

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's feet walking on a sandy beach. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow that reflects off the wet sand and the person's skin. The background is a soft, hazy landscape of the ocean and sky.

**2018**  
POWER SERIES

# Forward By Faith

A Journey through Hebrews 11

A Forty Day Devotional Guide on practical steps needed to live by Faith

International Church of Christ, Nigeria  
[www.iccnigeria.com](http://www.iccnigeria.com)

## **Forward By Faith**

*A Journey through Hebrews 11*

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## PREFACE

Five years ago the first edition of the “Power Series” rolled off the Press. From our first Theme, “Back to Life”, it became evident that many of our Church members desire a periodic quiet time guide to help channel their thoughts as they step into a new year. Our first edition, which was meant to be a one-off exercise, was designed to encourage, inspire and challenge members of our local congregation to faith as we all step into the New Year. That first edition was inspired by similar work by Jimmy Allen.

The reception it received was so overwhelming that the Lagos Church staff decided to produce a sequel the following year. “The Most Excellent Way”, “Worthy of His Calling”, and “A Call to Build” kept us busy for the succeeding three years. Special PDF web editions of these publications were equally posted online for free download.

The theme of 7th Edition is “Forward by Faith”.

### Hebrews 10:36-39 NIV


You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. [37] For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” [38] And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” [39] But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

This is the bedrock of the admonition that led to all the encouragement in Hebrews 11. May we never shrink back rather may our faith power us forward.

We acknowledge and thank all the brothers and sisters who contributed directly and indirectly to the success of this major result of prayer, sacrifice and effort. May this devotional inspire you to exponentially multiply your heart and commitment to the major implications of the LORD’s investments to power us forward!

Michael Okechukwu Emeka  
Chief Editor

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## Section 1

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*Be on your guard; stand firm in the  
faith; be courageous; be strong.*

*Do everything in love*

*1st Corinthians 16: 13-14*

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DAY 1

THE ASSURANCE OF WHAT IS NOT SEEN.

**Hebrews 11:1**

Faith is not something we have to do to cause God to bless us. In Hebrews 11 we find this prevalent perspective. Faith is presented not as an effort but as an “assurance about what we do not see.” Through “eyes of faith” we can see something that was already there, whether we’d noticed it or not. Faith is a guarantee that what we do not see is there!

By faith we are guaranteed that even though we can not see GOD he is there. To Illustrate: We are in the harmattan season, there’s a lot of dust in the air, visibility is very bad.

An aircraft carrying 110 passengers flying in from Port Harcourt in this season is an epitome of faith, how? you may ask? The passengers are all seated separated and secluded from the pilots, they exercise a blind faith in the capabilities of the pilots to bring in the the huge aircraft safely to land. The pilots themselves can hardly see, the aerial visibility is so bad because of all the dust hanging in the air, so they have to do an instrument landing and trust the planes instruments as well as the radar to guide them into a safe landing. 99% of the time it works out that way in a purely human situation.

With faith, the situation is similar: we have an assurance of God’s trustworthiness. There are days when God’s work can be clearly seen in our lives. But other days may not be like that at all. A fog of doubt or the haze of shame of sin may creep in, and suddenly all the clear spiritual realities we have enjoyed can seemingly vanish. Having faith is often like squinting into the harmattan to see. We do this because we can not see, that does not mean the realities are not there, a mountain may become invisible because of the harmattan, but it would be very dangerous to think the mountain is not there. The same argument applies to the trustworthiness of God.

As we chart our way through 2018 let’s be assured of what is not seen, our GOD has seen all things and can be trusted to bring us into a safe landing and safe haven - *Romans 8:24-25, 1Corinthians 13:3, 2Corinthians 4:8 & 5:7.*

RECEIVING GOD’S COMMENDATION

DAY 2

**Hebrews 11:2**

“I’ll believe it when I see it!” I’ve said that many times. In a society that has fallen short of our hopes and expectations, it is easy to “tune out” and to become cynical. It seems the more we are promised that “things will change”, the less they actually do. Our faith – my faith – has taken a hit. We cannot please God when our hearts are dulled by cynicism. Without realizing it, this state of heart affects us spiritually. The ancients were commended for being certain of what they could NOT see. The Message version: reads thus, “The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.”

In John 20:29, Jesus in addressing Thomas, convicts us also when he said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (Emphasis mine)

**Read carefully the account in Matthew 15:21-28**

By all accounts, this woman was very much aware that she was not a Jew and therefore, not, one of Jesus’ people. In fact, her ancestors had been enemies of the Jews. Both Matthew and Mark in their accounts of this encounter, take the time to point out her Canaanite heritage. Jesus himself spoke directly to her ancestry, by referring to her people as ‘the dogs’...

There were several things this woman could ‘not see’  
She did not see a warm welcome and acceptance by Jesus and his disciples.  
She did not see a history of friendship between her people and Jesus’ people.

In order to receive God’s commendation, we must, like this woman, choose wisely in the following ways;

**Choose to believe what you’ve heard.**

This woman had heard about Jesus’ healing power. She believed what she had heard about Jesus’ power to rescue her daughter from demon possession. We too have heard of the power of Jesus to heal, rescue and restore. Do you believe what you have read in the scriptures?

Allow genuine faith to revive your prayers and your actions.

### Impress Jesus by not giving up.

This woman could have felt insulted by the disciple's attitude and Jesus' words. Similarly, do not let unmet expectations and unanswered prayers harden your heart.

Recognize Jesus compassion FOR YOU.

ACTION: Write down the ways you've 'given up' in your faith. Decide to take a renewed step of faith today.

## DAY 3

## THE UNIVERSE WAS FORMED AT GOD'S COMMAND

### Hebrews 11:3

#### Genesis 1:1-2, Psalm 33:6

The creation story is quite precise and credible. God created the world out of nothing (void and formlessness). God didn't need man's input or approval in this process, He just did it. God's creation effort is beyond human understanding.

God created all things. Everything in existence has its being in God's plan. He is worthy to be praised; He is our Lord and God, He is, daily, to receive glory and honour and power (*Rev 4:11*).

The essence of our being is to know Him, make Him known while worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

### 2Peter 3:5

Men have tried ever since to use their limited minds to figure out this awesome feat. They have come up with deliberate policies/tendencies to discard, discredit or make people forget the creation story (such as the 'big bang', removing God from public spaces etc.). In a film titled "Time Changers", which I recently watched, one of the lead characters alluded that "The authority and power of Christ is being removed from his word – the Bible – and is being replaced by religion that has no relationship whatsoever with the God of the universe" (paraphrase).

Q: Have you removed Christ's authority from discipleship – replaced same with opinions and ideas?

Q: Who are you following? Who is your Master/Lord?

Q: Are you living a life of worship of the Most High?

Q: Can you discern good from evil in your daily situations

By faith (that is, with an inherent trust and enduring confidence in the power, wisdom and goodness of God), we as Christians believe the creation story and God's ultimate authority over His creation.

In thinking about the fact that God created the world out of nothing, some biblical phrases/facts that strengthen my conviction concerning the issue of faith are discussed below.

For you created all things and by your will they were created and have their being. He determines our spaces in life. His desire is such that we will seek, find, obey and serve Him. *Rev 4:11, Acts 17:24-26*

The God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. God is in the business of raising the dead. He is the God of raising dry bones. This day, what areas of your life are dry, dying or dead? In faith take it to Him, the God of creation will raise and restore such *Rom 4:17, Eze 37:3*

He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are. He told Prophet Samuel that man looks at outward appearance, but He works with our inside. The hindrances include pride, arrogance, haughtiness, conceit, self righteousness. Come lowly hearted and be vulnerable before Him. *1Cor 12:5-28*

God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him, *James 2:5* is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. Immeasurably (very great in size or amount: impossible to measure); boundless, endless, fathomless. What is the highest imagination I/you can have? My/your biggest request from God is too finite. Let's put our personal growth/needs, ministry needs, disciples' needs/growth, societal peace and progress before Him. The God of creation is all able and infinite. *Eph 3:20*

DAY 4

A BETTER OFFERING

**Hebrew 11:4**

An Offering is a gift, donation, present or contribution devoted to God. It could be tangible like our weekly offering and special contribution. It could also be intangible like our worship of God, our prayers, our acts of service to God etc. Everyone loves receiving gifts especially from loved ones, and like every loving father, God also loves receiving gifts from us his beloved children. So what made God to accept Abel's offering and yet reject Cain's offering?

**Genesis 4: 6-7** made it clear to us that something was not right with Cain's giving, and this may have to do with the gift itself, but more than that I believe it has to do with the heart behind the giving because God searches the heart and is more concerned with the motives behind our action, more than the action itself. This is however in contrast with our world today (including religious bodies), where the end justifies the means. What you give in monetary value and in your acts of service is what counts; the more you're able to give the better recognition you get. The source of the money, the reason for the giving or the intention behind the giving, or the life of the person giving is considered irrelevant. **Proverbs 15:8** says that the Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him.

Therefore let us examine ourselves; how is your giving to God today (both financially and otherwise)? What is the source of your income and what is the heart (motive) behind your acts of giving and service to God? Do you give out of gratitude, love and respect for God, or is it out of compulsion, pride (show-off), or just to fulfil all righteousness (obligation). Note that God is more concerned about our heart than our gifts, because if the heart is right the gift will be right and acceptable, but if the heart is wrong, so will the gift. What do you need to do today to give a better offering that is acceptable to God? What do you need to repent of, for God to once again accept your offerings as a sweet smelling fragrance? Note that if Cain had repented, his offering would have been accepted (**Genesis. 4:6-7**).

**Today's action plan: Read Titus 1:16 and do a self-evaluation.**

LIVING TO PLEASE GOD

DAY 5

**Hebrews 11:5**

Few weeks ago, and at two different bible talks, I started off the discussions with the opening question: 'What do people fear the most?' From what people shared three things ranked the most and as follows; in number three is failure, in number two is poverty and in number one is DEATH.

Interestingly, we discussed further that man has been able to and can 'find-a-way-round' failure and poverty, but not death. Am sure if all scientists in the whole world were to be asked what would the greatest feat to achieve in this life be for them, it will be 'breakthrough' over death. Unarguably, it is the 'Ace' God has over mankind

Man wish to escape death and live forever, but has not been able to do anything about it and can never, no matter the millions of dollars pump into its research.

Perhaps, such as been the puzzle to this mystery about death and the quest to have a victory over it since the time of the ancients that led to one asking as recorded in the Scriptures:

**Psalms 89:48**

Who can live and never die? How can we humans keep ourselves from the grave? –GNT

This sounds almost rhetorical and seems to beg for answer that confounds and eludes man for ages. The good news is there is an answer to who can live, never dies and escape the grave. The passage below without mistake reveal so:

**1 John 3:21-24**

The secret to life now and forever is being in Christ and pleasing God daily through obedience to his words. It is not by any magic or scientific discoveries. Jesus has risen from death and has so overcome death. Therefore, those that chooses to please God by their ways of life gets to have through the Spirit the



resurrected Jesus in them and cause them too to live forever. Indeed, they have come to have the 'last one' on death (or in another way 'are cheating death').

### **Genesis 5:21-24 & Ephesians 5:8-10**

Enoch's walk with God reveals a relationship and way of life that pleases God. His desires, decisions and drives in life must have been determined by the question 'Does this please God?' Just as we too have been admonished by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians to do today.

Are you still finding out what pleases God concerning your marriage and parenting? How about God's money in your custody? Are you spending it to please God or self? Your involvement in mission and ministry of God and his church, are they pleasing in God's eyes? What you watch on TV or phones, does it please God? The type of characters you associate with, are they the types whose ways of life pleases God?

It was the faith that Enoch has in God that keeps him living to please God and causes him not to die. The same faith should keep us living to please God also in every area of our lives, and the reward will be immortality.

**Further reading: Colossians 1:9-14, 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 1**

## **DAY 6**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH**

### **Hebrews 11:6, Matthew 14:22-33**

Faith is defined as "complete trust or confidence in someone or something." As disciples, we have been called to put our complete trust and confidence in God. In these passages, we see the importance of faith in our lives. The first passage helps us to understand that without faith it is impossible to walk with or please God. Looking at this scripture closely, the word "impossible" stands out to me. The bible is directly telling us here that it is unfeasible, impracticable and hopeless to please God without having faith.

In the second passage, we see a practical example of the importance of faith. While other disciples cried out in fear thinking that Jesus was a ghost, the ever

outspoken and daring Peter was ready to do the unimaginable and walk on water to be sure that it was Jesus. However, he got distracted by the wind and became so afraid that he began to sink.

