involved in feeling less than adequate and comparing my life to others, that I would start questioning why God didn't give me this or that. I would wonder when I would finally feel satisfied and content. And then I realized my soul was not only looking for the satisfaction in the wrong places, but I had also stopped being aware of the blessings right in front of me, leading to comparison.

Over the years, I have had to learn how to be content with who I am, where I am, and with what I have; or, well...what I don't have. When I find myself trying to compare myself to what others have or wishing for something to bring satisfaction, I remind myself to run to the well and drink of the water Jesus offers.

*"On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified." (John 7:37-39)*

You see, God created us to be hungry and thirsty, and not just physically, but spiritually. Our souls need to drink and feed on something to find rest and satisfaction. Ultimately, our souls are made to find satisfaction in what Jesus offers us, not the

world. When we drink of the living water that Jesus offers, our thirst is satisfied in Him. The beauty of drinking from what Jesus extends to us is that He gives us more than one drink. He offers us a fountain, a spring, a river. The byproduct of drinking from this fountain is that it is everlasting and overflowing, which in turn, allows us to be overflowing from within. Because of this living water we drink from, our actions are the outpour of our refreshed souls, allowing others to see the light of Jesus. People begin to see that the source of our satisfaction derives from something different... something more secure than the world has to offer.



**Ultimately,  
our souls are  
made to find  
satisfaction  
in what  
Jesus offers  
us, not the  
world.**

## **PRAYER**

Father, you are the only true supplier of satisfaction. You are our River Maker. Thank you for your Son who came to give us a fountain of water to quench the thirst of our souls. Give us the discernment to know when we are trying to satisfy our lives with things that are not everlasting. Fill our minds and hearts on things that are of you and that glorify you. Then grant us the confidence to overflow the rivers of living water to those around us. In your Son's name, Amen.

# Day 17: Knowing vs. Knowing Of

Ashton Jones

The sound of silence was thick and the intensity of the room was palpable. Only the speaker's voice pierced the stillness. Something started to stir within me. It was an experience I had never felt or known before. This was not just another message or Bible story, this was something life-changing; this was the gospel.

I grew up with conversations regarding church and God so I thought I knew all there was to "know" about Christianity. Raised in a loving, Christ-centered home, I knew truths about Jesus, but my relationship with Christ was motivated by moral regulations, not by the grace of Christ. From my perspective, the teachings of Jesus seemed to be knowledge for the mind, not application for the heart. I knew of Christ, but I didn't really know Christ.

I was 15 years old when I first grasped the good news of the gospel. The camp pastor spoke on living an authentic life for the Lord and I was transfixed. This was something I wanted, but knew deep down, didn't have. As he spoke I came to understand I needed to believe in Jesus, not just believe about Jesus. I sensed God pulling on my heart to truly commit to Him. I was propelled into a new life where Jesus' words now became the blueprint for my life.

The good news of the gospel and the words of Jesus can transform our entire being. This is exactly what Jesus talked about in the gospel of John.

*Then many who heard him say these things believed in him. Jesus said to the people who believed in him, 'You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. (John 8:30-31)*

In this passage Jesus addressed a crowd who knew of Him. They believed that he was profound in knowledge and articulate in Jewish religious culture. However as he spoke to the crowd, Jesus did not just address the head - he addressed the heart. In John 8, Jesus gives us the answer to what true belief looks like. It is not a secret. It is not a mystery. If we want to be true disciples we should remain faithful to His teachings.

This means we need to know Jesus and his teachings, not just know of them. His life and teachings have the ability and power to transform and equip us into world-changing disciples. This happens as we align ourselves with the teachings and truths of Jesus. The standard is no longer the world, but the Savior of the world.

Knowing this truth, the challenge is to choose, each day, to be faithful to Jesus and his teachings.

## PRAYER

Dear Lord, Thank you for allowing me to know you in a real and intimate way. I pray that you help me continue to believe in you. May you transform my heart to understand the plans you have for me. Jesus, may you and your teachings be the standard for my life. May I be your true disciple and follow you all the days of my life. Amen



# Day 18: Experience vs. Expectation

David Wilson


"Jesus, please meet my daughter in her dreams, and walk with Her. Talk to her. Let her know the sound of Your voice. Let her see You, and know You personally. Give her the gift of a unique and intimate relationship with You, and prepare for her a life that makes a uniquely powerful impact for Your Kingdom."

These are words I pray over my daughter every evening when I put her to bed. I want for my daughter what I desire for me: "a uniquely powerful impact for Jesus' Kingdom". I pray for the works of Jesus, and even "greater works". Often, I've equated those works to His acts of power and signs and wonders, and been disappointed that they don't transpire at the completion of my prayers.


Let me elaborate. When my wife's aunt was deep under the physical oppression of ALS, I was convinced that Jesus wanted to heal her. I prayed for a long time leading up to the moment that my wife and I sat down in front of her aunt and uncle, with our Bible in hand, to talk through the promises of scripture and then to give her healing over to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Her aunt's and uncle's belief in Jesus was not known to us. Certainly, they were spiritual people, but believers in Jesus? We didn't know. So, this meeting carried with it a significant level of anxiety. I know what Jesus said in scripture... but would He follow through? Was I hearing from Him? Was I taking His scripture out of context? Could I misrepresent Him in a disastrous way? Would it be awkward? Would they be offended?

I searched my heart for things that might be not of Him. I concluded that I believed He desired her healing, so I would step out boldly in faith and leave the results to Jesus.



**I know what  
Jesus said in  
scripture...  
but would  
He follow  
through?**



*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:12-14)*

Jesus makes a bold and powerful promise in John 14:14. It's the truth, though. A key danger in Christianity is to define our doctrine based on our experiences, instead of on the truth – the Word of God.

She was not healed, but they were not offended... they felt loved. And my wife and I

gained a greater confidence that she is a citizen of Heaven.

When our expectations seem out of alignment with our experience, our faith requires that we understand the nature of Jesus. He is the Lord of truth. There is no falseness in Him. He cannot change. What He has promised, He is able to perform. So then, how do we move forward, with missed expectations? In Praise. Not just reminding ourselves of what He's done, but more explicitly reminding ourselves of who He Is.

## PRAYER

Jesus, I give you praise for who You are. Your ways are not my ways. Your thoughts not my thoughts. Grant me the faith to see You for who You are, even my experience doesn't match with my expectations of Your promises.

Amen.

# Day 19: Moving Beyond Faith

Erica Davis

I was safe. I was happy. I was content. I was serving God. Yet, I felt empty. I was serving the Lord from a place of comfortability in my own giftings. I was protecting myself from burn out. Though the truth was that my faith was running dry. I was in need of breakthrough, I was in need of growth. Let's be honest, if I'm serving from comfortability, how much faith is actually needed?

