

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

FAITH OVER FEAR

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J A N U A R Y 2 0 2 3

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DAY 1

THE LORD IS YOUR REFUGE

*I sought the Lord and He
heard me and delivered
me from all my fears -
Psalm 34:4*

A couple of years back
someone got shot in my
neighbourhood and to this
day the reason is still
unknown, but that struck
fear in my heart because I
live in a quiet
neighbourhood where
such events are unheard of,
so it makes sense why I'd
be afraid.

At the time of the shooting,
another crime crept in
where electricity cables
(copper wires) were being
stolen left, right and centre
with residents living
without power for a few
days, weeks and
sometimes months!

People were making
reports of how the cable
thieves would make threats
if they were seen by
residents. Authorities
warned us as residents to
stay indoors at all costs
even if we heard any
movement at night.

This is a problem not only
affecting my
neighbourhood but the
rest of the city, but all of us
are concerned for the
safety of our lives,
jobs/careers, relationships,
family, future etc.

The more we think about
our fears the more we
expect failure or
disappointment, and all
hope is lost, but that's only
in our minds.

The first step to
overcoming our fears is to
seek God by understanding
that we cannot tackle the
challenges that life throws
at us on our own especially
when we have tried to, and
we failed over and over.

**But seek first the
kingdom of God and His
righteousness, and all
these things shall be
added to you.**

- Matthew 6:33

When we seek God first and put our trust in Him, He will not hesitate to come to our rescue. When all these fears started growing in my neighbourhood my faith, and trust in God started growing too, because I knew and know very well that in every single thing that happens on Earth no matter how great or small it may be, God has the final say in it.

And when words failed I turned to His Word, and meditated on it, and used it as a prayer, Psalms 91 is a great prayer for protection and in verses 3 and 4 it says:

Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler And from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings, you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

God loves you and He will always take care of you.

Discussion:

You can discuss this with a reading partner or revise it on your own, the answers to all the questions are in the lesson section.

1: What is the first step in seeking safety from God?

2: When we are short of words to pray what can we use to pray?

Prayer:

Thank You Father for Your love, Your grace and Your kindness. Father, I ask that You may forgive me for all my sins and lead me in your truth in all that I do. Lord, please protect me from the enemy and the wicked people who might be after my life. Please watch over me and everyone who is in need of Your protection. I pray and thank You in Jesus Christ's name, Amen.



DAY 2

**COUNT IT ALL
JOY!**

'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.' - 2 Timothy 1:7

I'm sure everyone wonders if they will be able to accomplish their life goals without any interruptions like death, theft, and other reasons. One of the reasons could be the end of the world and the coming of Christ.

I have asked fellow believers whether they want our Lord Jesus Christ to return soon or not, and to share their reasons for their given answers. Others said no, because they want to get married, start a family and complete their career goals.

But the answer to this question for every Christian is supposed to be yes and the reason is that the coming of Christ is for our good, and the day He comes back will be the greatest and most joyful day of all,

because we will finally be free from sin, sorrow and all worldly desires. Some other fears people have could be losing a relationship, job, family member, scholarship etc.

Each of these fears is justified and understandable but we should not be worried about the outcome of these things, because when we are in Christ everything happens for a good reason and God only has good intentions for us. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy and this is what scripture says about joy;

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.
- James 1:2-3

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. - Gal 5:22-23

Whenever we face situations that create fear in our hearts, we end up with a lack of peace, and get a lot of worries and that is not good for us. But when we turn to God and choose to put our worries aside, God will take away the fear and give us peace, which brings joy and the power of self-control to choose the way God expects us to abide by. In every situation, be it a bad or good situation God has a good reason for it and one trait that we should always have is contentment.