Some of us have had or are presently going through a "Peter-Moment". After baptism, our faith in God is unshakeable and we realize the importance of having faith in God in our lives. However, when the "winds" of life come our way, we tend to become afraid and start sinking fast because our faith has been replaced with fear and we allow doubt fill our minds.

Our faith in God is very vital to our walk with God. When we continuously put our faith in God, knowing that he has only the best in store for us, we would have no reason to live in fear or doubt. We would place our confidence in Him knowing that he exists and will never fail us.

Are you feeding your faith in God by having in depth and consistent DQTs-Daily Quiet Times which will have an everlasting impact in your neighbourhood, office, school, state, Nigeria and the rest of the world? Are you allowing your faith be replaced by fear and doubt? Are you allowing the "winds" of life to discourage and distract you from the purpose God has called you to live?

Practical.

- Write down certain ways you can build and feed your faith in God today.
- Study out biblical personalities who had great faith in God and make a decision to emulate them.

**Ref: Jeremiah 29:13-14, 1 Chronicles 28:9, Psalm 105:3-4, Proverbs 8:17**

## **THE MIX OF FAITH AND ACTION**

## **DAY 7**

### **Hebrews 11:7**

I have had to give up immoral relationships while studying the Bible to become a Christian and along the line, God has blessed me with a wife and a family of my own. I have had to give up some jobs and other commitments during my working career that did not allow me the time to serve God the way I wanted and God replaced such Jobs and commitments with better and more

rewarding ones thereafter.

I have given and sacrificed way beyond my ability in the past and God provided for me miraculously thereafter. The list goes on.

### **Noah: Faith and Action**

#### **Genesis 6:11-7:1**

Do we or can we still have Noahs today? Do biblical Noahs still exist today? Ask yourself, are you a Noah?

Why was Noah's name the 3rd in Hebrews 11? This is a classical case and example of Faith and action working together. In the Bible passage, note the following:

- Noah did not see God face to face: Same today
- The whole earth was corrupt in God's sight: Same today
- The earth was full of violence: Still the same today
- In the midst of all these, God gave specific command and instructions to Noah: God's commands and instructions are still with us today. **Verse 22:** "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." Why? The answer is, his faith and action. He acted on his belief in God.

Are you still doing everything today just as God commanded? We cannot say we are Christians or disciples today with faith. Faith is the foundation and the basis of our relationship with God. All such faith must be backed up by action, what we do, not what we say.

#### **See James 2:14-24....."Faith without deeds (action) is dead."**

God spoke to Noah and he did everything just as God commanded. What is God saying to you today that you are not doing well? What instructions and commands of God are you ignoring today? These are questions on your faith.

Note: Just as God, in the days of Noah destroyed the world with water, so he is going to bring the current world to an end one day (**1 Peter 3:2**).

If we are not behaving like Noah today (faith and action), it will be impossible for us to make it to heaven. Act on God's word to you. **James 1:22**

God is not partial and does not show favoritism. God will not alter his standards because of us and because of the times we are living in. Be the Noah of today. Work your faith, for this is your righteousness. **Further Readings**

## FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

## DAY 8

### **Hebrews 11:8**

In this study we will examine faith and obedience as demonstrated by Abraham. Some key words that need to be considered in this study: **Faith, Obedience, Inheritance.**

**John Henry Jowett writes that:** Abram began his journey without any knowledge of his ultimate destination. He obeyed a noble impulse without any discernment of its consequences. He took "one step" and he did not "ask to see the distant scene". And that is faith; to do God's will here and now, quietly leaving the results to him. Faith is not concerned with the entire chain; its devoted attention is fixed upon the immediate link. Faith leaves something to the Lord. It obeys His immediate commandment and leaves to Him direction and destiny.

**Obedience: According to Hebrews commentary:** The words "when he was called" are the translation of a present participle which speaks of action going on at the same time as that of the leading verb, which is "obeyed". The translation is "Abraham, while he was being called, obeyed. It indicates Abraham's immediate obedience to God's call. The words "to go out" are to be construed, not with "called" but "obeyed". They specify in which his obedience was shown. The idea is "when he was called, obeyed to go"

**Inheritance:** (Kleronomia from Kleros = lot + nemo = give or distribute) derivative from the Greek word. It is literally that which is distributed by lot and so refers to a portion which one receives by lot in a general distribution and then, in a more general sense means to possess oneself of, to receive as one's own, to obtain. In other words it can refer to a property already received as well as one that is expected.

**He went out:** Faith is coupled with obedience and leads to action. Unhesitating obedience manifest by action. (**James 2: 14-16**). Do you have faith in God enough to dare to obey? What is holding you back from obeying?

**ACTIVITY:** List out your fears. Share your fears with a trusted and stronger

disciple of Christ. Now that you understand these key words: faith, obedience, inheritance. Why not obey?

**PRAYER:** Help me Lord to know that you are faithful and all you need from me is obedience. These are my fears ----- help me to overcome them.

Thank you. *Scriptures for further study: Exo 19:5, Deut 11:1, John 15:9, 2Cor 10:5, Isaiah 51:2, Neh 9:7-8, Rom 1:5, Heb 13:17, John 15:14, John 14:15, 2John 1:6, Luke 11:28.*

**DAY 9****A STRANGER IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY****Hebrews 11:9**

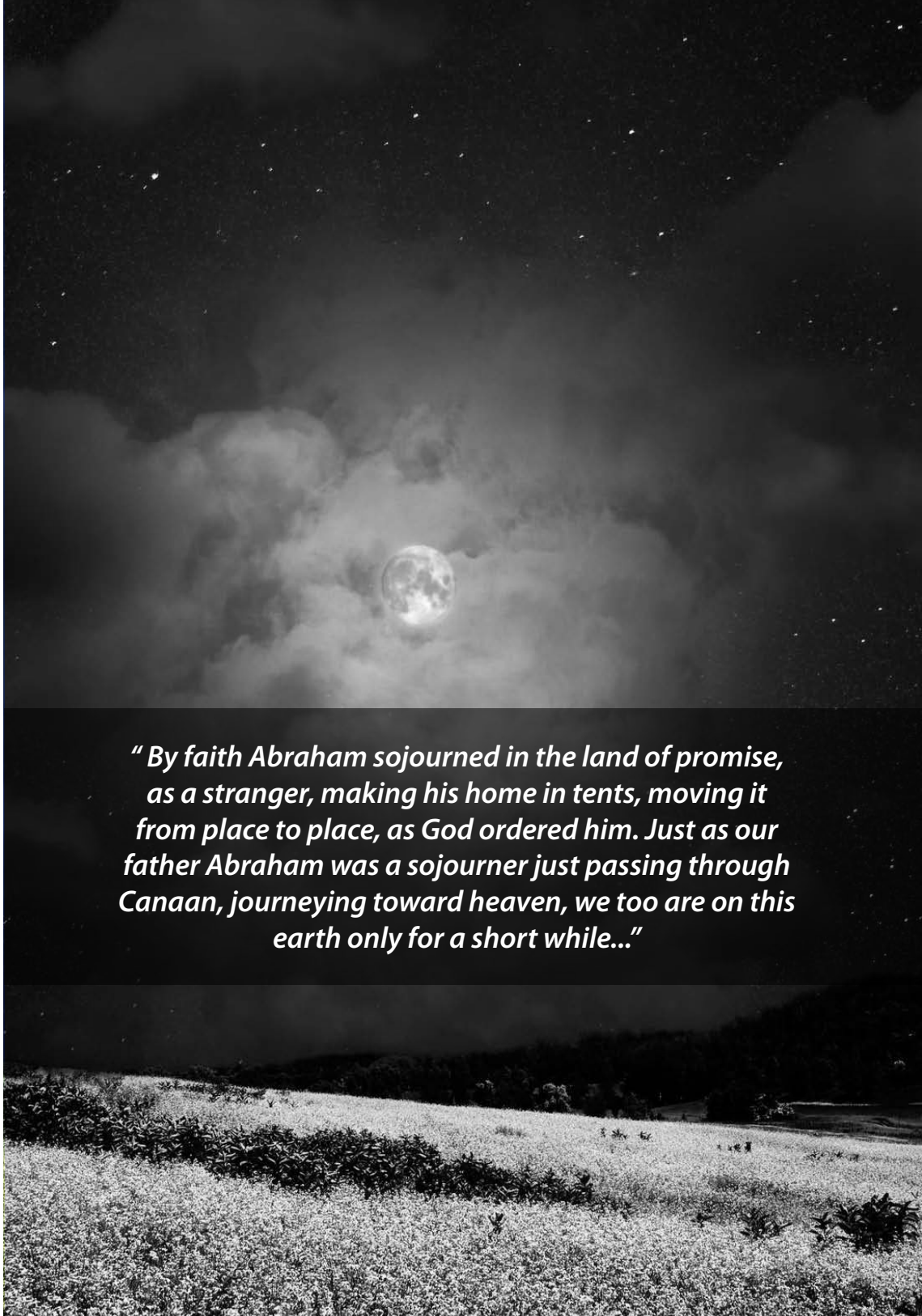
To learn about life of faith and how to live like a stranger or pilgrim in a foreign land, it makes sense to go to Abraham. Genesis 12-25 chronicles his story. Please stop right here and go study this. Welcome back!

By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as a stranger, making his home in tents, moving it from place to place, as God ordered him. Just as our father Abraham was a sojourner just passing through Canaan, journeying toward heaven, we too are on this earth only for a short while. We should not settle in it as though it's the last bus stop.

For most who profess to be following Christ, their view of Christianity is geared towards the here and now: What will it do for my marriage/career/wellbeing? How will it help me raise my kids, buy a few properties? Will it help me overcome personal problems and make lots of money?

These folks don't want any view that teaches about suffering, denying self, fleeing from worldly desires. These "Christians" see living as strangers as something to be postponed and avoided at all costs.

Are you one of these Christians? In what ways has your view changed over time? In preparing for this devotional, this truth hit me in a fresh way. Going through one of my reference scriptures, 1 Cor. 15:19: "If we have hoped in



*"By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as a stranger, making his home in tents, moving it from place to place, as God ordered him. Just as our father Abraham was a sojourner just passing through Canaan, journeying toward heaven, we too are on this earth only for a short while..."*

Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”  
I thought, “Does my lifestyle truthfully say that?” Does yours my brother/sister?  
There’s nothing wrong about enjoying God and His blessings on us in this life.  
But if we don’t hold the things of this life loosely, we are holding to a shallow  
slippery ground.

Our text in Hebrews, to live as strangers/pilgrims, there is a mind-set to adopt,  
& a lifestyle to maintain.

### **1. Strangers/Pilgrims adopt a mind-set.**

“Beloved, I urge you as aliens/strangers, foreigners/exiles...” (1 Pet 2:11-12).  
That’s how we are to think about ourselves: We are thus aliens and strangers  
on this earth which is for now under the dominion of the evil one. We’re in  
enemy territory.

A traveller doesn’t live according to the customs/standards of the foreign  
country. For the sake of not offending the locals, he may temporarily adopt  
some of their customs, if they are morally neutral, in order not to offend the  
natives. Pilgrims have a destination in mind, and they look forward to getting  
there.

### **2. Pilgrims have a lifestyle to maintain.**

“Keep your behaviour excellent among the Gentiles” (1 Peter 2:12). The word  
“behaviour” (used in 1 Pet. 1:15, 18; the verb as used in 1 Pet. 1:17 & 2 Pet. 2:18)  
means conduct/lifestyle. It points to the overall flavour of our lives.

Our lives should be marked by “good deeds” which conform to God’s Word, but  
which also, in a lesser sense, are viewed by even a godless culture as attractive.  
Conclusion

It’s so easy to get caught up in the lifestyle of the world, without even trying,  
you begin pursuing personal pleasure/affluence as the goals of your life. You  
want to get a little nicer house, a newer car, and a few more trinkets.

And God? His church? To the extent that they fit into that scheme and help  
you reach those goals, you get involved. But in the final analysis, you’re living  
for the same thing as everyone else in this world: Self-fulfillment/personal  
happiness.

## THE CITY OF GOD

## DAY 10

### **Hebrews 11:10**

Close your eyes for a second and conjure up an image of a beautiful city. What  
do you see? What comes to mind? For me I see New York City, ‘The city that  
never sleeps’ as it is known by many, the sights, the sounds, the smells, it’s a  
marvel to behold even in this day and age, but was it always so grand? Self  
sustaining? Beautiful? Surely not. Same as most things in this world, it had  
humble beginnings and grew, steadily becoming what it is today as a result of  
all the blood, sweat, tears, dreams, ideas and hard work put into it.