It's funny how the Lord will use one simple phrase to wake you up, to call you deeper, causing you to make a decision to go deeper in your faith. To move you beyond faith into action. Our Savior is gentle and kind and will help you at each step you take. The Lord spoke to me and asked me, "What's my love costing you?" James asked the same question.

*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:14-17)*

God was challenging me. The questions I meditated on in this season were: Is your faith real if you don't live it out? Do you really believe God's word? If so, then do it. James 1:25 claims, if you do it, you will be blessed. Fear has a way of blocking us from fullness. When God challenges our hearts, it's because he knows what's on the other side of the breakthrough. It isn't necessarily that He blesses our efforts. Because serving is hard. It isn't that He makes the receiver of our generosity grateful. Because, every person is unique. The blessing comes from obedience and

intimacy in relationship with Him. When we move beyond faith into action and live fully what God intended us to do, we become alive in Christ.

If you are feeling fearful or stuck and in need of a breakthrough, be encouraged! Our God is able to meet you at your next step of faith. Remember, he is an encourager, He loves you, He is for you! He is trustworthy.



**Fear has  
a way of  
blocking  
us from  
fullness.**

## PRAYER

God, thank you that you want to continue to grow my faith. Thank you that you guide me in my journey and are watchful for times when I grow stagnant. The truth is, you have life intended for me, and life to the full. Forgive me for thinking small. Forgive me for living out of my excess. God I want to love others the way you've loved me. I want to be used by you. Thank you for depositing into me, your word, and your heart. I want to be spent on your behalf. Thank you that you are always with me. When you call me to action, you go before me. You have a plan and a purpose for my life and you call me your ambassador. Thank you that I can count on you because ALL your promises prove true. Amen

# Day 20: Here We Go!

Kenny Luck

At the outset of the COVID crisis, California was one of the first to have a mandatory quarantine – California was going completely indoors. No one knew, at the time, if that was the right thing to do. When my own personal quarantine order came down, I felt strongly that quarantining would spread from the West Coast and head East across the Mississippi River until the whole nation was binging on Netflix, working from home, and buying toilet paper on e-Bay. I remember calling my producer for my weekly men's livestream and saying, "I think we need to stop our current series, pivot and create a series for men globally called the 'Corona Chronicles'. We will talk to God's people about God's plan in the midst of crazy." He thought I was crazy, but God kept telling me that more men will be working from home and able to watch. It was a total gamble and I went all out to raise awareness. I didn't have graphics, messages, or descriptions to get out the word. My wonderful team rallied and we launched the seven week series nationwide. This series ended up reaching over 100,000 men around the world and increased our livestream audience by a factor of forty! Most importantly, I didn't listen to culture or politics or even my own misgivings, God was leading me to hit the cultural event with Christ's truth head on and I jumped off the cliff.

"Here we go!" is a good way of summarizing what happened.

The Bible says that faith is exercised in the direction of your future hope and always involves two things: committing before knowing and a completing action. You hope to get to church – in faith you get in the car and start driving. You hope to fly to your vacation destination – in faith you get on the plane. You hope to feel better – in faith you go to the doctor's office, picked up a prescription and take a pill. Faith – commitment before knowing and completing it with an action – is built into the fabric of our lives. In faith, we are willing to take certain risks with our bodies

because the hope is for a specific outcome is strong. Faith must have both belief and behaviors.

*I can already hear one of you agreeing by saying, "Sounds good. You take care of the faith department, I'll handle the works department." Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove. Do I hear you professing to believe in the one and only God, but then observe you complacently sitting back as if you had done something wonderful? That's just great. Demons do that, but what good does it do them? (James 1:18-19 MSG)*

## PRAYER

Jesus you said, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord but don't do what I say?" Fill me with your Spirit right now so I can complete my faith in you with the right actions. Amen.





# **SESSION 5**

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GROWING  
THROUGH  
FAITH



# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever received a gospel tract? Those little booklets that tell about Jesus? There definitely are some good ones and there are definitely some bad ones. (Like the ones that look like dollar bills...I mean, c'mon.) However, in the back of one of the more familiar gospel tracts, The Four Spiritual Laws is an illustration called the "The Train Diagram". In this illustration, there is a graphic of a train engine, a compartment car and the caboose. The engine is labeled FACT, the compartment car is labeled FAITH and the caboose is labeled FEELING. The caption underneath the graphic explains that the power for driving the train is found in the engine car. The engine car powers the train and the passenger car and caboose follow.

The caption continues to explain that it would be futile to try to pull the train by the caboose because there is no power and in fact, the train will run with or without the caboose. The purpose of the "Train Diagram" is to illustrate the Biblical truth of living by faith. Explaining this concept, the caption transitions and states, "In the same way, we, as Christians, do not depend upon feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word." The Christian life is lived by faith in the fact, not by feelings. It's lived clinging to God's presence and promises. Sometimes, we need to "faith it" until we feel it!



## VIDEO SEGMENT

Now, as a group, turn on your TV or Laptop and watch the video for *Session 3, Faith has an Object*

### 2 WAYS TO WATCH:

1. Through RightNow Media (Learn How on Page 99)
2. Go to [crosslinechurch.com/faith](http://crosslinechurch.com/faith)

After watching, take a moment to initially respond with your thoughts about the video.



Begin your group discussion by going around the room and answering the following question.

*When was a time that your feelings failed you?*



## **2 Peter 1:3-4**

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.<sup>4</sup> Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

# DISCUSS

Using the scripture from above, answer the following questions.

1. What does the passage teach about God?
2. What do these passages teach about us, as people?
3. What are these passages prompting us to do?

# RESPOND

In response to what you read and discussed today,

***What is one action you want to take over this next week?***

Write down what people say, so that you can encourage one another and check back when you meet next week.



# FURTHER EXPLORATION

The following is made available to you If you would like to study or discuss this week's topic of "What is Faith" in greater depth.

## + SEE IT

1. How would you describe the difference between living by faith versus living by feelings?
2. As a follower of Jesus, why do you think living by faith is a better approach to spiritual growth and following Christ?

## + UNDERSTAND IT

Read *Romans 4:13-5:1*

3. What was the promise that God made to Abraham?
4. What challenge of obstacle stood in the way of Abraham experiencing God's promise?

5. How do you think Abraham felt about his situation? If you were Abraham and you were living by your feelings, what would be your response?
6. According to verses 19-22, what was the driving factor in Abraham's relationship with God?
7. Abraham chose to believe God more than he believed in his physical condition or personal feelings. As a result, his actions were influenced by faith. Abraham didn't fake it, he faithed it! What do think is the difference between "faking" it and acting in faith even when we don't feel it or see the reality of the promise?

## **+ LIVE IT**

8. Based on your experience, what might be the outcome of living by our feelings?
9. Faith is like a muscle, it grows with exercise. How can you exercise your faith muscle so that you increasingly live by faith over feelings?



