

Faith **Being Motivated to Obey** by Kelly Dixon



Ladies for Jesus ministry desires to inspire and equip all Christian women to deepen our walk with Christ; to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to Him; and to delight in our intimate relationship with Him.

Faith Trusts

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 1 of 10)

by Kelly T. Dixon

Readings: [Genesis 12:1-8](#); [Genesis 22:1-18](#)



I will never forget the day I realized the Holy Spirit was leading me to quit my job and start working full time in the business that I had held part time on the side. I had been working for the same company for eight years and circumstances that surrounded me kept drawing me more and more to the feet of Christ. As I sat at His feet absorbing the life lessons, the reality of this request came to the surface. I sat in shock for a while and finally realized I felt very insecure with the decision. But as I began to take the steps of faith by trusting in my Lord I realized where my security should lie.

It was at the end of the year when the lessons began and I was wrapping up my college career (literally). My husband and I still considered ourselves newly weds and his job was not very stable. In my fleshly understanding I thought, "This is a crazy decision." However, I felt the Holy Spirit strongly leading me in this direction and looking back today, I am glad I was obedient to Him. I believe with all my heart that the depth of my walk with the Savior would not be where it is today and my other steps of faith would not have come to fruition.

This time in my life was brought to mind as I read over the story of Abraham and how he was called on many occasions to trust in the Lord. God's call for Abraham to leave his land and go to a land that He would show him probably initially brought an insecure feeling for Abraham. Yet, the Scriptures indicate that Abraham did not hesitate. He gathered up the crew and he went. That step in obedience and trust in the Lord is what prepared Abraham for the ultimate test that God had for his faith which was the request for him to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

Looking in more detail, we see that Isaac symbolized Christ who would come and save us from our sins. A few of the correlations are: carrying the wood on his back correlates to Christ carrying the cross and then willingly being bound by his father correlates to Christ willingness to do as the Father sent Him to do. Sent by the Father as a sacrifice, Jesus showed us how to be obedient through trusting in the Lord. However, Abraham didn't have this example to look to – only his relationship with the Lord. A relationship that was strengthened by the steps of faith he took.

First, we see that Abraham's trust in the Lord began by the first step of immediate obedience. Abraham rose early the next morning to do as the Lord had requested. Once again, Abraham did not hesitate. Even though this request from the Lord seemed unreasonable, Abraham trusted that the Lord knew best and in [Hebrews 11:19](#) it tells us Abraham reasoned with himself that God could raise the dead. It was this reasoning that shows us Abraham's heart. He knew in his heart God was in control – ultimate control – and if He had to raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill His promise to Abraham, He would. This reasoning I am sure was what Abraham comforted himself with throughout the night and it was what rose him up early to do as he was instructed to do.

Next, we must realize that this trip was a three day trip (which is another symbolization to Christ). Three days Abraham was with his son as they traveled together. Three days Abraham knew what he was requested to do as he watched his son. I am sure these were three long days for Abraham. But at the end of those three days, Abraham looked up and saw the place and told his servants, "*Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.*" ([Genesis 22:5](#)) His trust in the Lord was so substantial that he knew they would come back together. It wasn't an uncertainty. It was a certainty that once again showed Abraham's heart of trust. This heart that trusted God continued to be revealed as he told Isaac, who questioned about the lamb, "*God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.*" ([Genesis 22:8](#)) A full surrender of the heart! Abraham was expressing that he didn't know what, when or how, but he knew Who!!

Finally, we see that up until the point that the Angel of the Lord stopped him, Abraham completed the command to the fullest. He had every intention of sacrificing his son. He didn't prepare the altar; bind Isaac; and then beg God to not make him do it. He was taking action to complete the request from God to the fullest. It was at this point that the Angel of the Lord arrived to say, "*Abraham, Abraham. Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.*" ([Genesis 22:12](#)) The words probably brought all the emotions Abraham had inside to the surface at that point. He was overjoyed at the outcome and even closer to his God.

Do you feel the Lord calling you to do something that in your flesh it seems unreasonable? If so, He is calling you to trust in Him so He can draw you closer to Him. He wants you to take steps of faith that show this trust. Steps of faith that are shown through obedience to His commands. Don't hold back from taking those steps. At the end you will be like Abraham – overjoyed at the outcome and even closer to your God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I know You want me to trust You. Help me to be like Abraham, a servant of Yours who takes immediate action in trusting You by taking steps of faith. Guide me in seeing Your requests and draw me closer to You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Trusts

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

Christians today, like Abraham, have promises that they can claim from our Father. Scripture tells us specifically about these promises. Look at the following Scriptures to see how you can build your trust on these sound promises from the Lord.

Read Deuteronomy 7:9 and list what it says about God's covenant to the ones who love Him?

Abraham was a person of faith who trusted that God would keep His promise even though it seemed impossible at the time. We, too, can have this same faith in the Lord. Take time to look at some of the promises God has made to us:

God promises to meet our needs. When our needs begin to accumulate – finances, health, etc. - it may seem as if it is impossible for those needs to be met. According to Philippians 4:19, when and how will God supply all your needs?

God promises to help you overcome temptation. When we have faith that trusts in God we will believe that God will keep His word in guiding us through overcoming our temptations. According to 1 Corinthians 10:13, what does it tell us about God's faithfulness even during trials that seem like they are impossible to endure?

God promises His peace to guard your heart. Worry is at the top of many of our lists as a constant struggle we have in trusting the Lord. Sometimes it seems like a never ending cycle of worry and cares of this life. According to Philippians 4:6-7, what reward is given to the person who by faith trusts God with everything?

God promises to reward tithing. Let's face it, our bank accounts tell whether we put our faith in God or something else. When it comes to tithing many times we look at the account and say, "There's no way." Take a look at Malachi 3:10. What were the instructions to the people? The Lord invites us to test Him in our tithing. What does this Scripture say we will experience if we test the Lord in this?

Final Reflection: Over the years, God has revealed His promises to me through my placing trust in Him. My needs have been met according to His purpose. He has helped me (and continues to help me) to overcome temptation in my life. He has given me peace to guard my heart. And, oh, the rewards I have reaped from my bringing the whole tithe to His storehouse. Trusting God is not an easy thing to do, especially when it means we must take a step in faith. However, the rewards from His promises can and will make you secure. - Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: Make a list of all the worries and concerns that come to mind at this very moment. Take this list to the Lord in prayer and ask Him for the strength to overcome the temptation of worrying over them. Speak each one by name and discuss it over with the Lord by telling Him the difficulty you are having in leaving the item at His feet. Seek the Lord by searching out Scriptures that give you more insight as to what His Word says about it. Seek the Lord while He may be found. (Isaiah 55:6)

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Faith Endures

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 2 of 10)

by Kelly T. Dixon

Readings: [Genesis 37, 39, 40, 41, 45:1-15](#)



Did you know that Jesus promised us a life of abundance not a life without trials? With every trial that I have I ask myself, “How am I living my promised life of abundance through the trials in my life?” To help in the understanding of this question I must define what I think abundance means. Abundance doesn't mean a life full of earthly riches. Abundance means a life full of God's riches. Yes, earthly riches are a blessing from God, but His eternal riches are what make our life abundant.

Over the last several years, I have learned the technique of “whistle while you work.” That has not always been the case in my life. In the past, I would complain my way through the day. Finally, it hit me one day that I was looking for attention through my complaining. Little statements like, “I'm always overloaded.” or “There is never a moment for just me.” or “It's one thing after another. At the end of each trial, I just wait for the next one to begin.” All were wearing on my endurance level and ultimately displaying my selfish desire to be known for my trials. Instead, I should have been striving for Christ to be glorified for getting me through the trials. When this lesson finally hit the surface, I found it necessary for me to learn what is really meant by “whistle while you work.” The only way I was going to endure the trials of life and show Christ's love to the world at the same time was by learning this technique.

Now typically when a statement is said about whistling while you work your mind naturally goes to your job. While this would certainly be beneficial on the job, I feel God blesses the efforts we make to overcome and not complain as we work through enduring trials of life as well. In Genesis, Joseph certainly displays the attributes of a person who was given one bad hand after the other, but there is no indication in Scripture that he complained. Instead, it is indicated he did his very best at what he was doing at the time.

After Joseph had endured the torture of his brothers, we see that he was enslaved to Potiphar, an Egyptian who was Pharaoh's captain of the guard. [Genesis 39:2-4](#) tells us, “*The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.*” At first glance we see that the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered. However, if we take a closer look we will see that the Lord gave Joseph success in everything he did. Meaning, Joseph got busy. He didn't sit around complaining about his circumstances and grumble about being enslaved. He took action to do the best he could at the job he was given to do. This action is what the Lord honored and what brought success for Joseph.

Joseph's endurance during his trials was so great that each time I review his story I learn more and more about how I can work through my own trials. First, beyond his working to the best of his ability, he verbally acknowledged that God was where he obtained his own strength (see [Genesis 40:8](#); [41:16](#)). It would have been very easy for Joseph to take the credit, but he didn't. Next, even though his patience was shown throughout his life, I believe it was exemplified by the patience of waiting two years for the chief cupbearer to remember him (see Genesis 41). I use to think he had no choice but to wait because he was in prison. Then I realized that He was not an ordinary prisoner. Joseph had connections because he was looked upon favorably. I am sure there were ways for him to protest or ways that he could have “gotten a message” to the cupbearer. Yet, we see no indication in Scripture that he takes advantage of these connections. Finally and ultimately in the end we must not forget how Joseph showed forgiveness to His brothers and in doing so shared God's purpose for his life. If it wasn't for the fact that his brothers sold him into slavery, he wouldn't have been a slave. However, let's also realize that God allowed these trials in Joseph's life because He had a plan for his life and Joseph expressed this himself in [Genesis 45:4-8](#).