The founders of this great city had vision, they saw purpose where others  
likely saw a waste of time and resources, it is because of this vision and drive  
that New York is what it is today. It is and always will be because of the faith  
they had in what their initially small territory would become, but even they  
most likely didn’t see this far ahead in its development, if you could tell them  
what their small dream has become, well... They would probably write you off  
as insane. Yet a city was promised to an average Joe, Abraham.

### **Genesis 12:7**

Not even to him but to his generation, An entire city filled with his descendants  
even though at the time he as well as his wife were quite old and without even  
a single child, yet what did Abraham do? He built an altar in honor of the Lord  
as a sign of his faith. He had faith. And the Lord’s promise was fulfilled.

### **Hebrews 6:17**

Now, the city of the Lord is yet to come, a city made of the purest gold, so  
pure it was likened to glass! And its foundations adorned with precious  
diamonds, A city whose Architect is the Lord most High.

### **Hebrews 11:10 Revelations 21:2-27**

We have been told of this, so a decision is in order. Are you and I going to write  
what has been given to us as Insane??

Or Are we going to follow the example left to us by Abraham and show great  
faith in the LORDS words?



## Section 2

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*But my righteous one will live by faith.  
And I take no pleasure in the one who  
shrinks back. But we do not belong to  
those who shrink back and are  
destroyed, but to those who have  
faith and are saved*

*Hebrews 10: 38-39*

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## DAY 11

## FAITH AND THE IMPOSSIBLE

*Hebrews 11:11**Gen 18:11-14*

"You too can become a disciple in just one day like the Ethiopian Eunuch if you are willing" Sola told me after church service on the 29th September, 1991. I had casually attended 2 to 3 Church Services of the Lagos Christian Church holding inside Federal Palace Hotel to make up for my missed services as an Anglican since I had to work at the swimming pool of the hotel as a DJ weekends from 8am daily. Like Sarah, I inwardly laughed at the incredulous guy before me whom I honestly thought was a joker. I thought that I was so far gone on the other side of life to all of a sudden be transformed within 24 hours into a Righteous Man. I would have probably taken him seriously if he had said something like in maybe 6 months, we would work together using scriptures to reshape my life and focus to be like Christ.

Like the Ethiopian Eunuch, I was an adventurer and the next morning by 5am, I packed a bag for the day, left for the regular office where I did my day job and left a note for my boss that I was going to be transformed into a new man and by the time I returned to work the next day, I would be a "True Christian". That night, on the 30th of September, 1991 around 11pm at the brother flat at Ikeja, I was baptized into Christ. I was honestly expecting to develop some special powers rising out of that baptism and was eager to unleash myself to begin healing every sick, blind and crippled person in Lagos. Those powers never came to me even with prayers and fasting but my life did get transformed.

Sitting in the cost counting sessions of other intending disciples of Jesus who did not make it into the waters of baptism months later, it was clear to me that I too during my interview to become a disciple had flunked the answers to the questions. Why was I then baptized when some of these candidates could not until they overcame their respective challenges?

As the Evangelist Charles Eliku explained to me years later about what his thoughts were that night when I posed this same question to him about the events of that night, he said he genuinely feared that I might not last but hoped

for the best (*Heb 10:24*). Even though the physical evidence indicated clearly that I might not have been qualified based on established Church Standards for baptism, faith and hope were the compelling reasons for the Evangelist and others to allow my baptism that night.

Charles Eliku only knew in part (*1 Cor 13:9*) but in spite of his doubts, he said he could not dismiss the urgency of a Young Soul seeking to be reconciled with his God (*2 Cor 7:11*). He could not and would not also disappoint nor dare to injure the faith and desires of the two young Christian Soldiers – Sola and Ebun who had both taken a whole day off their normal beats to pursue their dream of carrying out a "Chariots-ride Bible Study" and baptizing someone within 24 hours (*Acts 8: 26-39*).

Faith is not the complete absence of initial doubts but the overcoming of such fears by a conviction that God who spoke the world into existence is able to do all things – even the impossible (*Rom 4:20-21*).

It is the complete and absolute surrender to God's will even when it does not sometimes make human sense to do so (*1 Cor 1:18*) but yields an expected end based on God's promise to every Christian. Faith causes us to believe that if any situation does not exist and we act in faith, our faith in God and "follow-through" action to back up such beliefs will cause God to bring such desires into existence if we act in accordance with His will. Faith precedes the action of a Christian but acts in tandem (hand-in-hand) all the time with our Action. Faith is never a "follow-up", it is as described a "follow-through" Action. Hence a faithful Christian does not and must not act on what he or she does not believe in, rather he or she is compelled to act on his or her beliefs.

*Mark 9:23* – "Nothing is impossible for him who believes", and our faith will move mountains and remove every obstacle on our way if we come to God and act in pure faith in accordance with his will. In this realm of a Christian's spiritual life, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE!

## DAY 12 THE POWER IN ONE MAN'S FAITH

### *Hebrews 11:12*

In two senses, he became a father by faith. Literally speaking, It was humanly impossible for Sarah to give birth, yet Abraham believed. Figuratively, he is the father of us all.

Abraham obeyed when he did not know how God's will would be accomplished. Both Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children. Yet they both believed that God would do the miracle. Unbelief asks, "How can this be?" Faith asks, "How shall this be"

### *Genesis 22:17-18*

Consider how unreasonable God's request was. Isaac was Abraham's only son, and the future of the covenant rested in him. Isaac was a miracle child, the gift of God to Abraham and Sarah in response to their faith. Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac very much and had built their whole future around him. When God asked Abraham to offer his son, He was testing Abraham's faith, hope, and love; and it looked like God was wiping out everything Abraham and Sarah had lived for.

When God sends a trial to us, our first response is usually, "Why, Lord?" and then, "Why me?" Right away, we want God to give us explanations. Of course, we know that God has reasons for sending tests — perhaps to purify our faith, or perfect our character, or even to protect us from sin

### *Rom 4:18-25*

There is a direct correlation between hoping against all hope and faith. Abraham's faith sustained his hope to see God's promise fulfilled, even when it defied human logic

### *Conclusion*

One of the most important lessons in the school of faith is to learn that God's time is not our time. From Abraham's time frame, even though he lived for 175 years, God's promises may seem failed. He died with some children, hardly an

innumerable nation! But from God's time frame, the true children of Abraham, those who believe in Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ, number in the millions! From our limited time frame, certain events don't fit with God's promises. Abraham paved the way. Let us follow in his path. God bless you

*Further reading: Hosea 1:10, Jeremiah 33:22, Deuteronomy 1:10,*

## FAITH AND PATIENCE

## DAY 13

### *Hebrews 11:13*

"...They did not receive the things promised ; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance..."

Someone once asked "What kind of child would I really have become if my father had given me everything I ever wanted when I wanted it?" Your guess is as good as mine – "spoilt""ungrateful" and "lazy" are but a few apt descriptions! The men and women of old who trusted in God did not always see the answer to their prayers instantly. Some of them, according to scripture, did not even see their prayers answered in their lifetime. Imagine Abraham living as an alien in a makeshift tent in Canaan. There are nights he must have stayed awake and asked, "God... so...is this the plan? I thought you promised that I would have this whole place as my inheritance!" And yet, God was never asleep. He was working all that time, fulfilling His divine and glorious purposes. Why do we often have to wait?

When God makes us wait for what He has promised He wants us to learn the virtue of patience. Patience grows our faith. It makes us see more of God and less of ourselves. It teaches us to submit and surrender. It humbles us to realize that we are meant to be a part of God's plan and God is not meant to be a part of our own plan. When we have learned to be patient, our praise takes a different dimension. There is something profound that waiting does to our character.

Dear Christian, are you troubled, anxious or unsettled because you feel God is slow in answering your prayers and petitions?  
Lift your eyes for a moment to see the One who has the whole spreadsheet of

your life before Him. Thank Him for what He is doing that you have not seen. Ask Him to give you a heart of faith and patience so that at the end of the day you will not only receive what He has divinely promised, but you will be transformed by His divine process.

**FURTHER READING:** *Rom 8:24-25, 2 Pet 3:8-9, Isaiah 55:8-9, Ps 40:1-3*

**DAY 14****LOOKING FORWARD TO A CITY OF YOUR OWN****Hebrews 11:14**

When I come home late from work I notice the sleeping pattern of the security guards about four of them. Two on dirty foams with mosquito nets on the compound floor, one under the stairway wrapped like a corpse for burial with no net and another in the security post wrapped the same way with no net. Now and again they send large quantity of goods to their country - Niger. They were not investing in Nigeria but working in Nigeria and investing in Niger where their home is. They are not the only ones, this is the lifestyle of all aliens including Nigerians in diaspora.

For these people it is easy to work out their alien nature and where their home is, both can be seen. As Christians our homes here on earth can be seen, readily and worked out but our home in heaven is unseen and can only be understood by faith. Our alien nature here on earth exists only when we by faith see our heavenly state and heavenly home. Without this faith we will not see our alien status but will take this world as our home and we will spend our whole lives running around amassing wealth or just trying to survive until we discover too late on our dying bed that it was all a big mistake and our wasted efforts in futility. With faith we see our alien nature on this world and like all aliens worldwide you will not invest in your foreign country (this world) but have your investments in heaven when you pay your tithe, benevolence giving anywhere, your love and loving lifestyle everywhere anytime, your faith, your prayers, your hope in Christ, your seeking and saving the lost, your Godly service and the like. Because your investments are in heaven and not here on earth, your heart will be in heaven and you will be looking forward to your heavenly city. Without faith and your investments in heaven that will not happen. **2nd Corinthians 4: 18-5:7, Phillipians 1:23**

**BURN YOUR SHIPS****DAY 15****Hebrews 11:15**

Hernando Cortes is well known for his brutalities during his conquer of Aztec lands for Spain. When his ships landed, to prevent mutiny he ordered his ships burned and sunk. Panic would have enveloped the soldiers. The soldiers didn't have any opportunity to go back home. We have every opportunity but must choose not to take on those opportunities because of our "faith". It's forward and never backward.

Abraham left his country at God's command, and he never went back. The proof of faith lies in perseverance.

It is a wonder that we have not gone back to the world, and to our own sin. We have opportunities in our daily calling. Most of us work in the midst of ungodly men. We have opportunities to sin as they do, to fall into their excess, into their forgetfulness of God, or even into their blasphemies.

When we pray diligently, we not only get nearer to God, Satan seems to get nearer to us. Opportunities to return to sin will be prevalent till our very last breath. Burning the ships of doubt has a motivational value that boldly declares that our purpose and our faith is all or nothing. As an ambassador for Christ in this world, there is no exit plan to abandon the cause of Christ! It is either all or nothing; doubt cannot exist in the same place as our faith.

In Genesis 24:6-8, Abraham expressed doubt – the possibility of the wife found for Isaac by his servant, being unwilling to return home with the servant. However, he does not compromise his faith. He insists that on no account should his son be taken to the foreign land. ***What happens when we do not burn the ships? Genesis 19:17-26***

***We long for past lives, we look back!!!***

Are there old friends in your past whose contact you still keep (those you involved in sinful acts together?); now is the time to delete those contacts completely. (***Ephesians 4:27***) – "do not give the devil a foothold".

Burn the ships...move forward in your faith and trust in the Lord for guidance, protection and strength! He will never leave us or forsake us! (Deut. 31:6)

**PRACTICALS**

Make a list of the "ship(s)" in your life

Resolve & pray to burn it/them

Talk to a disciple about it/them today; ask to be held accountable.

**DAY 16****GOD IS PROUD OF THE FAITHFUL****Hebrews 11:16**

"I am proud of you" Everyone longs and loves to hear those words.

This phrase puts a bounce on our feets when we hear it from our bosses, friends, parents and especially from our spouses for those of us who are married

It is a phrase that makes you feel that you can do more and even break boundaries

I remember some years ago immediately after the burial of my mother in-law, my wife said to me- "I am proud of you" I felt it was the greatest acknowledgement ever received since we got married

***The truth is that God is proud of the faithful***

**Heb 11: 16** – Instead, they were longing for a better country – a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for them

Yes, we are in the world but not of the world. Our standard of living should be of the heavenly home that has been prepared for us and our guide to daily living should be of heaven.

**Job 1: 8** – Then the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him, he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. It was obvious that God was proud of Job. In the same way, God is proud of you when you make your focus heaven and refused to

conform to the sinful standard of this world

***Characteristics of the faithful ones***

**1. Isa 41:8-10** The faithful ones know that they are chosen and are not afraid  
Remember that you have been chosen by Jesus  
Remember that Jesus is in the boat with you  
The man who is in the boat with you was the one that calmed the sea  
The one who made the paralytic man walk  
The one who cast out demons and performed many miracles and even more in your life. Fear comes from the devil and he is excited when we focus on those fears because he knows that our attention at that time is not on God.

