



Take5 for the week of April 11-15, 2016

By Faith...

By Carolyn Taketa

MONDAY

What is Faith?

Hebrews 11:3; 2 Timothy 1:12

"The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see." Hebrews 11:1 (MSG). Everyone in the world has faith in something. For example, some people might believe one of these statements: 1) what goes around comes around, 2) if you have enough money, you'll be happy, or 3) if you are good enough, you will go to heaven. But unlike these propositions, our faith is not based on a wish, an abstract idea, or a human philosophy. Our faith is rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ! We believe the good news that God sent His son, Jesus Christ, to die so that we would be eternally saved and reconciled to God. As one Bible commentary noted, "The beginning point of faith is believing in God's character: He is who He says. The end point is believing in God's promises: He **will do** what he says."

FOR TODAY: Thank God for the gift of faith given through Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY

Cloud of Witnesses Part 1

Hebrews 11:4-21

We commonly refer to Hebrews Chapter 11 as the "Hall of Faith." It is an incredible list of people in the Bible who demonstrated faith in God in spite of their circumstances. Even when the future was uncertain and God's instructions did not seem to make sense, they moved forward in humble obedience and trust. We can take comfort in the fact that these were not perfect people. Like us, they were people who sinned, had doubts, were impatient, and wanted God to make their personal dreams come true. Yet, what they all had in common was their faith in God, their desire to honor Him, and their willingness to take risks for Him. As Hebrews 11:6 points out, *"And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him."* When we humbly seek God with a willingness to do what He says, even when it is risky, we will experience the joy of living in faith just as these witnesses did.

FOR TODAY: Reach out and thank someone who has been an example of faith in your life.

WEDNESDAY

Cloud of Witnesses Part 2

Hebrews 11:23-40

As we read through the names and stories listed in this Hall of Faith, God's sovereign presence is evident through all kinds of circumstances and challenges. There are countless ways God has worked throughout history just as He has worked, and is working, in your life. Likewise, as we celebrate Calvary's 40th Anniversary this weekend, we will be reflecting on God's goodness and faithfulness to our church during the past 40 years. Moreover, we are thankful God is not done with Calvary yet, far from it. Every week, God is drawing people to our church and we are reaching those far from Him. We are engaging the greater Conejo Valley with the good news of the Gospel. As God continues to work in and through us, as individuals and as a church body, we join the cloud of witnesses in proclaiming our faith in Christ.

FOR TODAY: Thank God for His faithfulness to you and to Calvary Community Church in the past, the present, and in the future to come.

THURSDAY

Throwing off Hindrances

Hebrews 12:1; 1 Corinthians 9:21-23

Long distance runners wear lightweight clothing and carry no unnecessary material; they want to be as light and unencumbered as possible. They know that every ounce they carry will take energy and slow them down. Likewise, to run the race of faith God has set before us, we need to examine what excess baggage we are carrying that will drag us down. We may be weighed down by sins, temptations, unhealthy relationships, misplaced priorities, materialism, or false beliefs. What are the obstacles that are keeping you from taking your next step of faith? Confess them to the Lord today and ask His Spirit to free you from those entanglements.

FOR TODAY: Identify something in your life that is distracting you from God and remove it.

FRIDAY

Keeping Our Eyes on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-2

To run a race well, you need both unflagging endurance for the duration and a steadfast focus on the ultimate goal. That is why Hebrews encourages us to persevere on the course God has set for our lives by keeping our eyes on Jesus, *"the author and finisher of our faith."* (NKJV) We do not run the race of life by ourselves. It is only through the grace of God that we are able to start, *and continue*, pursuing a life of faith. It is God's grace that fuels our efforts. As theologian Dallas Willard noted, "Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action." Every day, we have the opportunity to act in ways that deepen our faith in God, further our trust in Christ, and grow our dependence on the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live and love like Jesus.

FOR TODAY: Memorize Hebrews 12:1 to help you be encouraged and focused on the goal.