How is your endurance of your trials? Are you, like Joseph, allowing the trials in your life to strengthen you for God's purpose? It is hard for us to see that God has a plan for our life when we are going through tough times, but you can rest in the promise that He does ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)). Our faith is strengthened when we endure them as Joseph did with diligence, with God's strength, without complaining, with patience and with God's purpose in mind. As Christians we are given the challenge to make a difference in the world for Christ. The difference we make depends upon how we endure our trials. Make your commitment today to endure like Joseph.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, it is hard for me to endure trials in my life because so many times I can't see Your purpose through the circumstances of the trial. Help me to endure by walking by faith, one step at a time, in Your strength. Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Endures

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When we endure we are actually submitting to the Holy Spirit because endurance is part of His fruit. Depending on what translation you are using when you look up Galatians 5:22-23, you will read several different words used to describe this one part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

In the King James version, it's translated as "longsuffering."
The Message Bible calls it a "willingness to stick with things."
The Amplified Bible says "patience (even tempered, forbearance)."

When we look up longsuffering or forbearance in the dictionary we find that it defines each as patient endurance. Simply put, when we submit to the Holy Spirit, He gives us the ability to patiently endure trials and tribulations.

Another word used interchangeably between the Bible versions for endurance is perseverance. What does James 1:2-4 say about faith and endurance/perseverance?

Write out 1 Timothy 6:11-12 here.

Then ask yourself, "In my life, how am I fighting the good fight of faith through endurance?"

Enduring/Persevering becomes our witness. Read 1 Timothy 4:9-16. What does it tell us about bringing others to Christ through the way we live our lives?

So far we have looked at the importance of enduring for Christ's sake. Now let's look at a few steps in how we can endure.

How do I endure? Hebrews 10:32 – 38 gives us focuses we can adopt as we are enduring trials. List what each says below:

Remember the former days: What does Hebrews 10:32-34 tell us about remembering the former days? How does remembering help us to endure?

Do not throw away confidence: According to Hebrews 10:35-37, why shouldn't we throw away our confidence? Why should we persevere?

Do not draw back: According to Hebrews 10:38-39, how will a righteous person of God live? Will God be pleased with us if we draw back?

Final Reflection: Many times you may feel like asking yourself, “Why me? Why do I have to go through such trials in my life?” And I am sure you have heard the answer of “Why not you?” in regards to such questions. It is important for Christians to realize that even though we are blessed with the promises of God we are also human and not above all. God in His infinite wisdom allows trials in our lives to strengthen us. When we are facing such trials we should face them with the attitude of enduring for the Lord to bring Him glory. And in view of that attitude we will consider our trials as joy for having the opportunity to show God's love to this world through them. (James 1:2-3). - Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: At this time in your life, do you consider yourself as submitting to the Holy Spirit by allowing His endurance to comfort and minister to and through you? If not, review the “How do I endure?” section of this study and settle in your mind how you can put these focuses into action so you can submit to the Holy Spirit in this manner.

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Faith Acts

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 3 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [Exodus 3:1 – 4:20](#)



*Let my people go!

Have you ever been in a spiritual slump? Many times it is referred to as being in the valley. It is a time when you just don't feel like anything is going right in your life spiritually and when you feel like you are not close to God at all. At least not as close as you use to be. As time goes on, activities for spiritual closeness to God start to drop from your regular routine. It starts with not having time for your daily commune with the Lord. Then, before you know it you have gone through a whole day without even saying the first prayer or thinking about God. How can I describe such a state with such clarity? It is because I myself have just gone through such a time. I decided it was time to act when I started to realize that the valley was turning into a desert and the mountain tops were getting further away. If I had a small mustard seed of faith in me, then it was time to act!!

The realization began when I was listening to Dr. David Jeremiah. At the beginning of October he started a sermon series on "*What in the world is going on?*" In this series he takes a look at the world events today and how they are fulfilling prophecy of the Bible. I've always been intrigued by prophecy, especially prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled. Therefore, when He started this series, even though I was in a spiritual slump, I made sure I took the time to listen. I feel it was God's way of calling me back to Him and, boy, has He done so. I listened to Dr. Jeremiah say he felt like he would still be on earth for the rapture and that is when I realized I have always felt the same way!! It was then I realized with this faith I must start to act. I must get out of this slump and back to doing my Father's business.

As I was preparing for this part of the Faith series, I was reviewing Moses and how he was called by God out of the wilderness to tell Pharaoh to let his people go. Moses at that point had a job to do and he had to act. The fate of his people depended upon his obedience to God and if Moses had any faith in God at all then he had to be obedient by acting upon God's commands. It is the same with us today, for we have a command from the Lord to spread the Word of God and bring others to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Today, we must act more than ever. We are the Moses in this world. Even though we don't like to think of it this way, the unbelievers are in Satan's grips, being ruled by his desires. God has called all Christians forward to go forth in this world and tell Satan to let His people go. It is by us taking forth this message and sharing with the unbelievers that they will see the truth that leads to the promised land. It is their choice to be reborn becoming a child of God. However, it is our choice to decide to act and the decision must be made today.

Are you in a spiritual slump with no motivation to be about your Father's business? If so, it's time to act. Daily I look for my Lord to come in the clouds as He has promised. Are you doing the same? We must not sit around waiting for a more convenient time to act upon the Master's commands. We cannot sit back in our own spiritual slump and ignore the Father. We must break forth and realize through every war and rumors of war that the bush is burning and the voice of God is calling forth to His children. Stand up and lift up your heads, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for our redemption is drawing near and our Lord is coming in the cloud with power and great glory ([Luke 21:27-28](#)). In this faith, we must follow the example of Moses and act!!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I come to you with a heart that has been absent from acknowledging You and Your desires. As Your child, I feel the command to act upon Your Word and bring the message of salvation to this lost world. Your Word tells us that this world will not last forever and I know the time is drawing near. Strengthen me to go forth in Your name. I pray as Jesus taught me to pray:

Our Father, Who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen

Deepening The Walk

Faith Acts

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Women many times do not act upon their faith because they struggle with inferiority. Dr. James Dobson stated it best in his book, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*.

It is longing for someone to talk to, soul-to soul, but knowing there is no such person worthy of your trust. It is feeling that “They wouldn't like me if they knew the real me.” It is becoming terrified when speaking to a group of your peers, and feeling like a fool when you get home. It is wondering why other people have so much more talent and ability than you do. It is feeling incredibly ugly and sexually unattractive. It is admitting that you have become a failure as a wife and mother. It is disliking everything about yourself and wishing, constantly wishing, you could be someone else. It is feeling unloved and unlovable and lonely and sad. It is lying in bed after the family is asleep, pondering the vast emptiness inside and longing for unconditional love.

Do any or all of these hit home? These feelings of inferiority are Satan's tools in his effort of paralyzing us with fear so we are hindered in following the Lord's commands. There are many ways that Satan accomplishes this goal. It could be through reminding us of negativity during our childhood or past failures in our lives. It may be that you don't think you can do what God has called you to do because of your race, sex, etc. Regardless what Satan is reminding you of to bring feelings of inferiority, God is calling for you to overcome by drawing your strength from His power to do so.

Lets look at the consequences of inferiority and what Scripture says about them.

Inferiority Suppresses Your Potential: You may remember that one of Moses excuses to God was “God, I'm not a good speaker.” Read Acts 7:20-22 and list here what Stephen relates about Moses speaking skills.

When God calls us He equips us. Bob Russell stated in his book, *Extreme Faith*,

“God may want you to create jobs, lift spirits, educate minds, heal hurts, or save souls. But if you keep backing away from challenges because you don't believe you can do them, you don't lack confidence in yourself – you lack confidence in God.”

Reality is that Satan wants us to feel so inferior that we shrink down at the thoughts of acting upon God's commands. He wants us to live far below our potential. What does Philippians 4:13 tell us about where we get our strength?

With this in mind, should we place our confidence in God or in ourselves?_____

Inferiority Destroys Your Dreams:

According to Acts 2:14-21, what does Peter explain to the ones who were at Pentecost about dreams?

As we draw closer to God, the Holy Spirit will speak to us in many ways. One of those ways is through desires and dreams of our heart, along with visions He places in us. Read Proverbs 29:18 and write it here:

Inferiority Destroys Our Relationship with God:

When we think of ourselves as worthless, then we are placing negative opinions on the work of our Creator. Overall, this ruins our relationship with God. We have value in God's eyes and it is when we see this value that we realize how important it is that we fulfill the Creator's purpose in our lives.

According to Psalm 8:3-5, God values you through crowning you with what? _____

According to John 3:16, how much does God value you? _____

God also shows His value for you by giving you gifts to fulfill your purpose for the Kingdom. What does Romans 12:1-8 tell us about using those gifts? _____

After reading these Scriptures, how do you think it makes God feel when you don't see the value He has for you?

Inferiority Sabotages Christian Service:

When we are struggling with inferiority, we many times respond to God by saying we are not capable or there are others who are so much more capable. However, God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:26. In what state were the people when God called them? _____

God uses ordinary people to perform the extraordinary so that He gets the glory and not man. When we allow inferiority to keep us from following God, then we are taking away the opportunity for God to show His power through us.