# DEVOTIONS

☒ READ

☒ STUDY

☒ PRAY

# Day 21: So...You Want to help Me Move?

Matt Fager

I was raised by a single mom in a household where hard work was ingrained in us. Our weekends usually consisted of chores; cleaning our rooms, cleaning the house, and pulling weeds. Tasks that felt like they would never end. My mom came from a long line of hard workers, and she wasn't going to let my sister and I miss out on that tradition. Thanks, mom. At the time it felt like torture but looking back I can appreciate it. I got to spend time with my mom and was able to help her accomplish her goals of a clean house and a clean yard. She taught me the value of work and lightening the load of others. Now when I'm presented with the opportunity to do something daunting, like helping someone move, my gut reaction is to say yes, as an outward expression of my inner appreciation of my time with mom.

I recognize that not everyone grew up the same way I did, and that work is often thought of as a bad word, especially regarding salvation. Even back in James' day they were wrestling with the notion that true faith isn't just believing in God, it's living it out. James used Abraham as the ultimate example of faith in action and to illustrate that living out our faith isn't always easy.

*You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. (James 2:20-22)*

Salvation is by grace, through faith. We can't work to earn it. However, when we're saved, our lives are changed. Our sins are forgiven. We get to look forward to eternity in heaven. We have the Holy Spirit living in us! Because of this, we need to say yes to

God when asked to do His work as an outward expression of the inner appreciation of what God has done for us.

So seek to say “yes” to God’s promptings today.

## PRAYER

Jesus, thank You for pursuing me and every believer. Thank You for Your sacrifice. For salvation and for Your spirit that lives in us. You are the Lord of our lives. I pray that this reality would sink in for every believer, so that when prompted to do Your work, we can't help but say yes, even if the circumstances are uncomfortable. You don't call us to a life of comfort and we don't always get to understand Your ways, but we believe in You and Your plan. I pray that we don't miss the opportunity to put our faith in action. That we don't miss the opportunities to reflect You and Your love. Amen.



# Day 22: The Uniform of Christ

Kylie Healy

I recently watched a show on Netflix called "100 Humans." The show observes 100 humans who participate in social experiments that explore various aspects of humanity. Though I wouldn't necessarily recommend every episode, I did find one of the episodes to be interesting. In this particular episode, participants were asked to interact with individuals wearing different occupational uniforms. The uniforms varied from police officers, janitors, surgeons, fast-food workers, army officers, and pilots. The premise of the experiment was to determine if the participants were more attracted to the individuals with uniforms or without uniforms. While the findings are interesting, this silly social experiment reminded me that uniforms are a defining element in an individual's outer identity.



**This life of  
surrender  
- putting  
on a new  
identity, a  
new uniform  
- is a natural  
response to  
the love of  
Christ.**

It seems obvious, but people know who you are and what you do when you wear a uniform. When you are at Starbucks and see someone wearing scrubs, you know that they work in the

medical field. When you are walking through the airport, it is easy to distinguish between the passengers of the flight and the airline crew. Similarly, the same is true in our spiritual lives. Prior to Jesus, our life uniform looks one way, but when we enter into a relationship with Him, we receive a new uniform. This idea is reiterated in Galatians 2:20.

*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

As Christ-followers, everyday is an opportunity to either put on the uniform of our new life of faith in Christ or the uniform of our old live apart from Him. So, the question we need to ask ourselves is this: what kind of uniform are we wearing? Does our uniform reflect a life of faith in Jesus?

We are saved by faith alone and it is by faith that we trust in the finished work of the cross. It is by faith that we continue to live our lives with our new Jesus uniform, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead, transform and guide our lives to look more and more like Jesus. This life of surrender - putting on a new identity, a new uniform - is a natural response to the love of Christ. In the final part of *Galatians 2:20*, we see the motive for why Jesus gave himself for us: love.

Today, let's choose to look more like Jesus. Let's put on our new Jesus uniform and live by faith, in the Son of God, who loves us so much He was willing to fully give himself for us.

## PRAYER

Jesus, it is no longer I who live, but You who live in me. Thank You for taking my place on the cross. Thank You for loving me and giving Yourself for me. Lord, I ask that my life would be a reflection of who You are. Help me Holy Spirit to put on my new uniform in Christ. I ask this in Your name Jesus, Amen.

# Day 23: Fear vs. Faith

Pat Lawless

When I moved to California in my early twenties from Kansas, I was afraid. Everything was new and different, even finding my way to work or meetings was a challenge. In those days, instead of using Google Maps, we used this weird thing called a map or Thomas Guide to find our way around. In addition to all that, I could not believe how many people lived in southern California. It was a very fearful time in my life.

I remember traveling to Modesto, CA on a business trip and I was down on my luck, (as the saying goes), so I called my brother, Tom, to get some encouragement or advice. He told me that my problem was not my relationships, my job, money or the many changes I was going through, rather he told me my problem was I did not believe in Jesus. He shared the Gospel of Jesus with me and the message of the gospel resonated with me. That night in my hotel room, I got on my knees and asked Jesus to come into my life and save me from my sins. I literally went from a life of fear to a life of faith in Jesus. My brother Tom was not ashamed of the gospel because the gospel is the power to save us from ourselves and our sin. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the *Romans 1:16-17*, explains the power of the gospel of Jesus this way:

*"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."" (Romans 1:16-17)*

I want to be a man of faith, but not faith in myself, because living for myself only made my life worse. My faith is in Jesus, that He died for my sins and was raised to life. The reason I will never die is because my life is tied to Jesus, and because Jesus is alive I will live with Him forever. What is so powerful about the gospel

“

**I literally  
went from a  
life of fear to  
a life of faith  
in Jesus.**

of Jesus is that not only does God save you from your sins, He actually gives you the gift of faith. We do not have the power to save ourselves, only Jesus and His gospel can save us. Don't be ashamed of the gospel, rather believe in the gospel of Jesus and be saved.

## **PRAYER**

Holy Father, thank You that Tom was not ashamed of the gospel which has saved my life. Help me to have the same boldness. Grant me opportunities to share with others. By faith, I surrender my life to You. I long to serve You all of the days of my life. Amen

# Day 24: The Design

Sergio Serrano

It is the year 2020 and I, like many of you, have an iPhone. Some people have different variations of the iPhone. Others might even find themselves in a totally different category: The droids (we still love you guys.) If we stop to think about the many uses and functions that our phones enable us to accomplish, we realize how versatile and “smart” these devices are. They allow us to do so much more than just communicate through a call or a text, from calendar scheduling, video recording, news and social media apps, listening to music or podcasts, to tracking your health or finances. With these functions and so much more, phones have become an important part of our daily routines. Our phones are intelligent, intricate devices that have been designed by great minds. Since smartphones are too sophisticated to suddenly appear out of nowhere, they have (and need) a designer. If something as complex as phones requires a designer, how much more does the complexity of human beings, nature and the world around us also require a designer? Creation implies that there is Creator; a Designer.

