

gracepoint

# EXTREME FAITH

EXTREME CHRISTMAS 2010

**DEVOTIONAL  
WEEK THREE**

Monday 20 December 2010

## Without faith, it is impossible...

Scripture readings:

*Hebrews 11 vs 1-6*

*Jeremiah 29 vs 12-13*

*Mark 9 vs 23*

The author of Hebrews makes a very simple and rather startling statement in Chapter 11, verse 6: Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith is a difficult concept to explain or grasp and yet, it is the foundation and essence of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Scripture tells us that faith means believing that God is – that He exists and is all that He says He is – and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. It also promises that those who seek God with all their hearts will find Him. When we dare to step out in faith and to go deeper with God, we will always find Him... He will encounter us in new and richer ways when we dare to make ourselves vulnerable before Him and long for Him in deeper ways than before.

Faith is also an evolving process as God continually challenges us to trust Him more. What is the step of faith that you need to take next in your journey with Him?

Without faith it is impossible... with faith, nothing is impossible!

### **Extreme Faith Challenge 1:**

Do you really believe that God is – exists and that He rewards those who seek Him? Dare to practically seek Him more today.

Tuesday 21 December 2010

## The simplicity of extreme faith

Scripture readings:

*Matthew 18 vs 1-4*

*Matthew 19 vs 13-14*

*Mark 10 vs 13-16*

When Jesus was asked who the greatest would be in the Kingdom of Heaven, He pointed out a child. Why? We sometimes tend to get stuck in our thinking that in order to be great in God's eyes we must give the most, know the most, study the most, lead the most... It is easy to spiral downward in ambition and pride and to lose sight of what it is that God really requires, but God wants us to be like little children – not in terms of naivety or immaturity – but in teachability of spirit and simplicity of faith.

Faith does not have to be complicated. Like little children implicitly trust their parents and know, without a doubt, that they are safe in their care, that their parents know best and that they are loved and protected, God wants us to simply trust Him and His love for us. He wants us to rest secure in the knowledge that He will never let us go and that we are safe in His everlasting arms.

### ***Deuteronomy 33 vs 27:***

*“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”*

#### **Extreme Faith Challenge 2:**

Who are you trusting? The God for Whom nothing is impossible or your limited, flawed self? What practical step can you take today to step out in faith and to trust God more?

Wednesday 22 December 2010

## Faith in the valley of bones

Scripture readings:

*James 2 vs 14-26*

*Romans 3 vs 27-31*

*Ezekiel 31 vs 1-14*

True faith is expressed in practical action and in the way we live our lives. True faith takes a stand and makes a difference in the world. James argues that faith is not really alive unless it is revealed practically in the things that we do every day. It cannot be separated or removed from love for God and obedience towards Him, because if we truly believe in Him and in Who He says He is, we cannot remain unchanged. We must be moved forward by love in obedience to Him.

May we be challenged to examine our lives today and to ask, “Is my faith truly alive? Is my love for God evident in the way I live?”

James compares faith without works to a dead body without a spirit. If you find your faith in this place - in the valley of dry bones – may God raise it up and make it new. May you be bold enough to give Him the permission to put the bones together again and to breathe His Spirit of Life into your faith again. Let Him help you come alive again.

*“Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God trusts God; and he that trusts God obeys God. He that is without faith is without works; and he that is without works is without faith.”*

*– Charles Spurgeon*

### **Extreme Worship Challenge 3:**

Is your faith alive and backed up by action, or is it dead? How can you practically demonstrate your faith by works today?

Thursday 23 December 2010

## The faith to follow

Scripture readings:

*Matthew 4 vs 18-22*

*Matthew 19 vs 16-22*

The passages in Matthew 4 and 19 reveal two very different stories – two very different responses to Christ and two very different results. The passage in Matthew 19 tells us the story of the rich young ruler who had an encounter with Jesus. Jesus extended an invitation to him to follow Him and to be His disciple, but the young man was weighed down by many possessions and doubts and he went away discouraged. He walked away from truly knowing Jesus, from the greatest adventure He could have imagined and from a life of true significance.

On the other hand, when Jesus called Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow Him and to be His disciples, the Scriptures tell us that *immediately*, they left their nets and followed Him. These men abandoned their family businesses, left everything they knew, walked away from their source of income and followed Jesus in faith, with no guarantees and no real idea of what to expect... but think of all they must have experienced and witnessed. They got to spend intimate time with Jesus for three years. They were there when He raised the dead, healed the sick and fed five thousand with one boy's lunch. They were there when He was crucified and they rejoiced together when they found the empty tomb. They got to be a part of God's eternal story because they had the faith to follow.

... Do you?

### **Extreme Faith Challenge 4:**

Dare to cast down your safety nets today and to do what God is asking you to do, no matter what the cost. Be bold and step out of your comfort zone to do something significant for God today.

Friday 24 December 2010

## Faith vs. Fear

Scripture readings:

*Luke 8 vs 41-48*

*Isaiah 43 vs 19*

In Luke 8 the Bible recounts the encounter of a nameless, sick, impoverished woman with Jesus. He was being jostled about in a busy crowd, but suddenly He turned to His disciples and asked, "Who touched Me?" People were clamouring all around Him, so His disciples were puzzled. Lots of people were touching Him, but Jesus felt a different touch: a touch of power... a touch of faith. The woman who had been struggling with a devastating physical ailment for twelve years reached out and touched Jesus in faith, believing that He was God and that He had the power to heal her and change her life.

This woman would never had known healing and freedom if she had hung back and been too afraid to come near. Her faith was tested and put into action when she took the risk and reached out to Jesus.

What have you missed because you have been too afraid to reach out to God? What might God have in store for you if you take the leap and just dare to draw near... dare to extend your hand to Him? He is the God of the impossible who makes ways where there seem to be none and suddenly creates rivers in the desert. Will you trust Him with your deepest need and dare to reach out?

### **Extreme Faith Challenge 5:**

What is your deepest need right now? Will you dare to entrust it to God and await His life-giving and miraculous provision for you?

Saturday 25 December 2010

## Standing on the Rock

Scripture readings:

*2 Corinthians 1 vs 20*

*Hebrews 6 vs 11-12*

*2 Peter 1 vs 2-4*

*Matthew 6 vs 19-34*

Our human inclination is to worry – to endlessly fret about big problems and small ones and to be anxious about the things that we need – but that is not what God has in mind for His children. He wants us to be able to rest secure in the knowledge that He knows what we need before we ask Him and that He is in control. He wants us to stand on the solid rock of His promises and trust in His unfailing love and faithfulness.

As we turn again to look at the manger in Bethlehem this Christmas; as we see the star in the distance, the anxious and awed young couple, the startled shepherds peering into the manger and the baby lying the hay, may we remember that God has already given us everything in His Son. May we know with a certainty when we look into the face of Jesus, God in human flesh, that all the promises of the Father are YES in Him and that He will never let you down.

**Extreme Faith Challenge 6:**

What are the things about which you are worried? Bring them before God today and trust that He is enough for you. Choose to stand firm on His