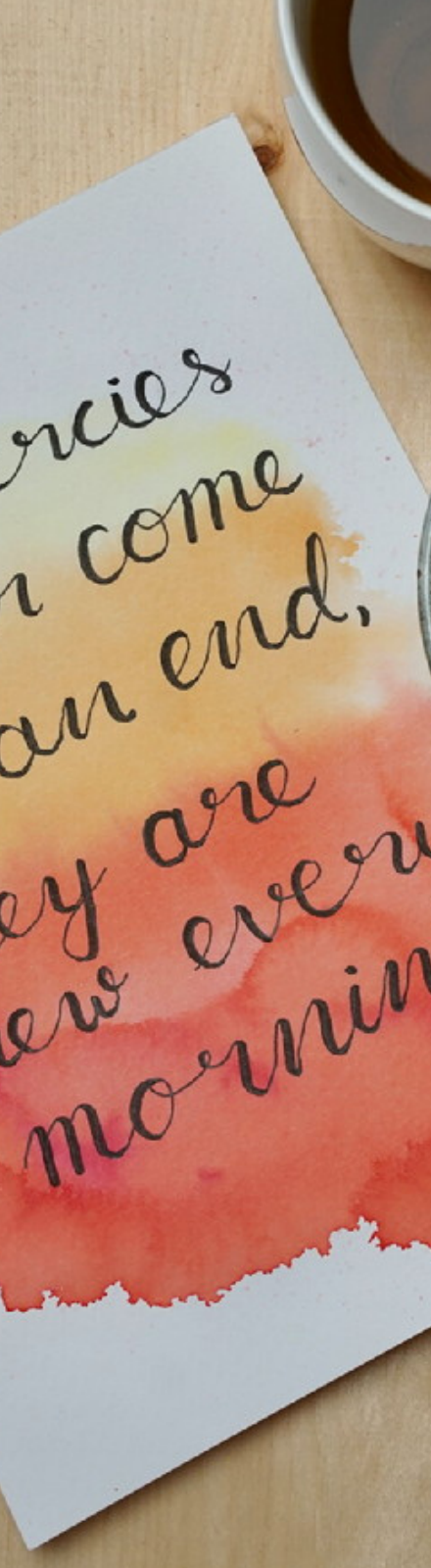
'Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ' - Phil 4:11-12

Discussion:

- 1:** What does the testing of our faith produce?
- 2:** Why shouldn't we worry about the return of Christ?
- 3:** Instead of the spirit of fear what has God given us?

Prayer:

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of life, I ask that You may forgive me for all my sins against You. Father, I ask that You may give me strength in times of trouble please take away the spirit of fear and please teach me to be joyful in every situation that I face. I pray all this in the mighty name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



DAY 3

GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY IN TIMES OF NEED

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. - Hebrews 4:16

You might be struggling with sin or you probably gave into temptation recently, and it feels like you have backslidden or you don't have a relationship with God at all, but the thing is that God is there for you, He cares for you and He will never abandon you.

God is perfect in justice and in mercy, meaning there is always a second chance and He is always willing to forgive our sins because we can't sin beyond God's forgiveness. Paul formerly Saul is a great example of that.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- 1 John 1:9

When we have sinned and find ourselves in times of trouble, we might assume that it's a punishment from God and we might be right about that, but it doesn't last forever, because it is for our own good, not to torment us.

'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.' - Proverbs 3:11-12

But sometimes we might go through trials and tribulations for different reasons not related to us falling short of God's glory. It could be a storm that is meant to help us grow in our faith just like what happened with disciples at sea in Matthew 8:24-27. With every circumstance, God has a reason and it all brings Him glory and if you abide by His word and put your trust in Him, it will bring you honour in the eyes of God and the eyes of men.

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.' - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, And so find favour and high esteem In the sight of God and man.' - Proverbs 3:3-4

God forgives and He takes good care of the ones who choose to obey Him. We are not perfect, and we will find ourselves in moments of weakness, but it is not the end of the world.

Turn to Christ and keep your eyes focused on Him, and He will come to your rescue. This however is not an excuse to fall short and sin against Him. Choose to love Him and obey Him and always keep your faith in Him.

Discussion:

1: According to 1 John 1:9 when we fall short we must?

2: God is perfect in justice and He is also perfect in...

3: Discuss how you are going to apply Hebrews 4:16 in your life.

Prayer:

Thank You, Lord, for Your grace. Thank You that You are always willing to forgive me for my sins even though I do not deserve it, Father please teach me Your ways and help me to stay away from sin, so that I may have more confidence in coming to You in times of need. Please take away all my guilt and shame in the mighty name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.