What does Paul say in 2 Corinthians 12:9 about God's grace, our weaknesses and Christ's power? _____

Final Reflections: If we are to act on our faith, we must overcome inferior feelings. It is important to realize that just because you feel inferior doesn't mean you are defeated. It is when we allow those feelings to rule that Satan has won in hindering us from fulfilling God's purpose in our lives. Start to overcome by acknowledging that God is in charge of your life and you are not. When you trust God and acknowledge His sovereignty over you, then you will concern yourself with bringing glory to Him and not yourself. With this as a basis of your thinking, you will be willing to act upon His requests no matter the feelings you may have of inferiority or otherwise. It is then that you will forget yourself and focus on the challenges set before you by God to fulfill His purpose for your life.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: Take out a piece of paper or use your journal if you keep one. Write down the ways you have allowed inferiority to keep you from fulfilling God's purpose for your life. Take each one at a time and find the truth about them by looking up Scripture that relates to the topic. List these Scriptures beside each. After looking at the truth, take the list before the throne of God and ask Him to guide you in overcoming by showing you ways you can act on faith and trust in Him more. As God reveals Himself to you, write down the act you performed for the Lord and the date. Celebrate each accomplishment by sharing with a Christian friend. In doing so, you will encourage them in the Lord.

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It is longing for someone to talk to, soul-to soul, but knowing there is no such person worthy of your trust. It is feeling that "They wouldn't like me if they knew the real me." It is becoming terrified when speaking to a group of your peers, and feeling like a fool when you get home. It is wondering why other people have so much more talent and ability than you do. It is feeling incredibly ugly and sexually unattractive. It is admitting that you have become a failure as a wife and mother. It is disliking everything about yourself and wishing, constantly wishing, you could be someone else. It is feeling unloved and unlovable and lonely and sad. It is lying in bed after the family is asleep, pondering the vast emptiness inside and longing for unconditional love.

Do any or all of these hit home? These feelings of inferiority are Satan's tools in his effort of paralyzing us with fear so we are hindered in following the Lord's commands. There are many ways that Satan accomplishes this goal. It could be through reminding us of negativity during our childhood or past failures in our lives. It may be that you don't think you can do what God has called you to do because of your race, sex, etc. Regardless what Satan is reminding you of to bring feelings of inferiority, God is calling for you to overcome by drawing your strength from His power to do so.

Lets look at the consequences of inferiority and what Scripture says about them.

Inferiority Suppresses Your Potential: You may remember that one of Moses excuses to God was "God, I'm not a good speaker." Read Acts 7:20-22 and list here what Stephen relates about Moses speaking skills.

When God calls us He equips us. Bob Russell stated in his book, *Extreme Faith*,

"God may want you to create jobs, lift spirits, educate minds, heal hurts, or save souls. But if you keep backing away from challenges because you don't believe you can do them, you don't lack confidence in yourself – you lack confidence in God."

Reality is that Satan wants us to feel so inferior that we shrink down at the thoughts of acting upon God's commands. He wants us to live far below our potential. What does Philippians 4:13 tell us about where we get our strength?

With this in mind, should we place our confidence in God or in ourselves?_____

Inferiority Destroys Your Dreams:

According to Acts 2:14-21, what does Peter explain to the ones who were at Pentecost about dreams?

As we draw closer to God, the Holy Spirit will speak to us in many ways. One of those ways is through desires and dreams of our heart, along with visions He places in us. Read Proverbs 29:18 and write it here:

Inferiority Destroys Our Relationship with God:

When we think of ourselves as worthless, then we are placing negative opinions on the work of our Creator. Overall, this ruins our relationship with God. We have value in God's eyes and it is when we see this value that we realize how important it is that we fulfill the Creator's purpose in our lives.

According to Psalm 8:3-5, God values you through crowning you with what? _____

According to John 3:16, how much does God value you? _____

God also shows His value for you by giving you gifts to fulfill your purpose for the Kingdom. What does Romans 12:1-8 tell us about using those gifts? _____

After reading these Scriptures, how do you think it makes God feel when you don't see the value He has for you?

Inferiority Sabotages Christian Service:

When we are struggling with inferiority, we many times respond to God by saying we are not capable or there are others who are so much more capable. However, God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:26. In what state were the people when God called them? _____

God uses ordinary people to perform the extraordinary so that He gets the glory and not man. When we allow inferiority to keep us from following God, then we are taking away the opportunity for God to show His power through us.

What does Paul say in 2 Corinthians 12:9 about God's grace, our weaknesses and Christ's power? _____

Final Reflections: If we are to act on our faith, we must overcome inferior feelings. It is important to realize that just because you feel inferior doesn't mean you are defeated. It is when we allow those feelings to rule that Satan has won in hindering us from fulfilling God's purpose in our lives. Start to overcome by acknowledging that God is in charge of your life and you are not. When you trust God and acknowledge His sovereignty over you, then you will concern yourself with bringing glory to Him and not yourself. With this as a basis of your thinking, you will be willing to act upon His requests no matter the feelings you may have of inferiority or otherwise. It is then that you will forget yourself and focus on the challenges set before you by God to fulfill His purpose for your life.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: Take out a piece of paper or use your journal if you keep one. Write down the ways you have allowed inferiority to keep you from fulfilling God's purpose for your life. Take each one at a time and find the truth about them by looking up Scripture that relates to the topic. List these Scriptures beside each. After looking at the truth, take the list before the throne of God and ask Him to guide you in overcoming by showing you ways you can act on faith and trust in Him more. As God reveals Himself to you, write down the act you performed for the Lord and the date. Celebrate each accomplishment by sharing with a Christian friend. In doing so, you will encourage them in the Lord.

Faith Takes Risks

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 4 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [Judges 7](#)



As she was walking to her car after work, she continued to think of the things she didn't accomplish during the day. "No time to think about that," she exclaimed to herself, "I have to just keep going. I have too many people counting on me." She began to feel the burden of the remainder of the day. The children still needed to be picked up from school and their homework done. The house was a wreck and there was still those clothes on the bed that needed to be sorted. Some needed to be put away and some needed to be hauled away. Then there was supper, "What do I have in the freezer?" She then exclaimed to herself, "Oh great, nothing! I have nothing at home to cook for tonight. I have to go by the grocery store also!" The anxiety that she felt on a daily basis began to rush through

her body and she had to suppress the feelings. "There is just too much to do. I can't continue thinking about the things I need to do. I just hope I can get the children in bed on time or I will be dragging them out in the morning." She then began to feel the guilt about everyday life overwhelming her so much that she had not been able to spend time with the Lord - really spend time with the Lord. Not just reading her Bible so she can say she did it, but *really* focusing on what she was reading and how to apply it to her life. Then there is Sally. Oh no! She forgot to pray for Sally today when she promised her she would! Oh God, what am I going to do! I have no time for Your people. I have no time for You!

Does this scenario sound familiar? Change a few details and I am sure I describe the feelings that many women have on a daily basis. It is the feeling that we have too much to do and not enough time to do it. No matter the age, we all struggle with the feelings of being disappointed in ourselves. I know these feelings oh too well. It is the feeling of failure at being a wife, mother, daughter, friend and employee. It is the feeling of being a failure to the Lord! Disappointment in ourselves is a feeling the enemy uses to overcome many women so they will not reach their full potential for the Lord. Charles Stanley states the following about disappointment in his workbook companion to his book, *Landmines in the Path of a Believer*:

"The enemy will try to plant disappointments along your path and get you to respond emotionally to what appears to be a failure in reaching your expectations and desires. You can tell if the enemy has been successful in wounding you because you have discouragement in your life. When you're disheartened, you lose your motivation for the things that usually bring fulfillment and purpose."

Many of us place high expectations upon ourselves. We feel like a failure on many occasions because we are unable to reach those expectations. We think we can do it all and if we ask for help then we are failing ourselves. The reality is, we aren't superwoman and we can't do it all. The Lord doesn't expect us to either.

As I was preparing for this part of the faith series, I kept thinking of large life decisions when God asks us to take great risks in our lives. Then I realized that as discouraged women we have a problem with taking risks on a different scale because we don't want to risk asking others to help us. When we do we have the risks of looking like a failure to others; burdening others with our problems; not being able to do things the way we want to do them; etc. The list can go on and on. When we reach out to others for help we are at risk of many things. However, this is exactly the lesson the Lord may be trying to teach us. Looking over many of the well loved stories in the Bible we see that God called many of His children to take risks by stepping out on faith. Rahab, who we will study about in our mini Bible study, took many risks when she housed men who were scouting out her town to destroy it. Moses, who we spoke of last week, took a risk by even approaching Pharaoh's throne with the request from God. However, Gideon took a risk by following God's instructions to eliminate the number of men for his army. And it is Gideon's story that we look at for the basis of why God wants us to take risks for Him. The Lord told Gideon to eliminate the number of men who are to fight because, ". . . *You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her,*" ([Judges 7:2](#)) The Lord was teaching them that He is the One Who will bring the victory. This is the lesson He is teaching us today. As women, we put too much reliance on our own strength to do the daily tasks of life. When in reality God wants us to take the risk of asking for help because it is through taking this risk that we are allowing Him to work through our lives. When we do things on our own we begin to think that we are the source of our strength and that we can handle all that comes our way. Reality, we cannot do anything on our own. Even having the good health to get out of bed in the morning is a blessing from God.

