



*December 6, 2020*

*Week 2: Day 1 Faith*

**Bible:**

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old. Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

It's a faith that can celebrate God even in the presence of terrible situations.

Having faith in someone should provide you with a feeling of protection. It should feel like someone has your back. If something happens, they will be there for you and vice versa. Faith allows freedom—it does not restrict us.

We sometimes believe that when we have faith in God, we lose our freedom. Instead, faith is something that gives us freedom. When we have the freedom that comes from faith, we can be still and rest in the comfort that comes from God. We can take refuge in knowing that God will be present with us, giving us everything that we need.

When you have faith, you can rest assured in the knowledge that God has a plan for you. With faith, you don't have to worry or fear when life gets chaotic. With faith, you can celebrate God even when the storms of life are raging.

**Talk About it:**

What worry/fear do you need to give to God in faith?

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What does it mean to have faith in God? Do you have faith in God according to your description of faith?

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Do problems in life derail or sway your faith in God?

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Can you praise God no matter the situations you face in life?

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**Further Reading:**

Psalms 91

*December 12, 2020*

*Week 2: Day 7 Faith*

**Bible:**

God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
though its waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging.  
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy place where the Most High dwells.  
God is within her, she will not fall;  
God will help her at break of day.  
Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;  
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.  
The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.  
Come and see what the Lord has done,  
the desolations he has brought on the earth.  
He makes wars cease  
to the ends of the earth.  
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.  
He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."  
The Lord Almighty is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Psalms 46

**Devotion:**

Faith is something that doesn't come naturally to most. It is something that must be built up over time. Faith is something that comes from someone being there time and time again in the good times and the bad times of life. This is the kind of faith that the writer, David, is writing about here. It's a faith that is produced after trials and turmoil

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Luke 1:5-25 (NIV)

**Devotion:**

Zechariah was married to Elizabeth, they had no children, and they were getting older. Zechariah was a priest who served in the temple. When we join in this passage, Zechariah is serving as a priest before God. He was doing things correctly in the sight of God and others, but still they were childless. Having a child in that time meant leaving a legacy, carrying on the line. It was something expected of every couple and seen as a blessing from God. Zechariah is still faithful to God, even when others probably would have doubted, and God showed up. An angel tells Zechariah that he and Elizabeth will have a child who will be the one that points the way to the Messiah. Zechariah could have had hope if he had chosen faith, but instead Zechariah choose to doubt this message of hope.

We can do the same. We can listen to the Christmas story season after season and become numb to the hope that it brings. What if we had faith that God would be with us? What if we had faith today?

**Talk About it:**

Have you become numb to the hope of Christmas and Christ's coming?

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What is one promise that you can remember about Jesus today?

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**Further Reading:**

Luke 1:57-80

*December 7, 2020*

*Week 2: Day 2 Faith*

**Bible:**

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'"

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Matthew 3:1-12 (NIV)

When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news

are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

Hebrews 11:1-22

**Devotion:**

In today's passage, we see how each of these people were faithful to God, and we see how God was with them. Each of the people in this passage are talked about because they were faithful to God for a lifetime. Some of them gave up everything they knew and held dear to follow God. Some of them gave up years of their life to fulfill what God had called them to do. Some of them even gave up their lives to follow God faithfully.

To be faithful to God's calling on your life means a lifetime of commitment. Following God isn't just a one-time commitment, it's a life of continual commitment. It's daily faithfulness.

**Talk About it:**

Has God called you to something or someone?

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Are you following faithfully?

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**Further Reading:**

Genesis 4(Cain and Able), Genesis 5:21-24(Enoch), Genesis 6:9-9:17(Noah)

*December 11, 2020*

*Week 2: Day 6 Faith*

**Bible:**

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

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.

By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 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.

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they

is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

Matthew 11:2-6 (NIV)

**Devotion:**

John the Baptist was sent ahead of the Messiah to be the "voice in the wilderness" that we read about in Malachi 4. John was given strict restrictions to follow when he was born, but there was also a promise if he followed them. He would take a Nazarite vow, which meant that he would voluntarily abstain from anything made of grapes, he wouldn't cut his hair, and he would not encounter dead things. The promise for following these restrictions was that he would proclaim the coming of the Messiah. John was able to proclaim that the Messiah was coming soon and had faith in this promise. John was even imprisoned because of his outspokenness.

We can have the same faith no matter the situation because the Messiah has come. We have the hope that causes us to act in faith as we follow Jesus.

**Talk About it:**

Would you be able to follow the strict restrictions of a Nazarite Vow if you had to?

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Have you had a situation in life that caused you to lose faith? What happened?