What are some of the fears that he throws along our path?

Will I ever have a child?

Will I ever get married?

How will I be able to financial provide for my family? etc.

The above questions and more are real but remember who has chosen you and the man Jesus who is with you

***2. Our desires should always be to do the will of our father who is in heaven which is our home - Luke 22: 41-44***

Paul said to die and be with Christ is much better than living on earth but staying meant faithful labour for Christ -**Phip1:21-24**

We should not put our trust in earthly wealth but in God who provides eternal wealth – **1Tim 6:17-19**

Earthly possessions are like trash compared to gaining Christ and the power of His resurrection -**Phip3:7-11**

We brought nothing into this world, and we will take nothing out. Instead of wealth, we should pursue eternal life - **1Tim6:6-12**. In the end those who trust in themselves will perish with their wealth – **Ps49:5-15**

***3. 2nd Tim 4:18 -The faithful ones pray continually***

See the way David prayed when it seems that all hope was lost and he was drowning. Save me, O God! For the water have come up to my neck! I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold, I have come into deep waters and the

flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God but as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord at an acceptable time, O God in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness! **Psalm 69:1-36**

What a prayer! What passion! What an expression of faith in a terrible circumstance!

And the response, the Lord heard the needy and does not despise his own people for God will save His people, Call on me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you -**Ps.50:15**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not fear – **Ps. 23:1**

The Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid – **Ps. 27:1**

The Bible says call on me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you and you will honour me. This is an assurance given to the faithful ones but not so with the wicked. **Psalm 50: 15**

## DAY 17

## NOT TOO MUCH TO LET GO

**Hebrews 11:17**

**Genesis 22 :1-16**

Why do we struggle to let go of our possessions and ourselves in the service of God? I believe strongly that it is because of our value system. What do we place the most premium on? A biblical character that comes to mind immediately is young man who over the years has been labelled “the rich young ruler”. He liked Jesus, he would have loved to be with Jesus, but he loved his possessions more. **See Matt 19:16-23**

Contrast this unnamed man with another character named Zacchaeus.

**Luke 19:8-9 NIV.** But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” [9] Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

What was different? Zacchaeus placed a higher premium on his relationship with God. If becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ would cost him everything,

so be it.

In the OT, Abraham was willing to kill his only son, the one through whom God had promised to bless him. Why? His relationship with God was more important than his relationship with Isaac. He loved Isaac no doubt, but he loved God more.

**What takes precedence over your relationship with God?**

Personally, I started knowing peace in my life only when God took his rightful position of master over my life. When possessions ruled my life, worries never ceased, cause there was always the fear of stuff being used up. Trusting my life into God’s hands however ushered in peace. When like Abraham, we get to the place where nothing is too much to let go, we find a God who provides what we truly need for our lives to be joyful and peaceful.

## THERE WILL BE A TEST

## DAY 18

**Hebrews 11:18**

The test of Abraham’s faith and his willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac, was the summit of faith in all history, except for Jesus’ sacrifice.

The Book of Hebrew show believers facing trials that faith overcomes all obstacles, even when circumstances seem contrary to God’s promises.

Faith is like a muscle: it grows stronger by frequent use. Thus, God will test our faith...**But never beyond what we can bear.**

God tests us and every test is potentially a temptation. Though temptation does not come from God but from our sinful lusts (**James 1:13-14**). If we sin under testing, we cannot blame God, because He provides ways of escape for us in every test. He knows how much we can handle (**1 Cor. 10:13**).

If we fail the test, rather than blaming God, we need to examine why we failed and learn from it. **Proverbs 19:3** observes, “A man’s folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord.”

Rather than rage against the Lord, we need to accept responsibility for our



failures. God tests our faith, but never beyond what we can bear. God's purpose in testing our faith is not to make it fail, but to reveal the quality of our faith and help us grow.

Tests prove to us and others the quality of our faith. If we submit to God in tests by trusting Him, our faith will grow stronger.

It is encouraging to realize that this test of sacrificing Isaac was not the first one God laid on Abraham, and to know that Abraham had failed some earlier tests gives even me hope.

God was patient and faithful to keep working with Abraham, growing his faith through repeated tests.

Abraham obeyed God promptly without argument, even though God's command seemed to contradict His promise to Abraham.

Abraham, being human, must have wrestled emotionally with this command, yet he arose early the next morning and proceeded to obey. Wow!

When God's Word commands us to do something difficult or objectionable, we too must learn to obey promptly. It may be the command to love a difficult person etc. We must submit to God with resolved obedience if we want to keep growing.

**Conclusion:** Abraham's test was the highpoint of his faith: When God tests you, believe that He will keep His promises. There will also be that test of all tests that will lift you beyond the ordinary like this particular did to Abraham. May we all climb higher in our faith when the test of all tests comes!

## DAY 18 ABSOLUTE TRUST

**Hebrews 11:19, Romans 4:19-21**

The English dictionary describes the word absolute as -not qualified or diminished in anyway; total, with synonyms such as complete, thorough, outright, entire, decided and perfect these words we can easily relate to. It describes the word trust as a firm belief in the reality, truth or ability of

someone or something. This then means that an Absolute trust in God on my part would need to be a non-diminishing confidence in God and his abilities mentioned in the Bible.

Trust can be a very challenging thing to find in our world today. We all have stories of some way our trust was shattered leaving behind that awful feeling of betrayal. It is difficult to trust the people we see and interact with every day; even harder to trust an invisible God. That being said trust in God is one of the most important attributes in the Christian walk, in fact in any significant relation, trust is key. **Proverbs 3:5** says "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submits to him, and he will make your paths straight." This is the why behind my decision to trust God. He has the best laid plans; as we go through life every day, the world hurls all sorts at us and it quickly becomes apparent that taking my life out of the hands of the almighty and placing it in the clutches of the world around me is the most dangerous thing I can do. So putting my absolute trust in the one who has the blue print of all I will ever be seems to make perfect sense. It is however a daily decision of surrender.

In **Ephesians 3:20a** it says "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than ALL we ask or imagine...." (Emphasis mine) Our great God holds the entire world we live in, in the palm of his hands He can do anything, ALL things to be precise but do I trust him fully? Do you trust him? If we did trust him, it would be evident in the lives we live on a daily basis.

We all have lofty dreams that seem so out of reach in our own strength, but if we have a focus; a trust in a power greater than ours to conquer, we are already half way to the victory. Look at our Father Abraham he wanted an heir; that was his lofty dream, the bible says that he and Sarah were old in fact as good as dead as far as reproductive science goes it was a dead end. So how would this dream be realized?

Seems impossible; yet in **Genesis 22:4-5** his dream stood there right next to him about to ascend mount Moriah. Abraham did face the facts as we can see in **Romans 4:17-21** but in the end he chose to believe despite the clear hopelessness of his situation.

Look at the barren Hannah who waited years for a Son; look at Joseph

imprisoned for a crime he did not commit only to emerge as Prime minister in a foreign land; there is Noah seemingly crazy to build a massive boat in a drought. The examples are endless; Gods plans are always turn out magnificent even though they start of obscure; in order to wait purposefully and effectively, we must trust him absolutely even when it looks ridiculous. How is it looking for you right now and what will your response be? We must trust and Obey as the famous hymn goes; trust and obey for there is no other way, if our goal is to please the lover of our souls, we must trust him and surrender while we wait for our lofty dreams to come to fruition.

**Further reading:**

**Romans 4:17-21, Proverbs 3:5-8, Matthew 9:28, Genesis 22:4-5**

**DAY 20**

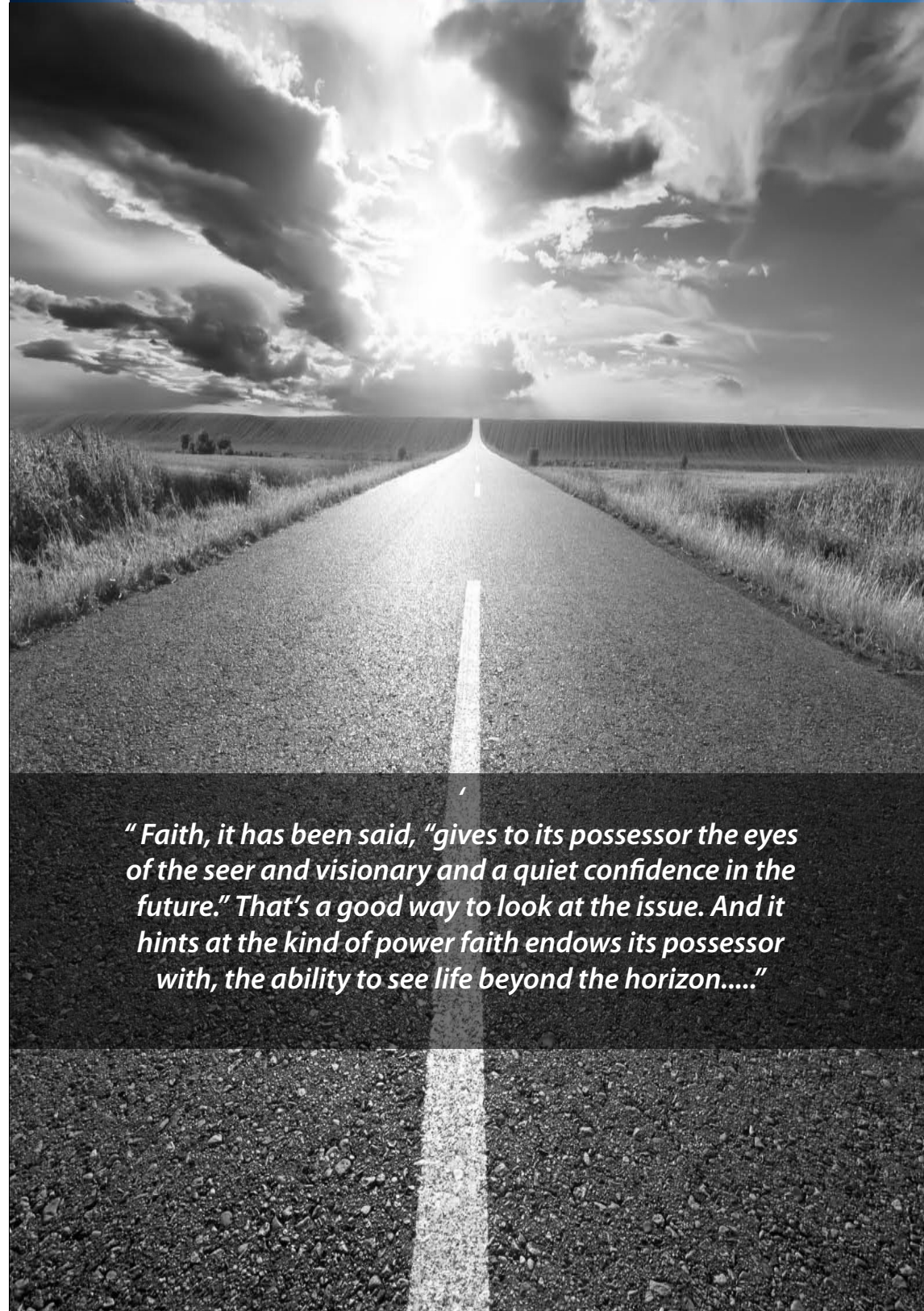
**FAITH AND THE GENERATIONAL BLESSINGS**

**Hebrews 11:20**

Faith, it has been said, “gives to its possessor the eyes of the seer and visionary and a quiet confidence in the future.” That’s a good way to look at the issue. And it hints at the kind of power faith endows its possessor with, the ability to see life beyond the horizon. That’s what faith gives us.

The son, grandson, and great grandson of Abraham span the generations and centuries by faith, and in their declining years with death approaching, the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph passed on blessings and instructions concerning the Promised Land.

With this verse, the writer of this letter begins to show us what the tradition of the “patriarchal blessings” involves. In the case of Abraham, it was Isaac that received his father’s blessing, not his brother Ishmael. It’s not that there was something wrong with Ishmael, it’s that Isaac was destined to become the son of the Promise. In the following generation, it was Jacob, not his brother Esau, that received his father’s blessing. Again, it wasn’t that Esau was an evil person, it was God’s will that the Promise be passed onto Jacob. And in the generation that followed, it wasn’t Rueben, Jacob’s first-born that received the blessing,



*“Faith, it has been said, “gives to its possessor the eyes of the seer and visionary and a quiet confidence in the future.” That’s a good way to look at the issue. And it hints at the kind of power faith endows its possessor with, the ability to see life beyond the horizon.....”*

it was Joseph who was blessed. And it wasn't Joseph's first born who received the blessing, it was Ephraim who received the choice blessing.