Are you discouraged and not wanting to take the risk to ask for help? God wants to reach out to us through the loving arms of the ones He has placed in our lives. He wants to give them the opportunity to be obedient to Him by assisting in the need. When we don't take the risk, then He is unable to show us His love in this manner. Just like He eliminated men from Gideon's army, He wants to eliminate things from our lives that keep us from seeing His strength. Ask the Father how you are standing in the way of Him being glorified through your regular activities. Request that He give you wisdom of how you should take risks that strengthen your faith in Him and ultimately strengthen the relationships between His children.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, why do I get myself into this situation where I feel disappointed and discouraged? Please give me the wisdom to know how to overcome this in my life so that I can bring glory to You by allowing You to strengthen me. Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Takes Risks

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

What does it mean to take a risk for God? Will the decision you need to make be one you must make in a split second or will you have time to think it over? In the case of Rahab, it seems she didn't have time to think it over. Instead, Scripture jumps right into stating how she took the Israelite men in and lied to the king about their location. In doing so she risked her own life. So what helps one make such quick decisions to take a risk. Let's look at Rahab's story and discover the background of her faith.

Begin by familiarizing yourself with the full story of Rahab and the spies by reading Joshua 2 and Joshua 6.

Faith above the fear of man: How does Rahab's response to the king's men in Joshua 2:4-5 show that her faith in the God of the Israeli people was greater than the fear of man?

How does Rahab's request to the spies in Joshua 2:9-13 show she had knowledge of God? How did her response show she had faith in God?

Realizing The Risks:

What risks was Rahab taking by the following actions?

- Hiding the two men and lying to the king (Joshua 2:4-7) _____

- Requesting special treatment from the spies (Joshua 2:8-13) _____

- Leaving the scarlet rope in the window for all to see (Joshua 2:17-21) _____

The blessing from the risk:

What was the ultimate blessing that Rahab and her family received from her stepping out on faith and taking these risks? _____

Read Joshua 2:15, Joshua 6:15-17, 20-23. Where was Rahab's house? Through the falling of the wall God performed a miracle for the Israelite people. What additional miracle did He perform for Rahab and her family?

Final Reflections: The Lord wants to bless us in great ways. Many times He is unable to do so because we do not take risks to believe more in His miraculous powers. Rahab had heard of the Lord's miracles. She believed that His promises would certainly be fulfilled and that there was no way of escape but by submitting to Him and joining with His people. The risks Rahab took proved that she had the faith the Lord looks for in all of us - the faith that brings about opportunities for God to show His glory to us through miracles. - Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: What risk is God calling for you to take at the moment? Think about how you have been avoiding taking the risks by allowing the fear of man or of this world to overshadow you. Many times when God is calling for us to take a risk it is to lead us out of circumstances that are hindering our spiritual growth. Think about the risks He is calling for you to take and write down the circumstances involved with the risk. Take these circumstances to the throne of God and ask Him to reveal to you how you are hindering your spiritual growth by not taking the risks He is requesting from you.

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Faith Obeys

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 5 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [Judges 6](#)



“Done.” Joshua said to himself. He had delivered the instructions from the Lord to the Israelites. Murmuring was going on all around him, “Moses would have never had us doing this, Joshua is out of his mind.” In Joshua's mind there was no doubt, the Lord told him to do it and as Moses' successor in leadership, he was going to obey the Lord. The ones he was leading were in doubt, but he wasn't. The Lord gave specific instructions and they must be obeyed. “Lord, give me strength to lead in this obedience,” Joshua prayed to himself as he assisted by giving further instructions on how to assemble the priests as the Lord had instructed. As they began the march around the wall, Joshua was happy the people had to be quiet as the Lord commanded. Even though their murmuring wasn't going to sway him, he was glad he didn't have to hear it anymore. He knew that the marching around the city sounded ridiculous, but the Lord had commanded it. He wasn't going to allow the people to sway him like they did Moses years ago. If they were obedient to the Lord's commands and had faith in Him, the wall would come tumbling down.

When I read the story of Joshua and the wall of Jericho, I relate to Joshua the most. Mainly I think it is because the Lord has put me in leadership positions for His people on many occasions, but also I feel it is because I know that I must stay tuned in and pull from His strength to fill that leadership position. My children love the game “Simon Says.” They really listen intently for the words “Simon Says” before the command so they will be assured that the act they are to do is to be done. If Simon didn't say to do it, then it wasn't to be done. If you do so, then you are dismissed from the game. They get frustrated when they are dismissed. Sometimes dismissal comes about because they get the giggles from what they were doing at the moment and their focus is taken off of the leader's words. Other times, they get dismissed because they start to predict what the leader was going to say for them to do next and they stopped listening for “Simon Says.” It makes me think about our obedience to the Lord. As we begin to seek God's guidance in our life, we must focus on His Word. It is impossible for us to be obedient to the Lord if we don't know what he is commanding. In the game Simon Says, you focus on hearing the words “Simon says” before each command. In our obedience to God, we must focus on the Lord and His Word to find out what He is requiring of us.

The struggle comes in performing the acts of obedience especially when those acts just don't make sense to us. Just as Joshua was with the Israelites walking around the wall, we too must be obedient to the commands of the Lord. Even though it doesn't make sense, do it anyway because the Lord commanded. When He commands He does so for a reason and with a promise. God had a reason for the Israelites to march around the city walls for seven days and to do so in a particular manner. The reason I see right off is for them to be obedient to Him. In addition, His promise stated to Joshua was that the walls would collapse and they would be given the town of Jericho. However, if you read over this Scripture you will see that Joshua didn't share the promise of the Lord giving the town to them until the very end. I feel this took dedication from Joshua and great faith in His Lord. It would have been easier on him to say to the people, “If we do this marching for seven days then the Lord will collapse the town wall and we will take the town.” Instead, Joshua just gave the command to march around the wall. The faith through obedience was within Joshua as he was the one who knew the promise and he was the one acting in great strides of obedience. Obedience that knew God would keep His Word and fulfill His promise.

Has the Lord asked you to obey a command from Him that just doesn't make sense? Are you hesitant because you are not sure why? You can always be assured that God has a reason for His commands – no matter how ridiculous they sound to us. And His commands always come with a promise. Sometimes the promise is a personal one, just for us, as it was with Joshua and the Israelites. However, sometimes it is the promise that we don't have to worry because He will be there with us every step of the way. Just like in the game Simon Says, you must focus on the Lord and actively seek His commands only. We must not get caught up in our own judgment of the acts instead we must walk by faith and obey. It is when we walk by faith in obedience that we accomplish what the Lord wants in our lives and draw closer to Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Your Word tells us that Your foolishness is wiser than our wisdom and Your weakness is stronger than our strength. (1 Corinthians 1:24-25) Help me to remember this when You command me to do something that I think doesn't make sense. You are in control – not me. Help me to focus on Your Word, Your guidance and Your promises. It is in Jesus Name I pray, Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Obeys

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

In Joshua chapter 6, Joshua led the Israelites to victory by following the instructions of God that seemed unreasonable. Many times we are called to follow unreasonable commands of the Lord and our response should be as Joshua's – immediate obedience. It is when we have a submissive spirit toward God's instructions, even when they don't make sense, that God blesses us for walking by faith and not by sight. Let's look at what Scripture says about our obedience and how it affects our relationship with God.

The Reason for Obedience:

According to Matthew 22:36-38, what does Jesus tell us is the greatest commandment? _____

According to John 14:15; John 14:21 and 1 John 5:3, how do we show our love for God? _____

Are you showing your love for God in this manner? _____

Drawing Closer through Obedience:

According to John 14:23-24, what does Jesus tell us about His and the Father's response to those who obey His teaching? _____

According to John 15:10, when we obey Jesus' commandments what are we doing? _____

According to Acts 5:32, the Father gives Who to those who obey Him? _____

What does 1 John 2:3-4 tell us of the man who does not obey? _____

Write out Romans 1:5 here. Are you answering the call?

Final Reflections: The Lord doesn't give us instructions because He is a tyrant who desires to make us suffer. He gives us instructions because He knows what is best for us. His commands are given for our benefit and is the way to having the abundant life Jesus said He came to give us. Obedience to God is very important in your Christian growth. It is impossible to deepen your walk with Him if you disobey His commands. The Lord honors us with His presence when we constantly strive to be like Jesus and follow the commands of the Father. He delights in our ways and makes our steps firm. Even though we may stumble, we will not fall because the Lord upholds us with His hand (Psalm 37:23-24). Our faith is revealed through our obedience and our relationship with Christ grows even stronger.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: From the Scriptures we have already studied, there is a clear picture for us to show our love for God by obeying His commands. Review the following Proverbs and ponder how you are applying their wisdom in your life today.

Proverbs 14:12: _____

Proverbs 4:10-12: _____

Proverbs 3:1-6: _____

If you feel you are falling short at applying these to your life, take your weaknesses to the throne of God and ask Him to give you wisdom as to how you can be obedient to Him by walking by faith and not by sight.

Faith Repents

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 6 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [Romans 13:11-14](#)



I sit and wonder sometimes as to what makes me stop and take notice. What makes me stop and take notice to those around me . . . those who I've known, but now they are far away . . . those who I haven't met yet, but they are right in front of me. What makes me take notice of the way I treat people in my life and the awareness of my sinful actions towards them. What really makes me take notice? Does God have to hit me over the head with a brick to get my attention? Does He need to leave me in my sinful state until I cover myself so much with the sin that I do not recognize myself? All these questions I wonder at times. It is in the midst of pondering these things that make me strive to be a better servant for Christ. For when I bring my sins to the surface I am able to deal with their existence. However, if I ignore my sinful ways, I am destroying my close relationship with Christ.