*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools. (Romans 1:21-22)*

The apostle Paul is writing to the church in Rome with the purpose to present the message of the gospel, for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike. His message is the good news that our lives have purpose. Our lives have an original design that was distorted by the fall of humanity, but through faith in Jesus, it can be restored. Our Creator desires to restore the original design for His creation. We are His creation and He intended for us to rightly see Him and enjoy a relationship with Him. This scripture points us all to see who our Maker is. Paul is referring to a crowd who didn't view God as the Creator, but blindly worshiped

creation, as a substitute. Their lack of faith and understanding led them to a place of blind contentment and foolish ways. Humanity's downfall starts with not rightly seeing God for who He is. This passage warns us that If we choose not to view God in His rightful place, we are just like the people that Paul wrote about; our hearts will darken and our thinking will be futile. We may know of God and see things that point towards him, but still miss seeing Him as the one worth our worship and gratitude.

God created us with a design that allows us to experience life in its richest, healthiest and most truest form. There is a call to behold & recognize Him. From the global to the personal, in the big and in small details and everywhere in between, we can bring honor to God by recognizing Him as the Creator. When we see Him, we are stepping into a place of humility, gratitude and relationship with Him. This glorifies Him, points others to see their Maker and fulfill us, because we are living in the original design.

## PRAYER

Lord, you are the Creator of all. We are amazed and humbled. Thank you for creating me with a purpose that impacts my present and future. May I live and walk in all You have for me. May this life honor You, bless others and fulfill my purpose. In Jesus name, Amen!

# Day 25: I am Right Here

Sarah Aungst

Some of my favorite days when I was growing up were pool days at our neighborhood rec center, swimming all day until we were sun spent with eyes stinging from the chlorine. I have a particular memory of a dad encouraging his young, floatie-clad, goggle-wearing daughter to jump in for what seemed like her first time. Her nerves were apparent as her legs shook and her toes grasped the edge of the pool. Her dad consistently, gently, and patiently reminded her, “I am right here. I promise I will catch you. I promise you can do this.” It was quite the back in forth, but after a while she locked eyes on him, believed his promise, and cannonballed right in.

Did you know that faith is the key to pleasing God? Not kindness, not acts of service, not even obedience is the key, it's faith! Our scripture, found in the book of Hebrews in the midst of the section titled “By Faith,” makes this fact abundantly clear. This “By Faith” section is famous for listing some of the stories of the MVPs of the Bible. What makes them MVP's you ask? Well, they lived “by faith.” Our verse is nestled in the midst of these MVPs, because the author must have desired that someday we too would make the list.

*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Hebrews 11:6*

It is impossible to please God or even be near to God without faith. From this verse we can see that this “faith” looks like believing that He is real and acknowledging His desire to reward those who follow Him, to uphold His promises. God promises many things to His children. I wish I could cite them all, but to summarize a few, He promises to renew our strength (*Is 40:31*), have good plans for us (*Jer 29:11*), save us (*John 3:16*), and be with us at all times (*Josh 1:9*). Let's think back to our pool day.

The quivering girl at the edge of pool clearly knew her dad was there, she chose believe his promises, and by faith she jumped! What is a situation, conversation, or circumstance where you need recognize that God is with you, remember His promises for you, and, because of your faith, jump? Like the Dad in the pool, God is in front of you and makes promises to you, what is holding you back? By faith, by acknowledging God's presence and believing in His promises, we too can cannonball into life like the MVPs in Hebrews 11. Let's do it!



**God is in  
front of you  
and makes  
promises to  
you, what is  
holding you  
back?**

## **PRAYER**

God, I know that You are real and that You are with me. I acknowledge and celebrate the gracious promises You have made to me. God, like the examples in Hebrews 11, help me to have faith to jump into whatever situation, conversation, or opportunity You have for me. Amen.



# APPENDICES

INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT GROUP

COMMITMENT CONTRACT

HOW TO ACCESS RIGHTNOW MEDIA

DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST

ABOUT THE EDITOR

ABOUT CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH

# INGREDIENTS FOR A × GREAT GROUP

Whether you have been a part of a group like this before or not, please take a look at the following guidelines to help your group function to its greatest possible potential.

- **Don't Miss!** This first tip is a big one! As a community group, make a commitment to not miss! This includes being on time! If you are going to miss or be late, make it a commitment to let your host/group know ahead of time! (Not an hour before group starts!)
- **Assign a timekeeper!** Amongst everyone in the group, there is bound to be someone who appreciates organization and timeliness—assign this person to be the timekeeper for group time together. Give this person permission to move things along to make sure everything gets done and group ends on time.
- **Keep it Confidential!** One of the beautiful things about Community Groups is the deep, meaningful conversation that happens. A definitive rule for your group that everyone ought agree on is to keep sensitive things that are shared confidential!
- **R-E-S-P-E-C-T!** Your group is likely comprised all sorts of people that come from all sorts of backgrounds—it's one of the great features of your group! As a group, commit to making your group a safe environment with mutual respect. Respect not only your fellow group members and your host, but also the property of who's home you are meeting at!
- **Have Fun!** Don't forget to have fun! Laugh! Play games! You can even make specific space for that stuff!
- **EAT UP!!** Food always provides a sense of comfort and unity in group settings, so whether it's a full meal, snacks, dessert or coffee—Eat up!

- **Take Turns!** Many groups find ways for members to take turns on things such as providing food, leading prayer requests, texting reminders, or opening their home for group. It's always healthy to not have one person in charge of something every time. (You can even assign a group member to coordinate this).
- **Find your own groove!** Here is what is important to know—no community group is the same and that's okay! As a group, find your groove on how you do things and stick with it.
- **Don't let kids control!** If you are group with kids, make group time a priority. It's easy to become overwhelmed with kids and their schedules and babysitters, but don't let that control your involvement! As a group, figure out the best scenario for childcare early on so that you can fully participate in group. (E.g. Individual babysitters, group babysitter(s), putting on a movie in the back room, etc.)

# × COMMITMENT CONTRACT

(Some groups may want to consider utilizing this simple commitment contract as a way of keeping each other accountable to healthy group participation.)

- *I commit to taking this group seriously.*
- *I commit to being intentional with my attendance to this group.*
- *I commit to engaging in conversation.*
- *I commit to respecting my fellow group members and keeping everything I hear confidential.*
- *I commit to being honest.*
- *I commit to all the things listed above because I value community and I desire to grow closer to all those in my group.*

Sign: × \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## HOW TO ACCESS RIGHTNOW MEDIA

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## CREATING A MULTIPLYING GROUP

*“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”  
(Acts 2:48-47)*

The traditional and most widely accepted understanding of a small group in western culture is that it is a place for you to find friends from your church that you can grow close to over the course of years as you study the Bible. It is a social gathering with a spiritual emphasis. Then, once the right collection of friends is found, you protect it so that you can have an inner-circle community that you can do life with. Whereas it cannot be denied that this is a central part of small groups, we believe this definition is not fully complete and is lacking the missional purpose of a small group. As we see in the passage above, the Lord was adding daily those who were being saved as a response to the fellowship of believers meeting in their homes and in the temple courts. As a follower of Jesus, isn't that your greatest hope? People being saved? If we collectively share this hope, we must acknowledge that it needs to be core emphasis of our small group gatherings.