What this teaches us about God is vitally important for us as disciples to understand. It is God who is in control, and His sovereign will does not abide by man's traditions, thinking, culture or rules. In other words, regardless of our wants and wishes; regardless of what our society deems to be the norm, God's will is accomplished as He sees fit.

Yet, God still used those to whom He had given a measure of faith. Each of the patriarchs blessed their children with a prophetic insight, and while each time a single son was blessed with that special blessing related to the Promise, all the children were blessed.

But we notice something else. In addition to passing on God's blessing to the next generation, something else was passed on:

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. (*Hebrews 11:21-22 | NIV84*)

Words of worship and instruction were passed on. God's Word was given to the younger generation by the older one. They didn't have a Bible – no Old or New Testament to read to them – all they had was the promise given to Abraham. That's all these patriarchs had, and that's what they gave to their children. That Word from God was never forgotten; it was so important it was spoken from the deathbed, as it were.

What Joseph taught his family is important. Of all the things Joseph could have talked about; of all his amazing experiences he could have passed on to his family, he chose the Promise, and how his descendants would relate to it. Again, it's the prophetic insight talking.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath

and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place." (*Genesis 50:23c-25*)

He actually spoke those words to brothers, though his descendants would have heard them too. The thread of the promise binds the patriarchs in faith that transcends time.

It's the thread of the Word of God that binds our families together, too, and it transcends time. Of all the things we can pass on to our posterity, none is more vitally important than God's Word. We want so much to pass on a heritage – usually financial – to our children, without realizing how temporal that kind of heritage is. It's dangerous too because unearned wealth almost always causes problems. The Word of God, though, is what solves problems. It was Peter who said these words in one of his great sermons:

#### **Acts 2:39**

Indeed it is. The Christian parent receives it and passes it on to their children. Or, at least they're supposed to. If you are a parent, hopefully you have or are passing the Word of God onto your children. But even if you aren't a parent, you're still on the hook. Others may be blessed by your faith. That's right! If you are living a life of faith, then all those whom you rub shoulders with, stand to be blessed simply because of your possession of faith.

That's a lot of power in deed!





### Section 3

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

*Hebrews 11:7*

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## DAY 21 AGING FAITHFULLY

### **Hebrew 11:21**

There are two periods in the life of a man. They may be identified as the early life of between 1 - 50 years while the older life may be classified as being between 51 – 100 years. It has been discovered that there is a clear difference between the levels of strength available to a person during each period. The old life naturally suffers a setback in the level of strength available for performance and commitment due to aging.

There is a motivating power that bridges the gap between the two levels of strength. The motivation that defies the deteriorating physique is the mind that contains faith which helps to retain constancy in performance and commitment throughout a life time. To age faithfully to any commitment, there must be a mind of faith in every person to pull through life successfully. The scripture in Hebrew 11:21 shows the life of Jacob and his attitude of faith. He had a covenant with God through his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac to possess Canaan as the land allotted to his descendants that was yet to be built. Abraham had this promise, but could not get it till he died. He handed it to Isaac who also did not get it but had faith to get it. Isaac handed the legacy to his son Jacob. God kept renewing his promises during the lifetime of each succeeding generation.

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff." **Hebrews 11: 21**. Jacob firmly believed that God would keep his promises and raise his descendants to become a great nation.

### **Ecclesiastes 12: 1**

This scripture shows that age is no barrier to faith. No matter how old you may be, your decision to follow God to store faith in you can begin today as your day of youth. God has a way of reversing age to pick knowledge and understanding of himself for the gift of his wisdom.

One is never too young or too old to think faithfully. Being full of faith is a decision we must renew in our hearts on a daily basis. I do not know the stage of life you are but you need to know that you are to age faithfully to God as you travel through life.

### **JOSHUA 14: 6-14**

God blessed Caleb at the age of 80, with the vigor and energy of a 40 year old, and enabled him to fight and conquer the hill country of his inheritance.

### **PHILLIPIANS 4: 13**

You can do all things in spite of your age because Christ can enable you if you have faith in him.

How committed are you to God now that you are still alive?

Today, I am above 71 years of age with all the normal physical deficiencies of old age yet I am able to do my best for God, the church, my community and my family. Jesus can do the same for you if you surrender yourself to him today.

## THE FAITHFUL VISIONARY

## DAY 22

### **Hebrews 11: 22**

Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers (**Gen. 37**). Eventually, Joseph was sold again, this time to an official of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Because of Joseph's faithfulness however, he was given a top ranking position in Egypt. Although he could have used that position to build a personal empire, he remembered God's promise to Abraham. After he had been reconciled to his brothers, Joseph was able to bring his family near and requested that his bones be taken to the Promised Land when the Jews returned – **Exodus 13: 19, Genesis 50: 24-25, Joshua 24: 32**

Faith means trust in God and his divine power in our lives no matter what challenges, trials and temptations we face. Joseph had every reason to be bitter, angry and frustrated with the various setbacks he faced. He had a dream but did not know how such would be accomplished. He kept his faith and focus on God as he took the knocks that life brought his way. Never giving up, never relenting!

The faithful visionary is one who keeps his trust in God, hoping and believing that his desires to accomplish great things will come to pass irrespective of any challenges or drawbacks. Most times we forget our purpose and vision of great things we want to accomplish for God, because we are dwelling too much on our hurts, disappointments and frustrations. Joseph had every



reason to let go of his dreams because the odds were stacked up against him; instead he looked to God for strength.

Are there unresolved conflicts, hurtful feelings and bitter disappointments that are holding you back from looking forward with faith to the wonderful things God wants to do with you this year?

Joseph had to reconcile with the past to set his sight clear for the future. He had to let go of his hurts and forgive his brothers. Forgiveness and reconciliation takes great faith and courage. When you set your heart free, you will see great things that God will use you to do.

1. Make a list of people you will need to reconcile/reconnect with this week.
2. List 5 things you want to accomplish this year – think big!

**DAY 23****FAITH DOES NOT FEAR**

*Hebrews 11:23,*

*Exodus 2:2- 10, Daniel 6:10, Isaiah 41:14, Psalm 118:6 (NIV)*

Here was a family that was faced with trials and challenges like you and I today. They were faced with the same challenges every Jewish family was faced with. They decided to be different, and not flow with the lot.

Daniel was equally faced with similar challenges as Moses' parents. He decided to fear God and not be perturbed about the consequences pronounced by a mere mortal. All he wanted to do was please the Lord God almighty. He cared more about obeying God, than fearing the death penalty.

What influenced their decision to hold on to God rather than have the fear of a mere mortal? *Psalm 118:6* is a good response to this question. They understood God's promises and His ability to see them through the storm. But they did not just have faith; they backed up their faith with actions. Moses' parents hid him for three months, before they placed in a basket on the Nile with his sister to watch out for him. Daniel backed his faith with actions. He went ahead to pray to his God. A very practical approach as indicated by

*James 2:18-20.*

Did these people know the consequences of their actions? Imagine if you knew the consequence of your actions could result in your death or imprisonment, would you still go ahead, and do it? They were not afraid of the king's edict but put their lives on the line for the sake of their son. They did not only put their own lives on the line, they did same with Moses' life by putting him out in the water.

Was their faith rewarded? Yes, it was more than rewarded. Was it rewarded because they were afraid or because they chose to banish fear and act out of faith in God? So too will your holding on to God be rewarded.

Where faith is concerned, fear quivers. Where faith is concerned, fear gives way to guts and courage. Are you going to allow the fears of your boss at work, your friends comment, etc. to stop you from acting in faith?

The lesson in these for me is that I will face trials and temptations in life. My faith will be challenged. When faced with situations beyond my control, I must not give in to fear but act in faith and do what pleases God.

**FAITH IS MY IDENTITY****DAY 24**

As I sit to write and meditate, I had to ask myself these questions and I want you to ask yourself same as well

- What is my identity?
- What do I stand for?
- What do people know me to stand for?

*Moses stood up for something*

He would rather be a slave with God's people rather than be an Egyptian Royal. How would I rather live? As a person striving daily to be righteous, a child of God or just like everyone else – A "Believer" who seems to have it all good?

Things are tough in Nigeria right now and with it comes all kinds of reasons to cut corners, cheat and lie so that we can make the 'extras' to make ends meet. I know because I am being owed a year's salary from October 2016 to date and

the temptations come on a daily basis but I choose not to cut corners or cheat to make extra but rather have looked for other side businesses to do.

How willing are you not to cut corners or to believe the Prosperity preachers and "Claim your Prosperity"?

#### ***Exodus 2:10 – 11, Acts 7: 21-24***

Moses grew up more as an Egyptian rather than a Hebrew (He was only with his birth mother as a baby). He was a beloved son of the Princess, grandson of Pharaoh, doted on and served by servants.

Well educated and trained in Egyptian wisdom.

Yet, he made a choice to follow the rough path rather than the greener pasture of Egypt.

What is attracting you back to Egypt... the gods?

- The way they pray?
- The prosperity messages?
- The economic wealth?
- That job that compromises your righteousness?
- Running your business the way the corrupt society demands.

#### ***All these at what cost?***

Temporary pleasures.

Loss of your children due to lack of values.

Eternal damnation.

Is it worth going to Hell for?

Moses chose to be identified with God walking the rough unfamiliar road and not the familiar comfortable life of Egypt.

That is FAITH.

I choose to be a disciple of Christ, following daily on the rough and narrow path, I choose to be different, I choose to stand with God – Faith is my IDENTITY

#### ***Additional scriptures;***

***Hab 2:4, James 2:18, 1 Thess 1:8 and 2 Thess 1:11***

## FAITH & PRIORITIES

## DAY 25

### ***Hebrews.11:25***

Priorities – "Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least."

What matters most to us? - Sharing the oppression of God's people or enjoying the fleeting pleasure of sin?

At every point in our lives, our choices vary; at some point we choose the pleasure of sin and other times share in the oppressions of God's people.

The Israelites, who were God's chosen and peculiar people, went through so many oppressions and sufferings. Moses through a turn of fate found himself in the lap of luxury. Yet Moses chose to suffer the same afflictions his people did. He chose to sympathize with them rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He refused to approve Pharaoh's cruelty and persecution, or even connive in it. Otherwise, he knew he would be entangled in the same sin.

He opted against carrying himself as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, knowing he was a Hebrew. He did not prioritize his own ease above the deliverance of his people; It was by faith Moses made this choice, for it is contrary to flesh and blood: it showed him to be a man thoroughly acquainted with the nature of sin. Moses looked beyond the temporal things of this world, to those of eternity. Moses deliberately made that choice.

When we have to choose between being broke and giving a bribe to get a contract, what would be our choice? Would we rather tell a lie to get a promotion than tell the truth and remain on the same grade?

Agreed, there is a degree of pleasure in sin. It is not happiness! The apostle calls it "pleasure," excitement, hilarity, merriment, amusement. Happiness is more solid and enduring than "pleasure;" and solid happiness is not found in the ways of sin. Solid happiness is found in God through "faith".

The pleasure of sin is only "for a season." It will all soon pass away. Had Moses lived at the court of Pharaoh all his days, it would have been only for a little

"season." These pleasures soon vanish, because: life itself is short compared to eternity. Our priorities should be things that will last for eternity not fleeting pleasures. This could only be achieved through our faith in God.

**Further readings:** *Psalm 84:10, 2Corinthians 5:17, James 5:5, 2Timothy 3:11-12 Colossians 1:24*

**DAY 26****LOOKING AHEAD****Hebrews 11:26**

He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

There is an interesting story of a French botanist, who was sent out many years ago to the tropics to import by all means the coffee-plant into the island of Mauritius to boost the island's economic prosperity. Regrettably the voyage was very long; negative winds prevailed; almost all the plants he brought with him died. Consumable water became so scarce in the ship that the passengers were only served one glassful per day—one coffee-plant only was left! To preserve this one plant alive, the self-denying botanist gave half of his small daily allowance of water, patiently enduring the torments of thirst. It was just enough to keep the plant from dying, and the happy result in later years was the naturalisation of coffee in the island of Mauritius.

Such were the fruits of self-denial from a scientist who was able to endure great discomfort as he looked ahead for some great earthly rewards.

During Moses' time, Egypt abounded in great wealth. Moses knew he had great prospect of inheriting large treasures. As the adopted son of the daughter of the king, he would naturally be heir to a great estate in Egypt. But he voluntarily gave them up because he knew and believed there was a greater reward ahead. He made the uncomfortable choice of "burning his ship" because he was able to look ahead to see better things.