Repentance of one's sins is the essential step of salvation. When we receive Jesus as our Saviour, we realize we are sinners; are in need of a Savior; and repent of our sins. However, afterwards it is easy for us to neglect the importance of repentance as a part of our faith. Many times we fall into Satan's trap of belief that we will always be sinners and we are unable to overcome sin in our lives. This is a state of denial. We deny that we must continue to overcome sin in our lives even though Jesus has paid the price for those sins. This attitude of denial is detrimental to deepening our walk with Christ. It is right in the middle of our faith that we realize that continual repentance of sins must be done if we are to draw closer to our Saviour. As Christians we believe that Christ has forgiven us for our sins – past, present and future. But within this faith we need to grasp that if we are to obtain the promises of God we must strive to overcome sin in our lives. For example, God promises us His peace and is ready to give it to us in abundance. However, we must trust in Him and have faith that He will provide the peace we long to obtain. This trust can be overshadowed with sins in our lives. Such sins as worry can take us further away from trusting God and further away from the blessing of the peace that He promises.

How do we overcome these sins? Continual awareness and repentance is the only answer. If we are unaware of the sins in our lives then we will not be able to repent of those sins. Yes, we can ask for forgiveness of sins in which we are not aware. Since all sins were paid for at the cross, this forgiveness was obtained at the point of our salvation. However, we are unable to overcome those sins if we are not aware of them. It is important that we show our faith by asking God to reveal sins in our lives that keep us from drawing closer to Him and obtaining His blessings. After awareness, we must then repent of those sins and realize what repentance means. We repent when we feel such a regret for our actions that we change our ways, literally turning from the action and following the better way – the way of Christ.

Are you daily asking God to reveal the sins in your life? Man even though born into sinful nature was given a free will. As Christians, we have chosen Christ and when we were saved we received the Holy Spirit, Who indwells each of us. We have a choice not to sin in our lives and that choice begins with a realization of the sins in our lives. Once we are aware, we have the choice to repent and submit to the Holy Spirit. In our flesh, we cannot overcome sin, no matter how much effort we put forth. However, as we yield to the Spirit, He produces godly fruit through us and our sins are overcome.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Your Word tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Lead me in being aware of when I have sinned. Give me the strength to repent of those sins and the wisdom to know how to turn from my wicked ways. Show me how to submit to Your Spirit so that through Your strength I may overcome sin in my life. Overall, I will bring glory to You, which is my true desire. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Repents

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

*“Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.
Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit.”
Ezekiel 18:30-31*

Repent O sinner!! Throughout the Old Testament you will see that the Lord sent His prophets on many occasions to tell the Israelite to repent of their sins if they were to draw closer to Him. The above text from Ezekiel shows us that the call was to rid themselves of the offenses they had committed and to obtain a new heart and a new spirit. Repentance is not just about asking for forgiveness of our sins, but much more. Repentance takes us further into turning away from our evil ways and adopting a new heart and spirit that the Lord desires. Therefore, to repent of our sins we must realize that we cannot overcome the sins of our lives in our own strength. As Christians, we must pull from the Holy Spirit within us to overcome. By putting this submission into practice, our faith in God is strengthened. Let's take a moment to look at how repentance is at the very core of our faith.

The Flesh and It's Fruit:

In the flesh, we do things we regret and as we try to make up for those regrets in the flesh, we fail. This is because we sometimes get the impression that we are responsible to live by godly values in our own strength. However, this is never the way God intended it to be. Let's look at what fruit the flesh produces.

According to Galatians 5:19-21, what is the typical fruit of the flesh? _____

Circle the ones that you feel the most convicted of at this very moment.

Therefore, since the fruit of the flesh is not righteous fruit, then overcoming of sin in our lives cannot be done in the flesh. We must submit to the Holy Spirit.

According to Romans 5:17, how do we obtain the gift of righteousness? _____

When we try to be holy in our own strength, we might find partial success. However, the by-products of such effort can include pride, selfishness, exhaustion, and judgmental attitudes.

When have you realized you've tried to attain righteousness on your own? _____

What were the results of your efforts to be holy? _____

The Holy Spirit and His Fruit:

In the flesh we desire control, to do things ourselves. However, when it comes to righteousness—whether for salvation or for living—we must allow God to do the work. He has equipped us at the point of salvation to be able to allow Him to do the work. Let's look at how He has equipped us and what benefits come from our submission.

According to Ephesians 1:12-14, what were Christians given as a seal to mark them as a guarantee of God's redemption? _____

According to Galatians 5:22-23, what is the fruit of the Spirit?

Take a look at Galatians 5:20 and Galatians 3:3. What do these Scriptures tell us about our faith and living for God?

Final Reflections: To experience success over specific sins in our lives, we must start by declaring victory over them each morning. Think through the pressures you are likely to feel and identify how those pressures can tempt you to sin. Item by item, thank God for the victory over sin. In doing so, you activate your faith and avoid pursuing righteousness in your own power. Remember, Christ died not only to pay your sin-debt, but also to enable your success. By daily submitting to the Holy Spirit, you can become a believer who faithfully lives according to biblical principles. Through this biblical living you will overcome the sin in your life and bear the fruit of the Spirit.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: Think of the sins in your life as a giant that you must fight. Read over the story of David and Goliath beginning with Goliath's challenge to the Israelites all the way through David's victory over Goliath. (1 Samuel 17). Write down what you observe about the following:

- David's Perspective (1 Samuel 17:26, 45-47)
- David's previous experience that gave him confidence in God. (1 Samuel 17:37)
- David's role throughout the story.
- God's role throughout the story.

Looking over each of these. How can you face the giants (sins) in your life by having the right perspective; reflecting upon your experience with the Lord; acknowledging your role and acknowledging God's role?

Faith Answers

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 7 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [John 13:1-17](#)



Imagine this . . . you are in a room full of eleven people who are trying to love you the best they know how while at the same time they are trying to understand who you really are in the scheme of things. Then there is one individual who is looking for any opportunity he can to betray you and you know it. Yet, instead of catering to the overwhelming desire to "get them before they get you," you decide to serve them instead. Now, think about this fact for a moment: Jesus was right in the middle of this scenario when He washed the disciples feet. Yet, what did He do? He continued to answer the call in serving the Lord by fulfilling His purpose which was to show His disciples and us today how to serve regardless who we are serving.

The Lord has revealed a lot to me over the last few years about answering His calls. One particular lesson has been in regard to mercy. I use to excuse myself from being merciful by telling myself and others, "I wasn't given the spiritual gift of mercy." Then other excuses would fall in line with this one like, "If I give them money then they will just go spend it on alcohol or drugs." All boiled down to be just that - excuses!! However, it hit me one day as I was reading this account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet that Jesus, even though He knew Judas' heart, still picked up the feet of His soon to be betrayer and washed them. No excuses, just a display of perfect love. So many times we make excuses about what the other person is or isn't going to do that we decide not to answer the call the Lord is giving us through His Holy Spirit. We view our possessions as being our own and when we give, if it isn't used as we intended, we view ourselves as being betrayed. However, don't our possessions belong to God? Doesn't He give them to us for use in the furthering of His kingdom? Therefore, when He calls us to use one of these resources, whether monetary or otherwise, we must answer the call. In reality, if we think about our faith in God we shouldn't question the receiver just the giver. Questions we should ask ourselves should be - Am I tuning in to God so that I can answer the call to be or not to be a giver?; Am I giving for selfish reasons or am I giving to display God's love?; Are the excuses that I give myself keeping me from answering God's call and ultimately keeping me from fulfilling His purpose in my life? These questions and many others can help us determine if we are living by faith by answering the call of God.

Are you answering God's calls? One of the reasons we don't answer God's calls is because we don't recognize when He is trying to get our attention. God speaks to us primarily in four ways - through His Word, through His Holy Spirit, through another person, and through the circumstance in our lives. Could it be that you are not hearing His calls because you are not investing time in His Word? Could it be you feel the Holy Spirit directing you but your doubts and fears are overshadowing your decisions to act? Are you ignoring other Christians in your life? Are you not evaluating the circumstances of your life in regards to God and His spiritual growth for you? Whatever the reason, it is imperative that you begin to recognize God when He calls because if you don't recognize His voice then you cannot answer His call.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, guide me in realizing when I am making excuses and not answering Your calls. Lead me in recognizing when You speak so I may answer by showing Your love to this world. Thank You for sending Jesus to show me an example of how to display Your perfect love. It is in His Name I pray. Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Answers

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

There is one fact about the great invention of Alexander Graham Bell – you do not know to answer the phone unless you hear it ring. God's messages to us are always important and timely. He calls us on many occasions and for many reasons. However, many times we are not alert to His voice and miss His calls altogether. As Christians, it is our responsibility to be wise adventurers of this earth and to be alert to our Master's voice as we journey through life. When we tune into the voice of God He is delighted because we begin to be conformed to the image of His Son and express His love to this world. There are four primary ways that God speaks to us - through His Word, through His Holy Spirit, through another person, and through the circumstances in our life. We should be so attuned to His voice that we hear it as soon as He speaks. Unfortunately, we are not always spiritually alert. Let's look at a number of ways God helps us take notice.

A Restless Spirit:

One of the ways God gets our attention is through a restless spirit. Read Esther 6 & 7 and explain how God used the restless spirit of the king to further His purpose for Mordecai? _____

When we experience a restlessness deep within, the wise thing to do is stop and pray. Ask the Lord if He is trying to say something to you. Many times He gives us a restlessness to show us that we need a change of direction. This is a very gentle method God uses to correct our course.