Similarly, small groups of believers must also have the same heart and attitude of Christ, who compassionately saw the crowds of Israel as “sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36) and who pulled the outcasts and overlooked into community with him. So, whether it's someone lost in sin or an uninvited brother or sister, small groups of God's people must have open doors.

Anything that is healthy and attractive will grow. If your group is healthy and attractive, you should expect it to grow. It is our job to not stifle growth and, with prayerful discernment, seek out the will of God for our group. That said, here are 5 helpful tips that you can weave into the leadership of your group that will create a culture of multiplication while still maintaining closeness with those in the group.

- **Communicate and Meta-Message the vision:** One of the most important parts of creating a multiplying group is to be clear about the mission and purpose of your group. This means that it would be wise to, at the start of each new study, communicate the vision for your group and check-in with your group members about that vision. You also can meta-message the vision in group discussion throughout each study.
- **Stay Flexible:** Be very careful to not get too rigid in the structure or make-up of your group, which would prohibit newcomers from participating and/or stunt growth. Rather, be flexible to changing things up and be checking in with your group members often.
- **Celebrate newcomers:** If you or one of your group members happens to, after first notifying the group, bring a newcomer, celebrate their participation! Be sure to extend loving hospitality that makes them feel truly welcome. Do your very best, as a group, to not come off as cliquey or exclusive.
- **Train-up the members of your group:** As a leader, you should always be seeking to train the members of the group to lead as well. You can do this by asking them to facilitate conversation, lead prayer, set up the meeting schedule, select and lead a study, etc. Then be sure to follow-up with them about it. If you are doing everything yourself, you are not creating a multiplying group.
- **Plant seeds of leadership:** One of the biggest reasons that people do not lead or serve in ways that they are capable of is that they are not asked. As you begin to notice certain members of the group evidencing leadership skills and spiritual maturity, it may be time to ask them if they would consider leading a group of their own. That can mean passing the torch of leadership to them OR having them start their own group OR splitting/subgrouping the group (which is growing) and having them lead the other group out of the split.

Having a multiplying group that you truly see people connected and brought to salvation through is wildly rewarding. I fully understand that it may seem to be disruptive to the closeness of your group, but counter-intuitively, it actually brings a group much closer as you engage in mission together and see God working through it. Don't feel like you have to start over every time your group grows, but rather just pull people on-board for the journey that you are already on and trust the Holy Spirit!



# WAYS TO MEET AS A GROUP

*(In response to the COVID-19 season)*



***There are many ways that a group can move through this study both in the midst and subsequent to the COVID-19 season in our world.*** How you, as a group, choose to move through it largely depends on the level of comfortability and health of your group members. The technology of software applications that are available to us ensure that meeting online is a real and feasible option. Such online meeting platforms include, but are not limited to...

- Zoom
- Google Hangouts
- Amazon Chime
- FaceTime (iOS)
- RightNow Media Groups

***Why you might consider meeting in-person:*** While interactive conversation is possible via online platforms, there are aspects of in-person fellowship that cannot be replicated on an online platform. Meeting in-person would be a decision made for the sake of mental and spiritual health. There is, indeed, a science and theology around presence. Some may find that they are experiencing a sufficient amount of connection from an online platform, but it is likely that there are members of your group that would greatly benefit from an in-person meeting and having conversation around this option would be wise.

You can also think about an alternating in-person and online schedule.

If your group decides to meet in-person, here are some helpful guidelines you can consider as you try to keep things safe for those in the group while still reaping the benefits of personal connection. *(This list is not exhaustive, nor are any of the items mandatory)*

- If you have a large group (>10 people), subgroups are an option. Subgrouping means breaking into two smaller



(<10 people) groups meeting in separate locations or in two different areas of the same location.

- Maintain the same location for all meetings. At the agreed-upon location of meeting, be sure to adequately disinfect surfaces and door handles before and after meeting.
- During the meeting, maintain the social distancing recommendation of 6 feet of separation.
- Bring your own water bottles, coffee, pens, bibles, etc.
- Sanitize/wash your hands upon entering.
- If you happen to cough or sneeze, be sure to cover your mouth with your arm.
- Bring and wear a mask; especially if there are those that are uncomfortable or immunocompromised.

NOTE: If some in your group do not feel comfortable meeting in-person, be sure to warmly welcome them to join the meeting via an online platform. We must be very careful not to shame anyone for not attending in-person (and vice-versa).

## DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

### *In the Psalms*

Lord (1:2)  
One Enthroned in Heaven (2:4)  
Shield (3:3)  
My God (3:7)  
Righteous God (4:1)  
King (5:2)  
Most High (7:8)  
Righteous Judge (7:11)  
Refuge (9:9)  
Stronghold (9:9)  
Helper of the Fatherless (10:14)  
My Rock (18:2)  
My Fortress (18:2)  
My Deliverer (18:2)  
Horn of my Salvation (18:2)  
Support (18:18)  
Savior (18:46)  
Redeemer (19:14)  
God of Jacob (20:1)  
Holy One (22:3)  
The Praise of Israel (22:3)  
My Strength (22:19)  
Shepherd (23:1)  
King of Glory (24:8)  
Lord Strong and Mighty (24:8)  
Almighty (24:10)  
My Light (27:1)  
My Salvation (27:1)  
Stronghold of my Life (27:1)  
Helper (27:9)  
Fortress of Salvation (28:8)  
God of Truth (31:5)  
Hiding Place (32:7)  
Help (33:20)  
The Living God (42:2)  
My Joy (43:4)  
My Delight (43:4)  
Ever-present Help (46:1)  
Most Worthy (48:1)

Guide (48:14)  
The Mighty One (50:1)  
Judge (50:6)  
The God of Israel (59:5)  
Loving God (59:9)  
Strong Tower (61:3)  
My Mighty Rock (62:7)  
Hearer of Prayer (65:2)  
Hope of all ends of the Earth (65:5)  
Him who rides on clouds (68:4)  
Father to the fatherless (68:5)  
Defender of widows (68:5)  
One of Sinai (68:8)  
Sovereign Lord (68:20)  
Rock of Refuge (71:3)  
Hope (71:5)  
My Confidence (71:5)  
Holy One (71:22)  
Strength of my heart (73:26)  
My Portion (73:26)  
Resplendent with Light (75:4)  
Majestic (75:4)  
Sun (84:11)  
Father (89:26)  
Dwelling Place (90:1)  
The God who avenges (94:1)  
The Rock of our Salvation (95:1)  
Maker (95:6)  
Forgiving God (99:8)  
(Awesome descriptions in 104)  
My Song (118:14)  
Your Shade (121:5)  
Master (123:2)  
Peace (125:5)  
Mighty one of Jacob (132:2)  
God of gods (136:2)  
Lord of lords (136:3)  
God of Heaven (136:26)  
Spirit (143:10)  
One who gives victory (144:10)



# **Spiritual Gifts**

# SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

When you accepted Christ, you not only got saved...you were given something very special from God: a giftedness to serve God in a unique way. God's plan for your life is that you would meet a specific need in the church family, and He has gifted you in a special way to meet that need.