DAY 4

HE QUIETS THE STORM

'But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. '

- Matthew 8:26

Trials and tribulations are good for us, because they teach us to be patient, and to have perseverance, this gives us strength and leads us closer to God. These are good for us and our spirits understand this, but our flesh doesn't and during times of trouble we tend to lose faith in God and our doubt increases.

We must remember the God we serve, how powerful He is, and how He can handle any situation we face, but somehow we don't, and that clouds our judgement and leads us to make irrational decisions.

When the disciples and Jesus were at sea in Matthew 8, a storm invoked great fear in their hearts because they assumed they were going to die.

But as we know they didn't die, because Jesus came to their rescue when they turned to Him. They knew that they couldn't save themselves, and that they needed the one who is greater and who can control the world that He created, because they themselves are His creation.

And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" - Matthew 8:24-25

When you face hardships and challenges in your life who do you turn to? What is the first thing that comes to your mind? Do you choose to handle the matter yourself or do you run to God and ask for His intervention?

It is humanly logical for us to immediately take matters into our own hands but the question is, what do you do when you fail to handle it on your own? Do you call for reinforcements?

As Christ's followers, one thing that we must always keep in mind is that we are not on our own, our God is there for us. Our flesh may tell us that a certain issue is too small to give it up to God but that is where we make our first mistake. What do we do when the issue gets bigger? One thing we must know is that God wants us to turn to Him no matter how great or small a situation is, be it trying to find a missing sock or to find the money that's missing from our bank accounts.

Nothing is too big or too small for God to handle and He wants to help us at all times,

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; - Phil 4:6

In the verse above we are told to pray to God about everything, not a few things or some things but everything. Every little detail about your life. The disciples after Jesus had ascended performed miracles and shared the word of God without fear even though they faced persecution and died terrible deaths for proclaiming their faith.

When they preached they were now bolder because they trusted in Christ. When they faced a storm they ran to Him and even when He left they moved by faith trusting in Him with no doubt in their hearts.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. - 2 Cor 5:7

Discussion:

- 1:** What is the first thing we must do when we face a crisis?
- 2:** What does God mean in Philippians 4:6 when He tell us to pray about everything?
- 3:** Trials and tribulations teach us to be?

Prayer:

Thank You Father for Your unfailing love and grace. Please forgive me for all my sins against You and please help me to turn to You in every situation that I face regardless of how big or small it is. Please teach me to put all my trust in You at all times and remove doubt from my heart in Jesus Christ's mighty name I pray, Amen.



DAY 5

CAST YOUR CARE UPON HIM

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. - 1 Peter 5:6-7

Every day has its challenges and today can impact tomorrow in either a positive way or a negative way. When it is in a positive way we tend to be very confident and we trust that things will be good or better depending on the situation and we worry less about what the future holds.

But when there is uncertainty that lies ahead that is when anxious thoughts creep into our minds, and we start to worry more and hope less. There are many valid reasons why we would be anxious about the future, maybe you are going to propose, and you do not know whether she will say yes or no. Or maybe you are waiting for a response from a school or job to which you applied and there

hasn't been a response in a long time or it has even surpassed the promised time to expect a response from them. All these can make you wonder if there is anything wrong that you have done or that you might do.

Sometimes we try to resolve the concerns by taking matters into our own hands by finding a Plan B or giving up, but then whatever solution we try might result in more failure, and more worries. However, God calls us to put our trust in Him by first humbling ourselves, and turning away from our fleshly methods to casting our cares upon Him. When we worry we bring no value to ourselves, but when we trust God, we know whatever happens is according to His will, and for good reason.

Pride can hold us back from moving forward, but when we choose to not worry about what people will think or say that is when we start to win.

And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. - Matthew 23:12

Instead of worrying pray,

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:6

And meditate on His word,

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. - Joshua 1:8

Discussion:

1: What sometimes holds us back from moving forward?

2: Instead of worrying, what must we do?

3: What are the benefits of meditating on the word of God?

Prayer:

Dear God, thank You for the gift of life and for caring for me all this time and I ask that You may forgive me for all my sins. Lord, please help me overcome the fear of the unknown and to put my trust in You in everything pertaining to my life in every aspect, in the mighty name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.