In today's main passage, the writer of Hebrews equates Egypt to temptation and sin. Moses chose faith, God and God's people (and by extension, Hebrews says, he chose Christ). He chose Christ over sin." Just like Egypt with it bountiful

treasures, sin is treasurable as well. In earthly terms, it is worth something. It has value. Like the treasures of Egypt, sin is pleasurable and visible. Sin can makes you feel good. Sin is tangible, magnetic and real.

This explains why Moses needed superior awareness for the radical choice he made. He knew that even though some elements of disgrace and discomfort might exist initially, there is a lasting reward to look up to at the end.

Little wonder he was prepared to sacrifice heavy earthly inducements of Egypt, and the "pleasures of sin," to win the lasting and precious "treasure" of true, lasting satisfaction of being with God's people, and securing that heavenly inheritance that lies beyond.

On the surface of it, you may ask: why would Moses ever make that trade? Why would he give up so much? But you have to see that Moses was making a long-term investment. The promises of sin were short, but the rewards of faith were eternal and more rewarding.

Moses saw that, and he believed. And because he believed, he acted. He burned his ships with sin, turned his back on Pharaoh, and agreed to be mistreated with God's people for the cause of Christ.

As Christians, when we made the decision to follow Jesus, it was a choice to value the rewards of faith more than the promises of sin. When we follow Jesus, just like Moses, we are making a decisive choice to burn our bridges with sin and never look back.

.Have you burnt your bridges with sin, with a strong determination to look constantly ahead? Or are you still hanging around, looking back intermittently, and waiting to see if "Egypt" has a better offer than Christ? Are you keeping retreat as an option in your Christian life?

Total victory over sin requires long-term perspectives. Like Moses, we should look ahead to see our purpose clearly to avoid distractions. We must deliberately make choices from a heavenly, long-term perspective, rather than indulging the sinful nature in the short term. We must constantly choose never to be comfortable with "the world" and its corrupting ways.

***That is when we can boldly say Like Paul: - Philippians 3:7-9 (NIV)***

## DAY 27

## FAITH PERSEVERES

**Hebrews 11:27**

Today is a great day!

Since the beginning of this devotional, God has been taking you on a journey of faith; you've been learning what faith is; how you can grow and move forward in your walk with God. Today, you will learn yet another vital ingredient that will strengthen your faith – Perseverance. It's defined as the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition. (Google)

**Hebrews 11** is commonly known as the hall of fame for men and women who showed great examples of faith in the Old Testament – Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses etc. Each of these people was faced with unique situations that were challenging yet; they all believed God for deliverance, and God came through.

Each of the people had to persevere one way or the other, Moses is also considered as a hero of faith. He was made to confront his fears and lead his people. Take some moments to imagine what it would have been like growing up amongst the enemies of your family and you could do little or nothing about it, except patiently wait for God's deliverance. He confronted Pharaoh many times and every time, he was angrily rejected. We do not really know how long this took, but Moses never gave up. This I believe was because he focused on the invisible, not the threats from Pharaoh, complaints from his people, not his doubts, but on the promises of God to deliver His people.

Personally, I've been faced with several situations that really tested my faith. Back in my undergraduate days, I needed to pay my school fees. I had a number of hopes and promises, several months raced passed and nothing came out, everyone disappointed me. It was now few days to exams and I had no sign that I would get the money to pay, yet I was hopeful. I focused on God's promise to meet me at the point of my needs (Philippians 4:19), and He did.

Your situation may not be raising money for some school fees (maybe it is), it could be that you have waited several years to be fruitful, or to be in a meaningful relationship, perhaps, you are trusting God to bless the work

of your hands, but nothing seems to be working, instead, things are getting worse. Do not worry; there is an appointed time for everything. While you wait for the break through, focus on the invisible - focus on God. Draw strength from his word and it will surely come to pass.

Don't stop believing!

**Further Reading:** Ecclesiastics 3:1, Exodus 6-12, Hebrews 11, 1 Peter 1:8, 2 Corinthians 4:18

## FAITH, OBEDIENCE AND SALVATION

## DAY 28

**Hebrews 11:28**

Moses had just survived the wrath of the king; and was now being confronted with survival from the wrath of God. The key to survival would be how much he was able to keep to God's instructions and directives. Nine plagues had already devastated Egypt, when God gave Moses instructions on how Israel should observe the Passover. Of much significance at Passover celebration, was the sacrificing of an unblemished male lamb. The blood of the sacrificed lamb was to be sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of every house in which the Israelites dwelt. God had warned that He would come through the land on the Passover night and kill every firstborn male in homes without the blood on the doorposts. Moses' faith was being put to test here.

Moses in obedience, driven by faith in God, did not only keep all the rites and ceremonies of the Passover, but also caused the people of Israel to do the same. On the same night when the Lord smote the first born of Egypt; the angel of death passed over the houses of the Israelites. All Israel were safe, and not one of them was touched. This distinguished Israel from Egypt.

A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. True faith is tested, either by temptation within us or around us (James 1:1-8).

**WHAT CHALLENGES ARE YOU GOING THROUGH AT THE MOMENT? IT CAN BE YOUR OWN TESTING TIME.**

Nothing is too difficult for the Lord (*Jeremiah. 32:17*)

God tests every Christian to bring out the best in our relationship with Him and to deepen our convictions about what we believe. But Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us. We cannot grow in faith by running away from difficulties and trials because, in them, God sees to it that His children learn the lessons of faith.

In the school of faith, Christians must experience occasional tests. We will never know where we are spiritually, until we are tested.

Moses faith was tested through obedience to God's instructions.

Abraham had his share of tests by a request from God to offer his covenant son Isaac. God's request, for all intents and purposes sounded very unreasonable because Isaac was Abraham's only promised son, and the future of the covenant rested on him. When God asked Abraham to offer his son, He was testing Abraham's faith to know how true and genuine it was.

Abraham believed that even if God allowed him to sacrifice Isaac, He could raise him from the dead.

Most times, when God sends trials or instructions to us, our first response is usually, WHY GOD and then WHY ME. Right away, we want God to offer explanations. Faith does not demand explanations. Faith obeys God's word to the letter.

A Christian with no faith asks, HOW CAN I GET OUT OF THIS, while the faithful asks, WHAT CAN I GET OR MAKE OUT OF THIS.

To be saved through the Passover blood, Moses and the People of Israel had faith and obeyed God's instructions and did what He told them to do. If anyone had disputed it by saying, "It's not logical that ordinary sprinkling of blood on door posts would protect first born son from death," his son would have died. It would not have been enough to say, "I believe," but not apply the blood. To be saved from the pangs of the destroyer, Moses and the Israelites had to believe God's warning by applying the blood. Beyond just merely sacrificing the lamb, every detail involved in the Passover ceremony, speaks about Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.

The same is true with the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus had faith and believed and trusted in the supremacy of God, thus he obeyed and submitted to the WILL of God and shed his blood on the cross, for the salvation of mankind. He is a God who judges sinners. To be saved, one must acknowledge that as a sinner you deserve God's judgment. Becoming a disciple of Christ breaks the barrier, and brings salvation to our lives, and this extends to all who by faith embrace the gospel.

Your Faith must lead you to abandon all trust in yourself, your knowledge, your ability or your good works and submit to God's will and instructions on faithful and Godly living. And you must trust in Christ's blood as God's payment for your sins. God's word must be applied by faith in the life of a disciple in order to be effective.

It is clearly obvious that being a hardworking Jew by birth, was not enough to save any family from the Destroyer. Any family that failed to heed to the instruction of sprinkling the blood at door posts, would suffer the consequences. While Moses' faith is mentioned in *Hebrews 11:28*, his faith did not cover for all of the Jewish homes. Each home had to apply the blood as God had commanded. Romans 3:23 states, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Each person will face God's impending judgment. Everyone's faith will be tested by their level of faithfulness, obedience and commitment to the will of God.

Let's join Moses by becoming people who overcome trials and tribulations by faith. Let us endure pains, hardships and enormous challenges by seeing and believing in the unseen God.

#### **PRAYER:**

1. For God to strengthen our faith to see beyond our circumstances/challenges.
2. For God to add more to the faith of the leaders, so that just like Moses they can be an example of success for the followers

**Further reading:** *Exodus 12:21-30, Hebrews 12:24, 1Peter1:2, Mathew 26:2, James 2:19, 1 John 2:2,*



## DAY 29

## FAITH IS THE VICTORY

**Hebrew 11:29**

"By faith the people passed through the Red sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned"

The story of God's great exploit with the Israelites as they journeyed through the wilderness will not be complete without recounting the amazing feat of their crossing the Red Sea. Apostle Paul in 1 **Corinthians 10: 1-13** recounted this historic feat to remind the Church of God's faithfulness to Israel and to warn them of the failures that lack of faith will bring about when we take our eyes off the goal.

In **Exodus 14: 1-31** we read about Pharaoh and his armies bearing down on defenseless, tired, hungry, fearful and vulnerable Israelite men, women and children. They had nowhere to run to and no weapon to face their adversary. Locked in between a fierce and furious Pharaoh with his iron chariots and charioteers and the Surging Red Sea, they allowed fear and panic to take control. This gave way to complaints, anger and vicious attacks on Moses. The courage of the people was failing and frustration had set in. What do you do at a time like this? How do you respond to such difficult and challenging situations?

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need to only be still"

God hates faithlessness. He provides a way if we do not give up. We see in this encounter how God brought his people through dry ground but drowned the Egyptians when they pursued the Israelites into the Red Sea. It was an unimaginable feat then and now. God is able to do the impossible but he expects us like Moses to be faithful.

Faith is the victory! It is the evidence of our trust in God and his power to change our situation. It is not whether God can do it; it is whether we believe

he can! Our faithlessness does not stop God's faithfulness.

**Action:**

1. Make a list of your unanswered prayers and pray about them this week.
2. Make another list of some "impossible" exploits you want to achieve this year.
3. Reach out today to 10 new people and invite them to your Bible Talk.
4. Pray for God to give you courage.

## FAITH AND THE FALL OF JERICHO

## DAY 30

**Hebrews 11:30****2 Corinthians 10:4-5****Joshua 6:3-20**

The story of the walls of Jericho falling down, recorded in **Joshua 6:3-20**, is one that vividly demonstrates the miraculous power of God. But more than that, the utter destruction of Jericho teaches us several grand truths regarding God's grace and our salvation.

The people of Israel had just crossed over the Jordan River into the land of Canaan (**Joshua 3:14-17**). This was the land of milk and honey God had promised to Abraham over 500 years earlier (**Deuteronomy 6:3, 32:49**). After spending forty difficult years wandering in the desert of Sinai, the people of Israel were now on the eastern banks of the Jordan. Their challenge: take the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. However, their first obstacle was the city of Jericho (**Joshua 6:1**), an unconquerable, walled city. Excavations there reveal that its fortifications featured a stone wall 11 feet high and 14 feet wide. At its top was a smooth stone slope, angling upward at 35 degrees for 35 feet, where it joined massive stone walls that towered even higher. It was virtually impregnable.

In ancient warfare such cities were either taken by assault or surrounded and the people starved into submission. Its invaders might try to weaken the stone walls with fire or by tunneling, or they might simply heap up a mountain of earth

to serve as a ramp. Each of these methods of assault took weeks or months, and the attacking force usually suffered heavy losses. However, the strategy to conquer the city of Jericho was unique in two ways. First, the strategy was laid out by God Himself, and, second, the strategy was a seemingly foolish plan. God simply told Joshua to have the people to march silently around Jericho for six days, and then, after seven circuits on the seventh day, to shout.

Though it seemed foolish, Joshua followed God's instructions to the letter. When the people did finally shout, the massive walls collapsed instantly, and Israel won an easy victory. In fact, God had given the city of Jericho to them before they even began to march around its walls (**Joshua 6:2, 16**). It was when the people of God, by faith, followed the commands of God that the walls of Jericho fell down.

There are other key lessons we should learn from this story. First, there is a vast difference between God's way and the way of man (**Isaiah 55:8–9**). Though militarily it was irrational to assault Jericho in the manner it was done, we must not question God's purpose or instructions. We must have faith that God is who he says he is and will do what he says he will do. (**Hebrews 10:23; 11:1**)

- Whatever obstacle we are facing as disciples let's always put God in the picture.
- God wants us to have faith and believe in him.
- Our faith must go with obedience and work.
- Obstacles help us put our faith in God who can do all things.

During my first start year in school there were internal issues which led to a compulsory strike. I had to stay without attending lectures for 356 days.