*"As each one of us has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)*

If you have trusted Christ, then you have a spiritual gift! Even if you don't know what it is or don't feel particularly gifted in a specific area, the Bible teaches that you do have a special gift that you can use to serve God. And, believe it or not, your gift is vital to the work of God in our church family, otherwise God would not have placed you here.

God's Word teaches that as a member of His Body, you are important to His work in this place. He has appointed you a gift and a purpose for being here...and you will greatly enjoy discovering and using that gift for His purposes!

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH THIS SPIRITUAL GIFT?

First Peter says that God wants you to be a "good steward" of His gift to you! The best way to do that is to begin now discovering, developing, and using your gift to serve the Lord and His church. The great result of using your gift is that the entire church family ministers to each other and to the community. That's the way the church, the Body of Christ, is supposed to work!

## TAKING THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

- To complete the assessment, answer every question in order by circling the number, 0 to 5, that most accurately describes yourself.
- While answering, refer to the scale indicator above the questions.
- When completing the spiritual gifts assessment, do not think as much as react.
- For the most accurate assessment answer quickly and honestly.

**For best results, PRAY BEFORE ATTEMPTING.**

Never Rarely	Occasionally	True Sometimes True most of	the time Always True		
0	2	4			
1	3	5			
1. I relate & measure everything I experience accordingly to God's Word.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Others seem to look to me for advice and help.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
3. I'm easily bothered by others' lack of compassion.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
4. I don't take anything at face value.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
5. I can visualize the "big picture" of a major project.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
6. When others are in my home I like to wait on them "hand and foot."					
0	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel compelled to give financially to others.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
8. I will speak the truth whether or not it causes hurt feelings.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
9. I can organize and delegate people and resources easily.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel compelled to share knowledge.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
11. Discouraged people are often encouraged by my words.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
12. I neglect my own work in order to help others.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
13. I easily identify tasks that need to get done and do them myself.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
14. I enjoy doing little things to help people.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
15. My natural tendency is to step up and take control.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
16. I cheerfully give time or money, regardless of how much I have to give.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have compassion for all living creatures.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
18. I don't hesitate to give constructive criticism.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
19. People see me as a frank and outspoken person.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
20. People seem to learn easily from me.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
21. I can be described as responsible, charitable, and disciplined.					
0	1	2	3	4	5
22. I don't expect repayment for favors I do for others.					
0	1	2	3	4	5

	Never Rarely	Occasionally	True Sometimes True most of	the time Always True		
	0 1	2 3	4 5			
23. Others tell me I'm a good listener.	0	1	2	3	4	5
24. Communicating the facts in a situation is something I do well.	0	1	2	3	4	5
25. I am a task oriented person.	0	1	2	3	4	5
26. I find it easy to maintain an optimistic outlook.	0	1	2	3	4	5
27. I will stand alone on something I believe in strongly.	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. I will not confront others if I feel it may hurt them.	0	1	2	3	4	5
29. I give well above my tithe to the Body of Christ.	0	1	2	3	4	5
30. While I'm frugal in personal spending, I'm often led to give to others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
31. I enjoy research as well as sharing what I find.	0	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am compelled to comfort people who are hurting or suffering.	0	1	2	3	4	5
33. Deadlines challenge me & I usually meet them on time.	0	1	2	3	4	5
34. I can discern the motives of others fairly easily	0	1	2	3	4	5
35. I find strength from bearing other's burdens.	0	1	2	3	4	5
36. My use of knowledge may appear prideful.	0	1	2	3	4	5
37. I can create order out of organizational chaos.	0	1	2	3	4	5
38. I volunteer my time and talents to worthwhile causes.	0	1	2	3	4	5
39. I'm moved with compassion to cry with others.	0	1	2	3	4	5
40. I can select the best person for particular tasks.	0	1	2	3	4	5
41. My focus on right and wrong may be read as being judgmental.	0	1	2	3	4	5
20. People seem to learn easily from me.	0	1	2	3	4	5
42. I enjoy helping others develop a plan of action to deal with their concerns.	0	1	2	3	4	5

## Spiritual Gifts Test Scoring Key

Directions: Transfer the number you circled to the blank beside the corresponding question. Add the totals up in each column. The highest possible score in one column would be 30.

	1.	6.	4.	2.	7.	5.	3.
	8.	12.	10.	11.	16.	9.	17.
	19.	13.	20.	18.	21.	15.	28.
	27.	14.	24.	23.	22.	33.	32.
	34.	25.	31.	26.	29.	37.	35.
	41.	38.	36.	42.	30.	40.	39.
Totals							
	Prophet/ Perceiver	Server	Teacher	Exhorter/ Encourager	Other	Leader/ Administrator	Mercy/ Compassion

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

### + PROPHET/PERCEIVER

The God-given ability to communicate God's message in relation to the truth already revealed (*Jude 3*).

It is not necessarily or even primarily a prediction. Rather, it is done for the purposes of encouraging, strengthening and comforting (*1 Cor. 14:3*). These have the ability to perceive the spiritual needs of others and meet those needs through Scripture.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROPHET / PERCEIVER:

1. Able to recognize good and bad and hates what is bad.
2. Sees everything clearly not dimly; no foggy or indefinite areas
3. Recognizes character in people, whether good or bad
4. Encourages repentance for the glory of God
5. Is an introvert rather than an extrovert?
6. Sees the Bible as the foundation for truth
7. Courageously holds to spiritual truths
8. Outspoken

9. Powerful and persuasive speaker
10. Distraught over the sins of others
11. Sees their own shortcomings and those of others
12. Desires to see God's plans take place
13. Promotes spiritual growth in others
14. Fanatical about integrity
15. Strongly communicates what they perceive
16. Self-examiner
17. Opinionated and holds to convictions
18. Holds to a high standard
19. Desperately desires to obey God

### **CHALLENGES OF THE PROPHET/PERCEIVER:**

1. May be judgmental and upfront
2. Delights in goal accomplishment not forward progress
3. Forcefully pushes others toward spiritual growth
4. Intolerant of other views
5. Struggles with self-image

### **PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:**

1. Small group leader
2. Any type of lay counseling
3. Security at any church function
4. Providing oversight of any ministry function
5. Great mentors and peacemakers

## **+ SERVER**

A server has the God-given ability to recognize a need and administer assistance to others. In relation to other believers, this releases them to utilize their God-given gifts (e.g. Deacons in *Acts 6:1-6*; *1 Corinthians 12:28*; and *Romans 12:7*).