A Spoken Word:

While there are not many of us that will verbally hear God call our names, we can be alert to the fact that God speaks to us through others. When God wanted to send Eli a message He woke Samuel by calling his name. According to 1 Samuel 3:4-9, how did Eli, as priest, assist Samuel in recognizing God's voice? _____

This experience of God calling Samuel got Eli's attention also. According to 1 Samuel 3:11-18, how did Eli express his curiosity of God's message to Samuel? _____

The Answer of “No” to Our Prayers

Sometimes God will answer a “No” to a prayer we desperately want an answer of “Yes.” Many times God will refuse to give us a prayer request because He wants us to examine ourselves. This is what happened in regards to David in the loss of his son. Looking at this story we see how David's response to God's answer should also be our response.

According to 2 Samuel 12:17-23, how did David respond to God's answer of “No” in regards to his son?

Defeat of Our Own Strength

When we are acting on our own strength, God may cause defeat in our lives so we will tune more to Him and pull from His wisdom and strength. Joshua experienced this right after the great victory of Jericho.

According to Joshua 7, how did God get Joshua and the Israelites attention through their defeat at Ai? What was their response?_____

Financial Difficulties

Many times when it comes to our finances we do as the people did during the times of Judges, “every man did what was right in his own eyes.” As a result, our finances end up in the same state as the nation of Israel did during the time of Judges and that is fallen into idolatry and disobedience (Judges 17:6). God will use financial difficulties to get our attention as to how we are not consulting Him as to how we should spend our money.

According to Judges 6:1-10, how did the Midianites prevail over the Israelites? How did God use this difficulty to get Israel's attention?

(Continue reading in Judges to see how God used Gideon to deliver Israel from their oppression and bless them.)

Final Reflections: Since God is a personal God, He uses not only the methods addressed in this study but many other methods to get our attention. He is constantly wanting to communicate with us and at any given moment He knows exactly where we are in our journey. So, be alert. Notice if any of God's methods are occurring in your life. Ask Him what He wants to tell you. Then, listen—not only to hear, but to answer with obedience.

- Kelly Dixon

Faith Takes Courage

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 8 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [Joshua 1:9](#)



When I first received the call from the Lord to His speaking and writing ministry, I couldn't see how it was possible. At the time, the obstacles of daily life saturated my thinking so much that I couldn't see God's bright rays of sunlight through the rain forest that I had come to know as my life. Excuses began to fall from my mouth as I would pray and with each excuse the Lord gave an answer that not only eliminated the excuse but called me to be strong and courageous in His strength. I would sit at times just staring out the window of my living room wondering how I was going to make it through the next day much less fulfill the call the Lord had given me. I remember at one point the Lord stirred His desire for my life so much that He would give me visions of speaking in front of crowds where He was telling me exactly what to say. It was then that I realized the Lord was directing me to take courage because I wouldn't be alone.

Many portraits have been drawn to illustrate the account when Jesus walked on water. One I have seen lately shows the fear that was on the disciples faces as Jesus barely becomes visible to them in the fog. They were very afraid thinking they were seeing a ghost. However, Jesus tells them, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." Courage is something that we must take, not something that will just fall into our laps one day. When we start fulfilling God's purpose for our lives, the glimpses of our Savior can sometimes be fogged with fear as the battles of this life begin to overcome us. We think strongly about quitting our mission for the Lord and to quit would be easy. It takes no skill to give up. It takes courage, however, to fight. We must take courage to face the battles life brings our way and not back down. Victory only comes to those who are brave enough to stand and fight!

Are you taking courage or are you cowering in your home? As I sat those times looking out my window, the cowardly feelings were ever present; but the Lord continued to remind me of His victory. The key is knowing that our strength to fight comes from the Lord. It is our faith in Christ that gives us the ability to stand and fight the battles of this life that hinder us from being about our Father's business. Our faith in Christ must be exercised by taking courage to do the Lord's will even through life trials. I wonder how many of us today are cowering in our homes in the face of great battles that need to be fought while others, who are facing those exact same battles, are out there living in victory because they exercised their faith in Christ! We must take courage and have the faith in the Lord that He will help us fight and get victory over whatever battles life may throw our way. Through Jesus, victory is ours. We must take courage and claim it!!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Jesus told us in this world we would have trials and tribulations. He also told us to "be of good cheer" because He has already overcome this world. Help me to put my hope and faith in Christ. He alone will give me the strength to stand and fight the battles of life and be victorious. Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Takes Courage

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

When you think of a courageous person, do you think of yourself? Even though many of us don't feel like we are cowardly, we don't feel like we are very courageous either. Throughout God's Word He tells us to be strong and courageous. He doesn't expect us to back down to life challenges. However, He doesn't expect us to face them on our own either. When we are courageous at battling the trials in our lives, God will strengthen our faith. Let's look at how He does this?

Courage builds our faith and brings restoration.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-10 and answer the following questions:

1. Why should we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand?
2. What should we do with our anxiety and why?
3. What does "be self-controlled and alert" mean in verse 8?
4. According to verse 9, how do we resist the devil?
5. Write out verse 10 here:

If we are courageous and fight life's battles with the strength of God, there is a promise at the end – restoration. God Himself will restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast. If we give up or back down, we will not be restored. Instead we will usually stay in the midst of the trial.

The set back of a shipwreck.

When we are blindsided with trials, many times we feel like we can't go on. Usually it starts with a major happening in our life, then our attitudes are changed for the negative. As other life trials start coming our way, we have the wrong attitude to face them and we feel like we are in the midst of a storm with one thing after the other coming after us. It is like being shipwrecked on an island and the only thing you can do is sit and think "woe is me." This is were the devil wants to destroy our mission for the Lord. That is why it is important for us to take courage from the very beginning and face the shipwreck in God's strength. Let's take a look at Paul, who I believe was more than a conqueror. Paul, who faced many trials during his pursuit of the Lord's mission for his life, was once faced with a literal shipwreck. Let's look at how he faced it from the onset.

Read Acts 27:13-44 for the full story of the storm and shipwreck Paul went through while he was a prisoner and answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean by "they thought they had obtained what they wanted" in verse 13?
2. Review verses 14 – 20 and list the ways they tried to "weather the storm" on their own.
3. Feeling destitute to the end of their lives coming soon, what were the encouraging words that Paul told them in verses 22-26? Do these words sound like words from someone who doesn't have faith? Is this the type of attitude that you take when you are faced with a tragedy in your life?
4. Looking through the rest of the story, how does Paul continue to be courageous and show his faith in God?

This account of the Scriptures reminds me a lot of how the trials of life hit us. We are going along fine and enjoying life. We think we have everything under control so we "drop our anchor" and plant ourselves right in the middle of a storm. As we weather the storm, we try our best to do it in our own strength, usually not even thinking about turning to the Father for help. It is when we are destitute for failure that we finally listen to the Word of God. How many trials we could "weather" better if we would take courage and turn to God's strength initially?

Final Reflections: As Christians, our purpose is to bring glory to the Lord. He has a plan for each of our lives and it is a prosperous plan (Jeremiah 29:11). He allows trials in our lives to strengthen us in knowing that He is our hope, He is our strength, and when we trust in Him, He will lead us to victory. We must not allow Satan to take our eyes off Jesus from the onset. This is why it is important that we start by facing our trials with courage. Starting in this way, we will benefit the blessing of being restored in the end.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: James 3:2-3 tells us, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.”* Through this Scripture, we know that God allows trials and tribulations in our lives to strengthen our faith and to develop perseverance. Think over the trials you have been through lately in your life. Consider the following reasons that God may be taking you through that trial and think about whether you are facing the trial courageously, strengthening your faith, and developing perseverance.

- **Faith trials draw our attention to Him.** Sometimes worldly pursuits coerce us to drift away from Jesus. If we encounter a situation for which we have no solution, our focus comes back to Him as we begin to pray and look for a way out of the trial.
- **Faith trials teach endurance.** We develop the stamina to bear up under heavy loads without discouragement because we trust that God will see us through. He increases our capacity by applying slight pressure. When we prove we can handle a little, He adds more, constantly working on our witness until we shine brightly for Him.
- **Faith trials train us for higher service.** We must endure and keep our attention on Him so that we are prepared to work anywhere in His kingdom. God designs opportunities for every believer, shifting us to more responsible areas of service as we grow in faith.
- **Faith trials glorify God.** The greatest praise we can give to our heavenly Father is to walk hopefully through a dark valley. It is then that we are a living example of His faithfulness and trustworthiness for everyone to see.

Faith Hopes

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 9 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [Mark 5:21-43](#)



Christians talk a lot about our hope in Christ and we spend a lifetime trying to determine what that really means. This journey of discovery is part of our walk with Jesus and somewhere along our travels we discover that how we react in the moment of crisis reveals much about how we place our hope into action. Sometimes our life seems like a long, dark tunnel. Perhaps we are unable to discover a solution for a problem, or we cannot find relief from pain. Regardless of the direction we turn, we find no hope for anything better than our present circumstances. But wait; as Christians shouldn't we always have hope. Shouldn't we constantly be relying on our Savior and not worrying about the problems in our lives? Certainly, but as the old saying goes; "Easier said than done." That is why I am so grateful for a Father Who has given me His grace when I fall

short of acting on my hope in Him. Hope has a depth of infinity. The lessons from this one little word are many. However, in this application, our focus will be on the action we must place within our hope in Christ.