As if that was not enough, 3 months after we resumed, another 6 month strike commenced. Due to the schools internal issues people started pulling out which got me discouraged. I told myself, short time or long I would finish from this institution so I kept on pushing. I kept praying and fasting for God to give me victory over the obstacles in the University. I had to go through the ups and downs of the school which taught me how to persevere. After 7 years I finally finished. My name came out this year which means I am graduating next year. Meanwhile this is an institution that admitted 300 Students and

graduated only 180 students. I was taught how to depend on God and obey Him despite the obstacles.

Joshua and the Israelites carried out the commands of God and conquered Jericho. God gave them victory over an obstacle that was trying to keep them out of the Promised Land. So it is with us today: God gives us victory over the obstacles that we face throughout life. Obedience is the clear evidence of faith. Our faith is the evidence to others that we truly believe in Him.

***We can conquer and overcome challenges and be victorious through life by faith.***



## Section 4

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*By faith the People passed through  
the Red Sea as on dry land ; but when  
the Egyptians tried to do so, they were  
drowned*

*Hebrews 11:29*

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## DAY 31

## EXONERATED BY FAITH

**Hebrews 11:31**

Rahab was an idol worshipper, a prostitute and a Canaanite. She belonged to a group of people who were condemned to judgement by God. Though she was not the kind of woman to be found in God's book of faith, God extended His grace and mercy to her and her family because of who she became.

Her people, the Amorites were idolatrous and wicked. Their worship services were filled with gross immorality and sexual perversion. They also practised what they called "foundation sacrifices." When a house was to be built, a child would be sacrificed, and its body built into the wall, to bring good luck to the rest of the family."

Think about living in an environment like this, and as bad as it sounds. These evil practices do exist in different forms in our society today. We also see how God condemned them to judgment in **Leviticus 20:2**.

Rahab, though not morally sound, has four great lessons on FAITH for us today. She believed in GOD..

In **Joshua 2:1-8**, Faith comes from knowledge. What Rahab knew and believed about the God of the Israelites prompted her faith into action. She showed the spies kindness and demanded same for her family.

This should give me great level of confidence and boldness to share the word powerfully and be radical with my life.

***Rahab's faith in GOD produced action.***

We know that faith without action is dead, and therefore true faith in God is always accompanied by good works and desire to please Him. Rahab's exhibited this in her quest to see her whole family come under God's protection and be saved from God's judgement by abandoning their fellowship and embraced that of the Israelites. It was a risk that could have caused her life if found out by

the king. This is a true conversion in action.

***Rahab's faith in GOD produced obedience.***

In Joshua 2:21b, she obeyed the spies by tying the scarlet on the window. The instruction was quite simple and basic and could be overlooked.

What would have happened if she did not do as she was told. Many times, I question simple instructions given to me simply because of how such instructions sound or the person they are coming from.

Humility is all that it takes to be obedient. To put my faith to work, I must fight to save my family and friends from the coming judgement of God.

***How many of my family members are saved because of me?***

If I am accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?

Rahab's family were all saved by the scarlet cord in the window. In the same way, all Christians are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. If Rahab's family had refused to come into her home, the scarlet cord would not have saved them. Let's continue to live faithfully for Christ.

***Rahab's faith in GOD was rewarded***

**Joshua 6:20 -25a** Rahab and her family were spared of God's judgement. Rahab became a part of the nation of Israel and, according to Matthew 1:5, Rahab married a Jewish man by the name Salmon, and actually became the great, great grandmother of King David and a relative of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No doubt there were many women in Jericho who were more moral than Rahab, yet they suffered God's righteous judgment and went without history. Like Rahab, I must exercise the faith that will imprint me in God's Hall of Fame of faith.



## DAY 32 WE ARE NOT ALONE

### *Hebrews 11:32*

Let me even talk a little about the faith of these men, hopefully it will impact your faith in God at this time.

Samson - was destined to rescue Israel from the philistine, but had a strong desire for the enemy, to the extent of making one his wife. Eventually he traced his steps to fulfill destiny (**Judges 13-16**)

Gideon - Reduced forces to 300 and conquered the midianites as a mighty man of God but started off with excuses why he could not do Gods will (**Judges 6,7**)  
Barak - Instructed by Deborah to fight battle but doubted Gods command and eventually lost the victory glory to a woman who is courageous (**Judges 4:6- end**)

Jephthah - driven out by brothers because of illegitimacy but begged by Israel to come fight Ammonites (**Judges 11:1-12:7**)

David - youngest son of Jesse, Ancestor of Jesus, Israel greatest & most loved king, killed Goliath, lived in the wilderness like a fugitive, sinned with Bathsheba, regularly confessed his sin, wrote 73 psalms, declared a man after God's heart for his reverence for God (**1 Sam 16:11-13, 17:1-55, 11 Sam 11,12, 1 king 2:1-4, 1 chronicles 11:1-25**)

Samuel - was son of Elkanah & Hannah, his birth, the result of special providence, brought up by Eli, anointed by Saul & David as kings, last of the judges and first of prophets after Moses, believed to be author of 1 & 11 books of Samuel.

These people could have broken the bridge of faith and refused to go on the journey God was taking them; either by circumstance, environment, complacency, and shortsightedness etc .But they became Heroes of Faith today by stepping out in FAITH.

I was once like them, always showing up in church/activities as if that is

cumulative to entering heaven yet living double life with unconfessed sins for years, looking at my status/years of discipleship, considering the shame of confession - But alas, when i remember my first love as a disciple, i knew i was not living in faith but just deceiving myself & if I die, I am going nowhere so I had to confess and get help and my Faith is alive now..

**John 10:7-10:** How about you? Where your faith now and where is it taking you to? It doesn't matter where your faith may be now, you're not alone. Are you living life to the fullest? I am in greener pastures ever since I took my faith to the next level. Don't allow the thief (Satan) to steal your joy, to kill and destroy your faith. God need your faith now.Talk to someone today.

## FAITH MAKES THE IMPOSSIBLE REAL 1

## DAY 33

### *Hebrews 11:33*

For me this title holds so true. My experiences are full of examples when I worried, was sick, despaired, thought all was lost, didn't see a way out, or desired the seemingly unreachable. In many of these instances, God amazed me by how he came true for me. Sometimes from the unexpected, sometimes quickly, sometimes delayed, sometimes different from what I asked. But in each instance, I saw God's power at work. My faith, prayers and appeals always paid off. When we want to give up, God rises up.

Today's scripture points us to the acts of faith by some of the great heroes of faith in the Bible. These men, despite being in challenging or seemingly impossible situations, remained faithful and stood their ground. Their faith was accompanied by great feats. They made the impossible real. By their faith they were overcomers. They refused to compromise on righteousness, and they glorified God with their lives.

I remember my impossible long drawn battle to quit smoking and quitting effortlessly after finding Christ. I remember losing everything and seeing God bring everything back, and more. I remember being discouraged about the fruitlessness of my Bible Talk over an extended period despite our efforts and God bringing 3 conversions in 2 months. I remember the countless times I

refused to compromise in the office, being sidelined for several years, and later being greatly appreciated for what I stood for. My list of faith victories is endless.

What faith victories do you remember? We all have great victory stories to share, but sometimes we forget our past victories, and worry and fret about the present. We forget who we are in the face of challenges and let our faith be shaken. **Isaiah 7:9** says - If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. Reflect on this.

We should remember always that God wants to give us great victories in every area of our lives through faith. These great feats of faith we see in the Bible can be real in our lives also. Whether it is with our health, finances, jobs, businesses, school admission, exams, relationship with God, relationship with others, marriage, parenting, sin, evangelism and fruitfulness, and so on, God's desire is that we are victorious in the end.

#### TO DO:

Meditate and memorize **Psalm 144: 1-2**, and start appreciating how God brings victories to your life. Reflect on and write out as many of your past faith victories as you can, and offer prayers of thanksgiving often.

Pray daily for your present challenges and trust God to give you victory like before.

## DAY 34

### FAITH MAKES THE IMPOSSIBLE REAL 2

#### Heb. 11:34

Nearly every epic or super hero movie is filled with heroism, valour, courage and 'glory', so they say. To achieve these box office hits, movie producers distort real life stories and make up all others, introduce natural elements in unnatural ways, get the super heroes to do the impossible like survive burning flames, beat light in speed, escape countless ambushes, get weak on probably kryptonite and bounce back to rout the evil lord and his cohorts.

We get hooked on the idea of being able to do that someday from infancy

till we outgrow it on realizing it was intended to be a 90-minute surreal thrill produced to entertain. Film tricks now attractively called Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) have always been the means to this fantasy.

In this curve of the hall of faith verse 34, we read events that could effortlessly fit in the part of our consciousness we consider surreal because the world has aided it greatly and Satan is working hard at it. (Eph 6:16). Skeptics constantly question the veracity of these 'real facts' with no proof to the contrary! What a negated faith!

As I think about the impossibility of dousing the fury of the flames of passionate desires that tempt me daily; escaping the sword and lethal ambushes of persecutions overt and covert that call my faith to question at work and life; turning my weaknesses and character flaws to strength and encouragement; winning over those who oppose my faith and seeing them become disciples of Jesus, a challenge is raised that I can disregard to my peril or accept and aspire to by faith.

We are in no different reality than the ordinary ancients about whom we read. Fantasy requires aloofness and offers an effortless, lazy, and futile hope. Faith in God requires commitment, trust and hard work but offers hope for this life, eternity and divinity. Can reality be any more than these?

**Challenge: Read Luke 17:1-6. Make that brother or sister yourself! Don't excuse or malign yourself. Forgive yourself first then do the same to others!**

**Psalm 144:10, 2 Kings 6:16-18, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Acts 16:25-40**

## A BETTER RESURRECTION

## DAY 35

#### Hebrews 11:35

Resurrection is the concept of coming back to life after death.

This devotional topic suggests that there are 2 types of resurrections.

**Hebrews 11:35** where this term occurs in NIV and KJV both talk of a better resurrection but the New Living Translation and the English Standard both allude to rising to a better life.

The latter translations form the focus of this devotional since they serve to assuage the inner insecurities of man – what happens after we die? Have you wondered what would happen to you when you die? Some claim that death is final – no more existence, no more consciousness – the end.

Others claim from accounts of “near death” experiences that they seem to be entering a warm intense glow, or that they would meet their departed loved ones.

So why do we believe in resurrection?

Jesus himself underwent resurrection

### **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**

Jesus died for our sins and was buried

On the 3rd day, he rose up from the dead

The resurrection of Christ connotes victory over death; it connotes victory over sin, it connotes the deity and permanence of Christ

There are biblical instances of people being raised from the dead:

### **1 Kings 17:22-24**

Old Testament miracle of resurrection through Prophet Elijah

Elijah showed empathy and love towards the grief of his friends

The miracle accentuated the belief among witnesses in the power of God to do the impossible

### **John 11:40-45**

New Testament miracle of resurrection by Jesus Christ

Christ showed empathy and love towards the grief of his friends and relatives of Lazarus. Once again, the miracle accentuated the belief among witnesses in the power of God to do the impossible

Now returning to the focus of this devotional – resurrection leading to a better life

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14**

Jesus died and rose again

In like manner God will raise up disciples that die

Is this not encouraging? So, no grieving when disciples die

We need not fear death since after you die, God will raise you up

What manner of Resurrection?

### **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**

On the last day, the disciples that have died will be raised from the dead

The resurrected disciples and the living ones will shed our perishable bodies and become immortal – no more sickness, no more pain, no more death. This is solace for disciples with terminal diseases, disciples in extreme deprivations

This means that living the life of a disciple is not in vain. This is a better resurrection. How do friends and relatives become part of this better resurrection?

### **Romans 6:1-4**

At the point of baptism, a person undergoes death (to sin), burial (immersion in water) and resurrection (up out of the water) and starts a new life

So new life guaranteed for Christians while living and even after death

## **FAITH: HUMILIATION AND PAIN**

## **DAY 36**

### **Hebrews 11:36**

It was a bright Tuesday afternoon, and the staff meeting had just ended. The atmosphere was buzzing with so much excitement and fellowship after some faith inspiring victory sharing and lessons. Barely a year before, my wife and I had just returned to Lagos from the mission field, victorious and full of dreams to take things higher. Dreams are drivers, and in the mission field, you are never short of them. We had come to Lagos to renew our faith and refresh our dreams, and the experience so far though not without its struggles had been so good.

On this fateful day, we got the shocker of our lives. We were to step down as evangelist and women's ministry leader for family reasons. Emotionally, we were shattered, distraught, confused, and years after, traumatized and pained.

How does one move on after such a sudden end? How does one pick up again?