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A SERVER:**

1. Willingly meets the needs of others
2. Has a hands on approach
3. Precise and orderly
4. Detail oriented
5. Friendly



6. Has trouble turning others away
7. More interest in others than self
8. More short term orientated than long term
9. Actively expressive rather than verbally expressive
10. Desires appreciation
11. Goes above and beyond what is asked of them
12. Enjoys being helpful
13. High energy level
14. Orderly; does not like clutter
15. Perfectionist
16. Places an importance on serving
17. Would rather do than delegate
18. Supports the leadership

### **CHALLENGES OF THE SERVER:**

1. Criticizes those who are not serving
2. Helps others to the extent of neglecting personal family
3. So enthusiastic to help, may come across as pushy
4. Does not like to be served
5. Saddened when unappreciated

### **PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:**

1. Hospitality ministry
2. Children's ministry
3. Homeless ministry
4. Taking meals to ill or injured
5. Set-up or tear down at special events
6. Serving anywhere, anytime, anyway
7. Construction of any type
8. Maintenance of anything
9. Putting together anything with the hands

## **+ TEACHER**

The God-given ability to study, research, explain and communicate truth (e.g. Paul and Timothy in *2 Timothy 2:2* ).

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A TEACHER:**

1. Logical presenter of truth
2. Confirms truth by examining facts
3. Enjoys study and investigation
4. Knows how to do word studies
5. Uses biblical illustrations
6. Detests Scripture used out of context
7. Establishes truth biblically
8. Objective rather than subjective
9. Extensive vocabulary
10. Accurate presenter of truth
11. Tests the information of others
12. Favors teaching over evangelism
13. Starts with Scripture when answering questions
14. Intellectual
15. Disciplined
16. Emotionally stable
17. Has a close circle of friends
18. Strong convictions based on solid research
19. Believes God's truth leads to life change

### **CHALLENGES FOR THE TEACHER:**

1. Can neglect application in exchange for information download
2. Slow to accept views of other
3. Prideful due to knowledge
4. May be legalistic and dogmatic
5. Easily distracted by love of new interests

### **PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:**

1. Small group leader
2. Bible study leader - Men's ministry, Women's ministry, Children's ministry

3. Rock U instructor
4. Research assistant
5. Developer of curriculum
6. Child, youth, teen mentor

## **+ EXHORTER**

The God-given ability to draw near to individuals in time of need; encouraging and counseling them accurately with the Word of God; and persuading them to take courage in the face of something they must do or assuring them to take comfort because of something that has occurred (E.g. Barnabas in *Acts* 4:36-37; 9:26-27; 11:19-26; and 15:36-41).

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EXHORTER:**

1. Verbally encouraging
2. Likes to apply the Word rather than investigate it
3. Prefers practical application over theological truth
4. Works best with others
5. Verbally encourages others to excel in ministry
6. Loves to do personal counseling
7. Loves to talk
8. Excels in communication
9. Perceives trials as opportunities for personal growth
10. Has a positive attitude
11. Easily makes decisions
12. Prefers to quickly resolve problems
13. Needs to bounce ideas off others

### **CHALLENGES FOR THE EXHORTER**

1. Frequently interrupts others
2. Uses Scripture out of context
3. Out spoken and opinionated
4. Slightly overconfident

### **PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:**

1. Lay counseling
2. Stephen minister
3. Table facilitator

4. Hospitality ministry
5. Drama ministry
6. Nursing home ministry
7. Homeless Ministry Team
8. Small group leader
9. Anyplace where encouragement is needed

## **+ GIVER**

The God-given ability to give freely of what God has entrusted to them. This includes giving time, material goods and financial resources with joy and eagerness and without any “ulterior motives” that would benefit the giver (E.g. David in *1 Chronicles* 29:1-19).

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF A GIVER:**

1. Gives as led by the Spirit
2. Freely and happily gives
3. Often gives anonymously
4. Understands giving is an intricate part of serving
5. Takes pleasure in meeting the needs of others
6. Gives not only quantity but quality
7. Gives to bless and enhance ministries
8. Sees hospitality as a chance to give
9. Financially wise
10. Strongly believes in tithes and offerings
11. Understands that God owns everything
12. Strong business skills
13. Appreciates value
14. Is not gullible

### **CHALLENGES FOR THE GIVER**

1. Tends to be controlling with money
2. Pressures others to be more generous
3. May over commit
4. Uses financial giving as a way out of other requirements
5. Leads others on guilt trips

## **PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:**

1. Homeless ministry
2. Small group leader
3. Fundraising
4. Any serving opportunity
5. Hospitality ministry
6. Financial counseling ministry Team
7. Support of church special projects (i.e. building)
8. Financially support any ministry

## **+ LEADERSHIP / ADMINISTRATION**

The God-given ability to lead others in meaningful endeavors which demonstrates personal care and concern in order to meet the needs of others and encourage their growth (E.g. Fathers in *1 Tim. 3:4-5; 12*).

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP / ADMINISTRATION:**

1. Motivates others to action
2. Clearly communicates
3. Thrives when given authority
4. Happily receives authority when given
5. Naturally assumes leadership when there is a lack
6. Takes on long-term projects
7. Is a visionary
8. Has good networking abilities
9. Delegates well
10. Takes criticism well
11. Is passionate and enthusiastic
12. Enjoys accomplishing goals
13. Gives credit to others
14. Meets challenges as they arise
15. Is a natural and capable leader
16. Understands the Big picture
17. Discards what does not work and keeps what does
18. Enjoys people
19. Dislikes the mundane routine

## **CHALLENGES FOR LEADERSHIP / ADMINISTRATION:**

1. May have trouble dealing with opposition
2. May become callous due to constant criticism
3. Pushes hard to the point of neglecting family
4. Ignores family responsibilities due to love of work

## **PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:**

1. Small group leader
2. Jr. High ministry
3. High School ministry
4. College ministry
5. Singles ministry
6. Prison ministry
7. Any type of leadership/oversight role
8. Creator of new ministries
9. Coach of Sports ministries

## **+ MERCY / COMPASSION**

The God-given ability to have immediate compassion for those who are suffering combined with great joy in meeting their needs (E.g. the Good Samaritan in *Luke 10:30-37*).