In Mark chapter 5 versus 21-45, we have the story of Jairus, who sought Jesus for the healing of his daughter, and the woman who had been constantly bleeding for twelve years. Intertwined throughout are many examples of how hope is being placed into action. The action brought about by Jairus' hope is first seen by him seeking Christ. Jairus was the local synagogue leader. Many synagogue leaders had close ties to the Pharisees, who did not support Jesus. It is very likely that Jairus, like other synagogue leaders, was pressured by the Pharisees not to support Jesus either. Therefore, Jairus seeking Christ for healing was a risk. However, his hope was placed on Jesus and the feeling of hope was certainly hastened when Christ began to follow him to his daughter. However, the feelings soon hit a brick wall when Jesus stopped to ask, "Who touched My robe?" I'm sure Jairus thought, "What do you mean who touched Your robe? My daughter needs Your attention now! Why are You stopping to examine who touched You at this moment? Let's go, my daughter needs healing!!" Yet, Jesus had another who was seeking Him through a heart of hope.

The woman who had been bleeding for twelve years had placed all her hope in doctors. This hope spent everything she had. She now placed her hope in Jesus and so much so that she knew she just needed to touch His robe to be healed. Just a touch! Think about it, in your ongoing trials of life do you reach out to Jesus for just one touch? That is all it took for the woman to be healed from twelve years of bleeding! When Jesus realized that she was the one who touched Him, He acknowledges her hope by acknowledging her faith. For it was the action of the hope she held in her heart that showed her faith. It was hope in a Healer that drew her heart to the faith of reaching out for the healing.

Jesus then turns to Jairus, who just received the news that his daughter had died. The words Jesus spoke to Jairus are ones we should always remember, "Don't be afraid. Just believe." Jesus was reminding Jairus to remember why he originally came to Him. He wanted Jairus to remember that he was seeking Jesus for healing; and if his heart began with the hope that Jesus could heal his daughter from sickness, then his heart must continue to believe. Believe that the healer who can heal sickness can do anything. Each step Jairus took back to his home had to be full of this continual hope; continual belief that Jesus was the answer. Hope that Jesus would perform a miracle.

Does your life seem like a long, dark tunnel? Are you unable to discover a solution for a problem, or find relief from pain? Have you hit a brick wall and feel that you have lost Jesus' attention? When we go to our Savior with a heart of hope, we must remember how to act upon that hope. We must continue to go to Him and reach out to touch Him in any way we can. We must seek His guidance through His Word and His comfort through prayer. When we see others being healed, yet we are still waiting on the healing in our own lives, we must remember the initial hope we had in our Savior and continue to believe. Continue to walk with Jesus! For our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, how easy it is to talk about hope, but not act. Help me to realize when I am not placing my belief in You with my actions of hope. When I am in the darkness of this world, help me to remember the hope I have in You. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Hopes

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

The other day my daughters asked if they could take a bath together. This was something I usually didn't allow, because the scenario ends up with a fight and, of course, the bathroom gets a bath at the same time. However, this day I gave in because they needed some good sister time together. About midway through the bath they called out to me, "Mom, can we wash each other's hair." To which I replied, "Yes, but make sure you put a little shampoo in your hand and don't use the whole bottle." So in a bit I decided to check on the shampoo treatments. To my surprise I encountered two little girls with clumps of white soap speckled all throughout their hair. I was quickly given the explanation that they couldn't find the shampoo and used the bar of soap instead. As I glanced to see that the shampoo was just a quarter of a head turn away from the bar of soap, I let out a big sigh. Grabbing the shower head, I began to rinse out clumps and specks of soap. I don't know if you ever had this task before, but it isn't an easy one. A few minutes into the tedious task I exclaimed, "This is going to take forever." My four year old looked at me and replied, "So Mommy does that mean we are going to spend the rest of our lives in this bathtub." I smiled and thought to myself that even though my comment was just an expression, she had a better perspective on longevity of problems than her mother.

Sometimes our troubles seem to go on for so long that we think they will never end. In the beginning, we are filled with hope in our Savior. However, as trials continue we begin to lose sight of that hope and begin to feel like there is no hope for an end. However, as my daughter pointed out in her four year old way, there is an end. Sometimes that end is reached here on earth and sometimes the end is when we exit this earth. But still our Savior does come to save us and we must remember that He may tarry for a reason. Meanwhile, we should learn how to act on our hope to keep it alive.

Elijah's experience with the widow and her son who died can teach us a lot about how to act on our hope. Let's look at the story and see how Elijah reacted.

Begin by reading 1 Kings 17:8-24

Initial encounter with the feeling of hopelessness:

What reaction did the widow woman have toward Elijah when her son died? (1 Kings 17:18)

Do you feel that she was angry with Elijah or with God? Why?

When we initially encounter something that gives us the realization that we have lost all hope (death of loved one for example), we begin a realm of emotions. Those who have studied the grief process report that we go through five stages of grief when we lose a loved one: shock, denial, anger, depression and acceptance. The widow woman probably immediately jumped to anger because her son had been sick for a while and she probably had realized early on that death could be the end. When we first realize that we may have lost hope in our lives for a particular

situation, we begin the same process as a grieving person does for a loved one. What we must do is realize early on that the stages are healthy for us, however, we must not let our hope die in the process of going through the stages. Elijah's actions are a good example of how to keep the hope alive.

Elijah's display of hope:

Read 1 King 17: 19-21 and write down your observations of Elijah's reaction after the widow had addressed him about her son's death.

Elijah did five things as a reaction to the initial news of hopelessness. They were:

1. He stayed calm.
2. He sought privacy
3. He prayed
4. He worked
5. He gave God the glory

Let's take a look at each of these to see how we can keep hope alive in situations we feel are becoming hopeless.

Elijah stayed calm.

Write down the words that Elijah said to the widow woman after she had finished her accusations toward him. (1 King 17:19)

Honestly, if this lady had come to me spewing off these bitter accusations I would have probably retaliated by spewing bitterness right back at her. However, Elijah responded with self-control – a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23) that many of us struggle with yielding to on a regular basis. However, when we lose control – when we lash out, hit, have an anxiety attack, etc. – we are not bringing glory to God. When we keep calm in the midst of the storm, we honor Christ. Read and write down your observations about the following verses in regards to self-control.

Proverbs 13:3

Proverbs 16:32

1 Timothy 3:1-2, 11

1 Peter 1:13

2 Peter 1:6

Elijah sought privacy.

Review Elijah's actions in 1 Kings 17:19.

Even though Elijah was going to pray for a miracle, he was not going to do it in front of the widow. He sought privacy.

Read Matthew 6:6. What does Jesus say about this?

Review the story of Jairus and Jesus raising his daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37-43). Did Jesus allow a crowd to see this miracle?

Jesus didn't exploit people or call attention to Himself and neither did Elijah. We shouldn't be too quick to broadcast our great deeds in advance. When we do them quietly and allow God to get the credit, we personally build upon our hope in Christ and don't get wrapped up in the sins that come from broadcasting them.

Elijah prayed.

Review Elijah's prayer in 1 Kings 17:20-21.

Elijah was honest in his prayer. He didn't understand why the Lord allowed the boy to die and honestly expressed this in his prayer to the Lord. We should always be honest in our prayers to God. Even though He already knows how you feel, He wants you to express your feelings to Him. This opens up the line of communication and allows for honest feelings to be examined by you before the Lord.

Elijah was persistent with his prayer. Three times Elijah cried out to the Lord. Review the following verses and write down what they say about not giving up in prayer.

Luke 18:1-8:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

Elijah expressed a prayer of hope: He prayed for God to do something that up to this point in history there was no account of this ever being done and that was to raise someone from the dead. Elijah had never seen anyone come back to life, but he believed God could do the impossible. He placed his hope in a Lord who in his past had stopped the rain, fed him by ravens, and replenished the widow's flour and oil. He knew that a God who did all those things could raise the dead.

Review what Jesus had to say about praying with faith in Matthew 21:21-22.

God wants us to pray for big things. When we do we must place our hope in Him; recall the things He has done for us in the past; and have faith that He will move mountains.

Elijah worked.

Review Elijah's actions in 1 Kings 17:21.

Elijah's action of stretching himself over the boy's body three times was in an effort to revive the boy. When we have trials that we feel are hopeless, we must be in prayer to our Lord, but also at the same time, we must take action to work as the Lord directs.

According to James 2:17-19, how should our faith be shown?

When we act upon our faith, then we are acting on the hope of the Lord strengthening us and pulling us through the trial of our lives.

Elijah gave God the glory.

Review 1 Kings 17:22-24. What does the widow's response to Elijah about her son being alive show us about Elijah's character and conduct?

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus tells us to "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." When you allow God to work through you, even during the tough times of your life, you will inspire others to seek God also. In this way, you will be letting your light shine and bring God the glory.

Final Reflections: Satan wants us to think that the rough times we are having here on earth have no end. However, the Scriptures constantly point us to keep on believing and have hope in our God, Who loves us and wants the best for us. Sometimes we get wrapped up in our woes and we forget we serve a God who wants to bless us abundantly. We begin to tell ourselves "this is my cross to bear." But we should remember that we serve a redeeming God. A God Who sent Jesus to give us a life full of abundance (John 10:10). Sometimes He may tarry in giving us an answer of yes to redemption from our woes because He is teaching us valuable lessons in making right choices that give us the life of abundance here on earth. Sometimes we have learned the lessons but the consequences from our past choices are still there and must be lived through. Whatever the reason, we know that we serve a loving God and He wants the best for us. Therefore, we must continue to have hope by doing as Paul stated he did in Philippians 3:12-16. Press forward toward the goal and remember to hold on to the progress we have already made in Christ. No the cross isn't ours to bear. Christ suffered on it already. We must remember to place our troubles at His feet, leave them there, and take away the lessons He has for us to learn. For **He is** our only hope.

- Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: Are you in the midst of a long road of woes? If so, think over the ways you have been displaying your hope in Christ to pull you through. Then think about the five ways Elijah displayed his hope. Ask the Lord to help you in keeping your hope alive by following the steps Elijah took – stay calm, seek privacy, pray, work, and give God the glory. When you have made it through this trial, then your faith will be strengthened because you have kept your hope alive.

Faith Perseveres

A series look on how faith motivates us to obedience (part 10 of 10)

by Kelly Dixon

Reading: [Hebrews 12:1-11](#); [James 1:2-8](#)



Daily spending quiet time with my Lord is what keeps me going in a life that is full of struggles. Have you ever been reading your Bible or a devotional book during your quiet time when you were hit right between the eyes with the reality of the way you are living and that the Lord was unhappy about it? I have on more occasions than I would like to admit. One such occasion happened just the other day as I was reading a book by Lysa Terkeurst, *The Bathtub is Overflowing but I feel Drained*, which is an excellent read for all moms that are like me – feeling defeated by mommy stress. About half way through she has a chapter on Super Mom v/s Slacker Mom, at the end of the chapter she encourages the reader to determine if they have idols in the following way . . .

"God is aware of the secrets of our hearts – even the ones we can't admit to ourselves. As our Creator, He knows us intimately. He can help us to search our hearts and determine any changes we should make in our lives. He can shine a light into our hearts in the darkest places, and open our eyes to His desires for us. Spend sometime in prayer about your priorities, and ask God to reveal to you any idols in your life you might not be aware of."

After reading this, I said to myself, "I know what things keep me from focusing on Jesus. I am already aware of the idols in my life." But then I felt the Holy Spirit drawing me to petition the throne of God. So I did. A still small voice gently told me the truth. I wasn't aware of something very important. I was allowing the problems in my life to keep me from focusing on Jesus. I was idolizing the problems and allowing them to consume my time - focusing on them and not on Jesus and how He is strengthening me through them. Wow, what a lesson! Wow, what a discovery. I thought I was persevering by just living day to day and enduring the problems. When in reality God was trying to tell me that I was idolizing the problem by enduring the way I thought I should endure instead of focusing on Jesus and allowing Him to show me how to endure.

The writer of Hebrews is unknown, however, I believe it was a person who God thought had great faith because He, through them, shows us many lessons of living out our faith. Hebrews 12:2-3 tells us that we should be focused on Jesus and directs us to do so by looking at the way Jesus endured,

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him Who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Jesus endured so much while He was here on earth. He endured intense opposition, ridicule, criticism, slandering and alienation. Yet, thinking back over His life there was no complaining, no grumbling, no arguing with the Father. Yes, He did ask God the Father to remove the cup when He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, but only if it was the Father's will. No negotiating with the Father's will, just petitioning the throne about His will. And why did Jesus face such torment with great perseverance? The writer of Hebrews tells us it was "for the joy set before Him" He endured the cross. The joy! The joy of knowing that the trials and tribulation would last but a while, but in the end the ones He loved would be able to live with Him forever. Because His love was so deep, He looked forward to the joy. He didn't focus on the problem!

Are you struggling to persevere at this time in your life? I was so wrapped up with the struggles that my family is currently enduring that I didn't realize I was idolizing them, allowing them to draw me away from God. They were consuming me and when I learned this lesson from the Lord He showed me the difference between my enduring and persevering through my endurance. For when you just endure, the focus is on you and what you are doing to get through the struggle. However, when you persevere, the focus turns to Jesus and you "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I have idolized the problems in my life allowing them to take my focus off You and the joy of developing my faith. How I want to persevere, yet I do not know how. Give me the wisdom to know what to do so I can persevere and that You will be glorified in the way I live through the struggles of my life. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Deepening The Walk

Faith Perseveres

(If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kelly Dixon by email kelly@ladiesforJesus.com)

Christopher Columbus is one man in history that was known for his perseverance. He had four known voyages from which one of them was fruitful in discovering the Americas. During his voyages there were many struggles many of which began with government and continued through the management of his crew. For example, three days before they discovered America the crew demanded that Columbus turn around to sail back to Spain. All their food had spoiled and there was talk of a revolt amongst the crew. The discovery of land actually caused this to cease. Another such struggle was the riding out of a hurricane during his fourth voyage in which Columbus' ships suffered minimal damage. Columbus was a Catholic Christian and while many still argue as to whether his motives for his voyages were religious reasons or for his own gain of wealth, there are many quotes from his journals that show he recognized his strength to persevere came from God.

Washington Irving, who was an historian in the early 19th century, wrote of Christopher Columbus:

"He was devoutly pious: religion mingled with the whole course of his thoughts and actions, and shone forth in his most private and unstudied writings. Whenever he made any great discovery, he celebrated it by solemn thanks to God. The voice of prayer and melody of praise rose from his ships when they first beheld the New World, and his first action on landing was to prostrate himself upon the earth and return thanksgivings . . ."

As you begin this study on perseverance, may this description of Columbus' character be an inspiration.

Begin by looking up the definition for perseverance and write it down here:

After reading the basic definition of perseverance, do you feel you are successful at implementing perseverance in your own life? Why or why not?

God uses lessons within perseverance throughout our walk with Him. It isn't one of those simple lessons that you learn and necessarily master. It is one that you learn how to implement at one level and then as you progress through your walk with Him you learn how to implement at a different level. Ultimately, each level builds upon itself and strengthens your faith. That is why we start by looking at the basic definition of perseverance. The basic definition is a base that you can go back to at times to help you. However, overall the lessons God provides within the implementation of perseverance are indefinable. Let's take a deeper look by viewing two aspects of perseverance – the importance of perseverance and maintaining perseverance.

The Importance of Perseverance:

Perseverance is important for our spiritual growth. Spiritual growth takes time and repetition. Implied within perseverance is time and repetition.

Let's first look at time:

Write down what these verses mean to you in your own words:

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Philippians 1:6

In our day of instant gratification, I believe this is a concept that is harder for us to grasp today than in past generations. We on many levels look at spiritual growth through childish eyes. We want to skip the lessons God has for us through perseverance and go right to being mature Christians. However, God shows us through His creations that this is not the way He works. Spiritual growth, like physical growth, takes time. It takes years for us to grow to adulthood and it takes a full season for fruit to mature and ripen. We put too much focus on how fast we grow when God is concerned about how strong we grow.

Next, Repetition:

We all have habits. You may be like me; I tend to have more bad habits than good. However, development of good spiritual habits is valuable to our spiritual growth. To develop a habit you must repeat the action on a regular basis. Development of the following habits helps us in our spiritual growth and in our perseverance. Let's look at a few good habits that would be beneficial to our spiritual growth and what Scripture says about each of them.

According to the following Scripture references, what are the benefits of the following habits.

1. *The Habit of Time with God's Word:*

Psalm 18:29-30; Matthew 7:24-27; John 8:31-32; John 15:7-8

2. *The Habit of Prayer:*

Psalm 6:8-10; Matthew 21:18-22; James 5:13-16; 1 Peter 3:8-12

3. *The Habit of Tithing:*

Malachi 3:6-12; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 1 John 3:16-19

4. *The Habit of Fellowship:*

1 Malachi 3:16; Matthew 18:18-20; John 13:34-35; 1 John 1:5-7

Associate with like-minded individuals:

For our spiritual growth, it is important not only for us to persevere, but also for us to associate with like-minded individuals who are striving for similar goals, similar habits, and who understand the need for perseverance in their own lives.

According to Hebrews 10:36-39, why do we need to persevere? What group are we like? (v. 39)

It is hard for us to persevere on our own. When we try to do so, we begin to think it is just us against the world. That is why it is important to frequently assemble with other Christians. Fellowship with other Christians will help us to not get discouraged because they will help encourage us in our common goal to glorify God.

Keep your eye on the prize – Jesus!:

There is a double prize for perseverance. Not only do we glorify the Lord when we persevere, but we also draw closer to Jesus. If we keep a clear vision of our ultimate goal, then perseverance will fall into place.

According to 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and Philippians 3:12-15, how did Paul keep his eye on the prize?

Read Hebrews 12:1-3:

What must we do to run with perseverance? (v. 1)

How did Jesus persevere? (v. 2)

What does verse 3 suggest that we do so we will not grow weary or lose heart?

Final Reflections: Columbus frequently wrote in his journal just four words to describe the day's events: "Today we sailed on." And I'm sure this meant the most to him during those final days right before he discovered the Americas. Those days when he probably felt like everyone was against him and he was beginning to question himself also. There are times in our lives when there's no sign of success, but we must keep sailing on. Columbus would not have experienced the reward of his discovery if he quit and turned around. It would have been a failed voyage in his eyes and the possible damage to his spirit for another voyage could have been detrimental. In our lives we must remember that each voyage that the Lord sets sail in our lives has a reward in the end. It is our responsibility to keep our eyes on Jesus and sail on. - Kelly Dixon

Your Turn to Reflect: As it stands today, how well do you think you are doing at perseverance? Take a moment and write down the lessons the Lord has taught you about perseverance in your own life. Review the Scriptures that support those lessons to give you encouragement to continue persevering.

Write this Scripture on an index card and put it in a place you will see it often. Read it daily and be encouraged to remember the Lord is constantly working to fulfill His purpose for your life. Ask Him to not abandon His works in you.

*"The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me;
Your love, O Lord, endures forever -
do not abandon the works of Your hands."
Psalm 138:8*