DAY 6

THE LORD IS YOUR COMFORTER

Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. - Matthew 5:4

Losing a family member, job, relationship etc can be really painful especially if we were dependent on them. Others may be bullied at school, abused at home or even at church sometimes.

Pain comes in different ways from varying circumstances and it can be very difficult to deal with it. Sometimes we might feel shame for asking for help or comfort from others because they might not relate or be able to help.

I myself was bullied for most of my childhood and teenage years and abused by family members both emotionally and physically. At school, I was always involved in fights or picked on by the bigger boys. At home, I was emotionally abused and insulted and I couldn't really get help except from my mother and my sister but as a

young boy that was seen as a weakness by other boys at school, regardless I felt no shame because they love me and they have always had my back.

My mother always recommended I read scripture and pray but at the time I wasn't even a believer and yet God came to me through my true family and friends. In my last year of high school,

I met a friend who encouraged me and taught me the scriptures and the next year (2018) I started attending church but I truly gave my life to Christ a year (2019) after I started attending church. Even after repentance, I was still in grief and traumatized by the pain I had experienced.

Depression was high but the more I started meditating on God's word the less depressed I felt and the more peace I had. I had a fear of failure, of death and even of people but Christ took that away and gave me peace.

God will always be there for you if you seek Him, turn to Him and trust in Him. God heals all pain as long as you have faith, even as small as a mustard seed. Don't put your trust in people, possessions or any of the worldly things; put it in the giver and taker of life.

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

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." - Romans 10:11

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. - Romans 10:17

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. - John 3:16

Discussion:

- 1:** Who can truly give us comfort in times of pain?
- 2:** God will heal your pain even if you have faith as little as?
- 3:** How does faith come?

Prayer:

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of life and for taking care of me all this while. Lord I ask for Your forgiveness for all my sins against You and I ask that You may heal my heart in times of pain and teach me to seek You diligently and to put all my trust in You, I thank You for Your love and Your grace in the mighty name of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.



DAY 7

SHARING GOD'S LOVE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

For the last six days we have read and learnt about God's forgiveness and love. We are not the only ones facing storms in life, each individual has their own troubles, and not everyone shares theirs. A lot of people keep it in their hearts, and that leads to depression and thoughts of suicide, so it is important that we share our testimonies in regard to what we have been through, so that others may get the same hope we've got.

God is the Father of mercies, that means He is always willing to forgive our sins if we turn to Him

and a lot of people who are new to the faith do not know this. And those who are still in the world definitely do not know either, so we must be able to share about the hope that we have and why we have it.

but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: - 1 Peter 3:15

Faith is a very difficult thing to understand for most people and they might ask why should they trust in someone that they can't see. To answer, use this analogy we have all seen a building that is older than us but we have never seen the person who built it. This is the case with most of the buildings we see on a daily basis. So just because we do not know the builder it does not mean he doesn't exist and this is the same with God (Creator) and creation.

If they ask why does He allow bad things to happen? Use the same analogy, but add this, if a builder builds a building and rents it out. As he rents it out, he gives the tenants a set of rules to follow, and if they break them there'll be consequences. One rule would be do not set a fire in the building, if the tenants set fire, the building will surely burn and it's not the landlord's fault. Breaking the rules is a crime/sin just like how Adam and Eve broke the rules and brought sin into the world.

God doesn't want bad things to happen to us (mainly hell) hence He gave up His one and only Son for our sins, so that we are saved from death and that He takes care of us during times of trouble.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
- John 3:16

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. - Matthew 6:33

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. - John 14:6

Discussion:

- 1:** Why is it important to share our testimony about what God has done for us?
- 2:** When we are faced with hard questions, what does 1 Peter 3:15 say we should do?
- 3:** In order to save us, what did God do?

Prayer:

Lord please forgive me for all my sins, and thank You for all that You have done for me, and for being with me during times of trouble, and for continuing to be there always. Lord, I pray that you may help me to share Your Word, and love with those that need it, that I may not be afraid to share my testimony or answer hard questions. In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, I pray, Amen.



GOD BLESS YOU

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