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF MERCY / COMPASSION:**

1. Loves to love
2. Searches out the good in people
3. Brings out the good in people
4. Recognizes the spiritual and emotional condition of others
5. Acts out of concern for others
6. Cares for the emotional, spiritual, and physical well being of others
7. Considers others more important than self
8. Chooses words carefully
9. Recognizes the affect words can have
10. Detects insincerity
11. Loves to be thoughtful
12. Is trustworthy

13. Non-confrontational
14. Unusually cheerful
15. Thinks with the heart rather than the head
16. Rejoices and/or grieves with others

## **CHALLENGES FOR THE MERCY / COMPASSION:**

1. Overly sensitive
2. Caring may be misunderstood by the opposite sex
3. Easily takes up others problems that are not their own
4. Thinking with their heart leads to indecision
5. Can be easily hurt by others unintentionally

## **PLACES IN THE CHURCH BODY WHERE THIS GIFT COULD BE UTILIZED:**

1. Small group leader
2. Homeless ministry
3. Counseling ministry
4. Hospitality of any sort
5. Visitation and follow-up
6. Prison ministry
7. Greeters
8. Any type of phone work
9. Children's ministry

## **+ IMPORTANT REMINDERS**

Keep in mind that oftentimes the Holy Spirit gives us more than one gift which serves to keep our other gift (gifts) in check or harmonize to create a blended gift that God uses in unique ways. This is another reason why each and everyone of us has a unique role to play in the Kingdom even if your gift may seem just like someone else you know!

1. Scripture commands us to minister in many areas whether or not we have the corresponding spiritual gift(s). For example Scripture clearly tells us that some have the following gifts, yet all are to minister in these ways...Gifts to some Commands to all
  - Ministering (serving) Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)

- Exhortation Exhort each other (Hebrews 10:25)
  - Giving all give (2 Corinthians 9:7) Teaching Make Disciples (Matthew 28:19)
  - Showing Mercy Be kind (Ephesians 4:32)
  - Faith Walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7)
  - Evangelism all witness (Acts 1:8)
  - Oftentimes as we are faithful to these commands, after we discover our particular spiritual gift(s).
2. No matter what spiritual gift(s) we have received, the Christian virtue of love must accompany the exercise of those gifts; otherwise, they will prove unfruitful. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GIFTS AND TALENTS:**

Talents have to do with techniques and methods; gifts have to do with spiritual abilities. Talents depend on natural ability, gifts on spiritual endowment. Talents instruct, inspire, or entertain on a natural level. However, when a gift is exercised, something supernatural happens in and through the one who is ministering.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Your God-given personality, talents, abilities and spiritual gifts all work together to make you uniquely you! "Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 4:11



## ABOUT THE EDITORS

JP Jones is the Founding Senior Pastor of Crossline Church in Laguna Hills, CA. JP is a graduate of Talbot Seminary where he did his Master of Divinity and Doctoral studies. A published author, JP has written the men's book, *Facing Goliath* and several small groups' curricula such as *The Man. The Myth. The Legend.* *Getting to Know the Real Jesus* and *XII: Experiencing your Best Life with God and Others*. JP is a popular speaker at Men's events and conferences and his radio program, *Truth that Changes Lives* is listened to in all 50 states and over 150 countries of the world. JP is on the faculty of Biola University where he teaches Theology and Biblical Studies. JP is married to his wife Donna and they have three children.

Jordan Gash is the Community Life Pastor at Crossline Community Church in Laguna Hills, CA. He graduated from Azusa Pacific Seminary with a M.A. in Pastoral Studies. Jordan has been working in both the Church and Christian organizational spheres since 2006. In his role as Community Life Pastor, Jordan oversees and shepherds a vast network of Community Groups. He has contributed to multiple adult small group curricula, including co-authoring *XII: Experiencing your Best Life with God and Others*, and authored several youth ministry groups' curricula. As a speaker at conferences and camps, he is passionate about encouraging practical application to Biblical truths. He is married to his wife, Alexandra and has three young sons.

# CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Three words describe the history of Crossline Church: Prayer, Faith and Relationships. In the fall of 2004 I began to seriously pray about the future God had for me and my family. I was at a crossroads in ministry and needed clear direction from God. I went to Forest Home, a Christian conference center in the San Bernardino Mountains and earnestly sought the Lord. Praying on the spot where God spoke to Billy Graham, I asked God to speak to me about where and how He wanted me to serve Him. That time of prayer launched a 10 day period of prayer and fasting to seek the confirmation and leading of God. True to His Word, God spoke to me and others about the vision to start a church that would reach both seekers and committed disciples with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. For a period of four months, a weekly prayer meeting gathered to pray and dream about God's direction. Following the pattern of the early disciples in Acts 1-2, the founding core group of Crossline spent a focused 10 day season of prayer before it launched the first public worship services in February of 2005.

Our new congregation grew over the next 4 years to a little over 1,000 in attendance. With growth came good challenges and once again we spent a focused period of prayer concerning a move from the high school campus to a permanent home for our church. That season of prayer was answered miraculously by God and Crossline now meets at its 25 acre home in Laguna Hills, CA. Our congregation has grown to over 2,000 and prayer continues to be a core value for the daily life of Crossline, its vision and its future.

Crossline began as a commitment of faith. Not sponsored by any denomination, foundation or church, the Pastors and volunteers stepped into an initial ministry with a million dollar a year budget. Having no meeting place, offices or staff, within a few months God miraculously answered prayer and provided everything we needed to be a mobile church. From its inception, Crossline has had a core commitment to believe great things

about God, to ask great things of God and attempt great things for God! What began as a prayer meeting with 16 people has grown to a local church of over 2,000.

Crossline Church is a body made up of ordinary people who believe in an extra-ordinary God. We believe that everyone is on a spiritual journey and whether you are a first time visitor or have been with us from day one, you are a vital part of our church right now and of the community He is shaping us to be for the future. At Crossline it our desire to connect people to Jesus Christ and to one another. Our motto is, "Love God, love people and have a blast!" We would love for you to join us. Together we can do great things for God!

JP Jones

*Founding and Senior Pastor*

## **Sunday Services:**

### **Main Services**

9:00am & 11:00am – Worship Center

5:00pm (Young Adults/Summit) – Fellowship Center

### **Classic Service (Traditional)**

9:00am – Chapel

### **Crossline En Español**

11:00am – Chapel

### **Information:**

23331 Moulton Parkway  
Laguna Hills, CA 92653

**(949) 916-0250**

**[www.crosslinechurch.com](http://www.crosslinechurch.com)**





## ***Am I going to believe God or not?***

This is the ultimate question that has been challenging people for thousands of years.

The Biblical character of Abraham is known as the father of faith, but what is faith? Is it necessary and, if so, how do you have it? As you journey through this workbook, you will explore what the Bible says about faith and whether you are a long-time Christian or looking at these verses for the first time, we strongly encourage you to lean in. This can change your life.



COMMUNITY GROUPS