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Where would you draw the line to stop trusting God? (Ex. If this happened my faith would be strained or destroyed)

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**Further Reading:**

Numbers 6:1-8 (Nazarite Vow), Mark 6:14-29 (John's death)

*December 8, 2020*

*Week 2: Day 3 Faith*

**Bible:**

In you, Lord my God,  
I put my trust.  
I trust in you;  
do not let me be put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.  
No one who hopes in you  
will ever be put to shame,  
but shame will come on those  
who are treacherous without cause.  
Show me your ways, Lord,  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long.  
Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love,  
for they are from of old.  
Do not remember the sins of my youth  
and my rebellious ways;  
according to your love remember me,  
for you, Lord, are good.  
Good and upright is the Lord;  
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.  
He guides the humble in what is right  
and teaches them his way.  
All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful  
toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.  
For the sake of your name, Lord,  
forgive my iniquity, though it is great.  
Who, then, are those who fear the Lord?  
He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.  
They will spend their days in prosperity,  
and their descendants will inherit the land.  
The Lord confides in those who fear him;  
he makes his covenant known to them.

at your rebuke, Lord,  
at the blast of breath from your nostrils.  
He reached down from on high and took hold of me;  
he drew me out of deep waters.  
He rescued me from my powerful enemy,  
from my foes, who were too strong for me.  
They confronted me in the day of my disaster,  
but the Lord was my support.  
He brought me out into a spacious place;  
he rescued me because he delighted in me.  
The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness;  
according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.  
For I have kept the ways of the Lord;  
I am not guilty of turning from my God.  
All his laws are before me;  
I have not turned away from his decrees.  
I have been blameless before him  
and have kept myself from sin.  
The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.

Psalm 18:1-19

**Devotion:**

David had placed his faith and trust in God, and God was there for David. Throughout David's life, God was evident. God was with David as he faced down the giant Goliath. God was with David as he hid in the wilderness, fearful of Saul. God was with David as he faced the enemies of Israel on all sides. David had points in his life where his faith was weak, but he remembered that God was faithful to him and kept him secure.

If we look back at our lives, we can see moments where God has been there for us, protecting and caring for us. When our faith is weak and we are in a moment of doubt, we need to look to these points as an anchor to our faith. Faith is believing God when you can't see the full plan.

**Talk About it:**

Where has God been faithful in your past?

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**Further Reading:**

Psalms 73

*December 10, 2020*

*Week 2: Day 5 Faith*

**Bible:**

I love you, Lord, my strength.  
The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;  
    my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
    my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.  
I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,  
    and I have been saved from my enemies.  
The cords of death entangled me;  
    the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.  
The cords of the grave coiled around me;  
    the snares of death confronted me.  
In my distress I called to the Lord;  
    I cried to my God for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice;  
    my cry came before him, into his ears.  
The earth trembled and quaked,  
    and the foundations of the mountains shook;  
    they trembled because he was angry.  
Smoke rose from his nostrils;  
    consuming fire came from his mouth,  
    burning coals blazed out of it.  
He parted the heavens and came down;  
    dark clouds were under his feet.  
He mounted the cherubim and flew;  
    he soared on the wings of the wind.  
He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him—  
    the dark rain clouds of the sky.  
Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,  
    with hailstones and bolts of lightning.  
The Lord thundered from heaven;  
    the voice of the Most High resounded.  
He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy,  
    with great bolts of lightning he routed them.  
The valleys of the sea were exposed  
    and the foundations of the earth laid bare

My eyes are ever on the Lord,  
    for only he will release my feet from the snare.  
Turn to me and be gracious to me,  
    for I am lonely and afflicted.  
Relieve the troubles of my heart  
    and free me from my anguish.  
Look on my affliction and my distress  
    and take away all my sins.  
See how numerous are my enemies  
    and how fiercely they hate me!  
Guard my life and rescue me;  
    do not let me be put to shame,  
    for I take refuge in you.  
May integrity and uprightness protect me,  
    because my hope, Lord, is in you.  
Deliver Israel, O God,  
    from all their troubles!

Psalm 25

**Devotion:**

In the passage today, David (the author) says that he puts his faith in God. He then goes on to name all the ways that God has been with David and all of Israel. Because God had been there for David, David put his faith in God. There was a relationship.

To put your faith in something or someone is a dangerous thing. When you put your faith in someone, your expectations change for them. You expect them to have your back and be there for you. You have a new standard for that person. You have trust and a commitment to that person. When you put your faith in someone, you have confidence that person will be there for you, and you will be there for them.

**Talk About it:**

Who is someone that you have faith in?

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What do you expect from somebody that you have faith in?

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**Further Reading:**

Psalms 20

*December 9, 2020*

*Week 2: Day 4 Faith*

**Bible:**

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden.

Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Mark 11:1-25

**Devotion:**

Why does Jesus curse the fig tree and then talk about faith? When a fruit tree does not bear fruit, it is good for nothing except firewood. The fig tree had no fruit and therefore it was useless. When pressed by his disciples about the tree, Jesus tells them about faith. This is because faith and fruit are connected. The fruit in our lives is our actions.

Does faith come from actions, or do actions come from faith? The Bible tells us that these two, faith and actions, feed off each other. Faith spurs action and action deepens faith.

**Talk About it:**

Which comes first, faith or actions? Why?

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What actions has your faith produced?

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**Further Reading:**

Romans 11