### **Gen. 37:2-36**

Joseph had God-inspired dream that would change his life and that of his

family from grass to grace, sojourners to territory owners, with him at the center – kingdom ruler. Wow, what a positive and wonderful horizon to life. But this story is about to change (verse 18-20); and in verses 28 and 38, they sold him to slavery. What became of the dream, the aspiration and desire? How would Joseph move on? **Gen. 39:11-20**. Though the situation got worse; Joseph's attitude was that of surrender. In this low moment of life, spanning seventeen years, he committed himself to God. In the throes of frustration that could engender withdrawal and depression, he focused on God. Note how many times the phrase "the Lord was with Joseph..." in the whole of **Gen. 39** (read). Joseph could have been bitter but fought for righteousness with faith in God.

For my wife and I, this was the same kind of road we had to walk for about eight years. We moved from regional leaders to not qualify to even lead a Bible Talk. This remained the lowest point of our spiritual life. We moved from average income earner to living below poverty line. By His grace, we struggled but fought hard for the survival of our faith and family with a focus on God. **Genesis 41:1-52**.

The journey of life can be rough. Joseph, in spite of the odds, walked faithfully and God raised him to become the next in command to Pharaoh, King of Egypt. The dream was fulfilled and in **Gen. 42:6**, his family bowed down to him. His attitude all along is summed up in **Gen. 45:1-7**. He saw God as the architect of his life, not man.

In my story, I came back into the full-time ministry nine years later and recently appointed as elder to serve his Church.  
Walk faithfully with God, He will work out your life!

**Dan. 6 Jer. 20:2, Gen. 39:20-21, Jer. 37:15-21, 2 Chr. 36:16**

## DAY 37

## FAITH: A HIGH PRICE TO PAY

**Hebrews 11:37**

This passage brings to mind images of men dressed in orange jump suits with

black-clad, masked executors behind each of them. Who can easily forget the brutal killings of Christians by ISIS in Libya, Syria, Iraq and many other parts of the Middle East? These mindless and barbaric executions devastated families and shocked the whole world.

For centuries, many followers of Christ have paid a high price for their beliefs; many were martyred for their faith. The Bible is full of examples of godly people who suffered and were persecuted for their convictions. Zechariah was stoned to death for calling people to account for their sins. In the time of Elijah, prophets were put to death because of their zeal for God. Countless men and women of faith were threatened with death; some were severely mistreated and tortured while others were killed.

Sadly, we live in a world filled with evil and wickedness. Having great faith does not guarantee a hassle-free life. Being a Christian does not exempt you and me from pain, abuse, rejection, ridicule, suffering, sorrow or even death. When suffering happens in your life, do you find yourself asking "Why me?" Does it feel as if God has deserted you, and perhaps, forgotten you? Do you question God for allowing pain and hardship in your life?

Rather than asking "Why me?" We should be asking "Why not me?" If we expect pain, suffering and hardship as part of life in this world, we will not be shocked and unprepared when it happens (**1 Peter 4:12-19**). In times of pain, we can take comfort in the knowledge that God is sovereign and is in control of the affairs of the universe.

God understands our weaknesses, pains, fears and disappointments; he will not let us suffer or be tempted more than we can bear (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

God can relate with our weaknesses (**Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:14-16**). He has promised never to leave us or forsake us (**Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 13:5b**). He is constantly interceding on our behalf (**Hebrews 7:24-25**).

Persecution, trials and sufferings should draw us nearer to God. We can confidently trust him to get us out of the situation.

**2Chronicles 24:21, 1Kings 19:10, James 5:10-11, 1 Corinthians 4:9-13.**



DAY 38

WORTHY OF BETTER PLACE

**Hebrews 11:38**

Teachers in Africa are examples of unsung heroes. With little available resources, they have managed to produce renowned people who have blessed the world. Qatar is hosting the FIFA world cup in 2022. Some poor immigrants doing the construction job have lost their lives in active service. Come 2022, nothing will be said about these fallen heroes.

I have seen something akin to the scenario mentioned above in the bible. Men and women of faith who often put their lives on the line did not get the attention they deserved. They were harmless, peace-loving, full of integrity, law abiding, and godly. As honorable as they were, they wandered the earth destitute and perhaps like fugitives. The greatest of these heroes was Jesus who often did not have a place to sleep (**Luke 9:58**)

**John 1:10-12**

This scripture above connects with the creation story in Genesis 1. The most important personality in human history was not recognized by the world. To make matters worse, even the Jews (Jesus people) did not give him the recognition he deserved.

Jesus was a great King, who laid aside his majesty, took up willingly the project of saving mankind. The world was blind not to see the anointed one of God. Instead, they ganged up against him and killed him.

This attitude is displayed in many areas of life. When plants produce a great harvest, the glory goes to fertilizer and technological development, we forget to praise the Lord of the harvest.

How many of us still remember the late evangelist Wole Adegbola who gave his all to the service of the Lord and was gunned down in cold blood years ago in Lagos? A man like him deserves a better place in the history of the ICOC Nigeria.

Let us identify with disciples in war-threatened zones who are striving to please God even with the constant threat of death. Let us look at some of our leaders in the West African Churches. They have sacrificed for the gospel. Let us be praying for them and spur them to keep pressing forward in faith.

THE PROMISE

DAY 39

**Hebrews 11:39**

I made a promise to myself when I signed up to be a contributor to this year's devotional that I would make effort to finish my write-up and submit within the allotted time. It would be nice for me to say that I fulfilled this promise I made to myself, this however - is not the case (sad to say). Today is one day after the deadline for submission and I am still battling with my thoughts.

Promises are easy to make, probably because they don't require immediate fulfillment. It is a verbal commitment which we make to one another or self, agreeing to do or not to do something in the future. It is the commitment one spouse makes to the other when they say to each other "till death do us part". It is made when a friend says to the other "NOTHING will come between our friendship. It will stand the test of time". It is made when the politician - before he is voted into office - pledges to turn things around for the good of the masses whose votes he seeks. It is made during cost-counting - before baptism - when we pledge to live and die (if need be) for Jesus - as 'LORD' over our lives - and that we would not give up on this race called discipleship - come what may - till death takes us home. And I am sure that you - reading this devotional right now - has made one or more promises either to self or someone else this year. It could be a promise to be more devoted to God this year, to grow in a character weakness, to lose weight, to help someone in need, etc.

Promise in itself is a good thing because it gives ground for feeling hopeful about the future. The problem with human promise though is that it is more often than not broken due in largely to the fallibility and inconsistency of human nature.

Thankfully, God is not like us humans! Borrowing from the words of Balaam "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?" **Numbers 23:19. NIV. (FAST FORWARD!)**

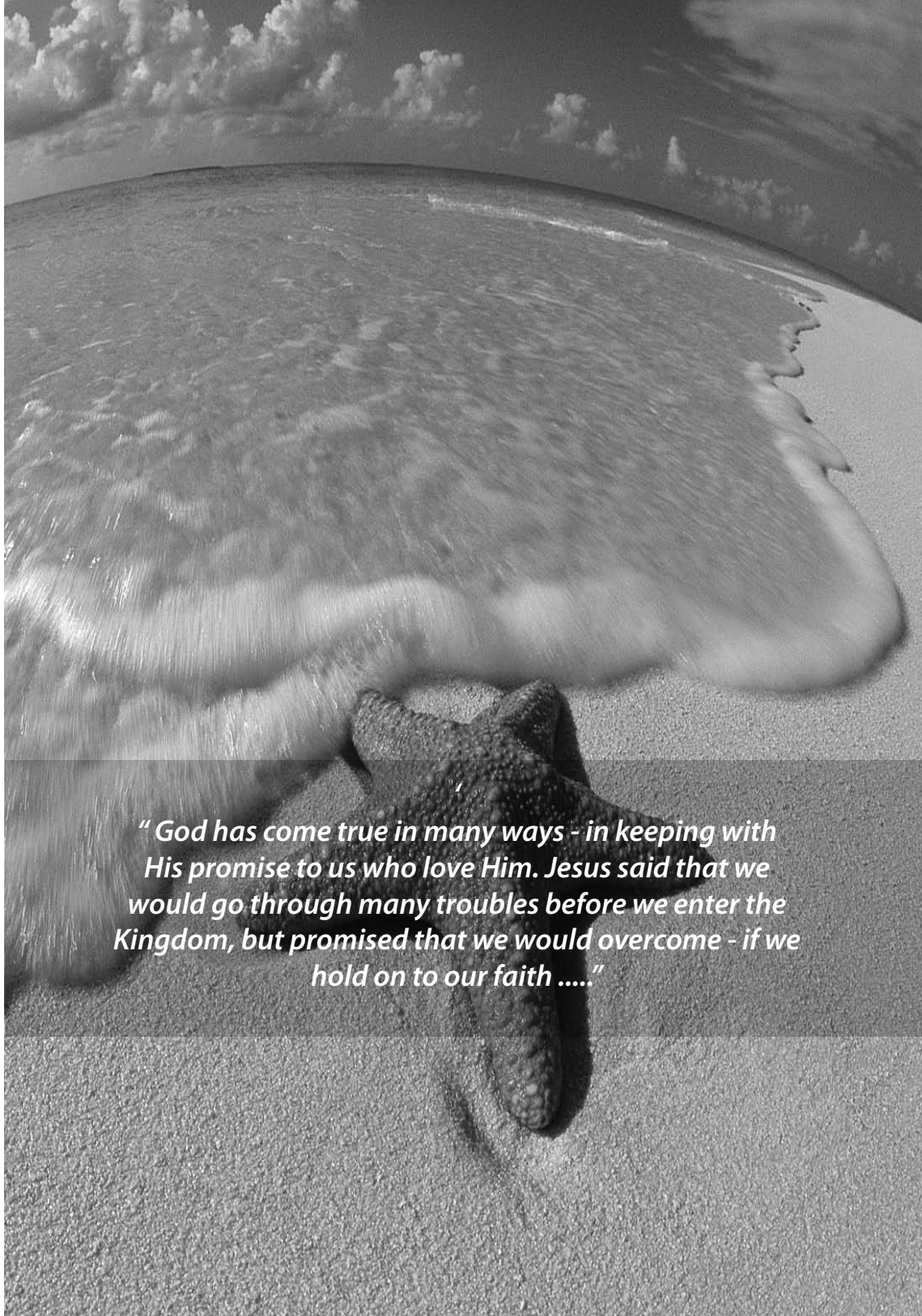
As I sat patiently - pondering on the best way to put my thoughts together - how to begin, what to write, how to write it, what grammar to use, tenses,

etc., my mind swirled and churned up all kinds of differing and incoherent perspectives. After sitting for close to four plus hours with no idea of how to make it all come together I turned - in frustration - to God in prayer. As I prayed and poured out my frustration - asking God to help me, I reminded Him what Jesus said in **Mathew 7:7-8**; that I should ask, seek and knock and it shall be given to me (paraphrased). That was when it dawned on me - that I was actually laying claim to one of God's many promises in His Word - the Bible. And you know what? God answered! My thoughts aligned - clear and coherent, and words began to flow out of me. All I did to receive was offer up a little prayer in faith, and God - Who promises and never fails - answered my prayers.

As I read through this - eleventh chapter - of the Book of Hebrews, I am amazed and inspired once again by the stories of great exploits and courageous acts of men and women who lived - thousands of years ago - by raw faith - motivated and inspired by God's presence and promises. The interesting thing worthy of note in this verse is that some of these great men and women of faith did not receive the fulfillment of some of God's promises to them and their ancestors during their lifetime. Not all made it out alive from Egypt - en route to the promised land, not all who left Egypt alive made it into the promised land, and not all were alive when the promised Messiah was born in Bethlehem in the land of Judiah, etc. Yet they all had one thing in common - they walked with God and, by faith, believed that He would fulfill what He had promised.

The question I ask myself - which I would like you to ask yourself also - is, 'how many of God's promises have come true in my life? To be honest, many have come true, and I believe you acknowledge the same too. God has come true in many ways - in keeping with His promise to us who love Him. Jesus said that we would go through many troubles before we enter the Kingdom, but promised that we would overcome - if we hold on to our faith - because He has overcome the world. I have gone through many trials - intense sometimes - (and I know you have too) - and we overcame. More are still on the way, and we shall overcome - if we hold unswervingly to our faith - because He promised that we will not be alone in our struggles and suffering, and we are not! He sent us His Holy Spirit - to be our help and comforter.

The great men and women of old did great exploits for God because of their



*"God has come true in many ways - in keeping with His promise to us who love Him. Jesus said that we would go through many troubles before we enter the Kingdom, but promised that we would overcome - if we hold on to our faith ...."*

faith in God's promises. As we remember God's promise of eternal home for us who believe, let us resolve deep in our hearts to 'Match Forward with Faith' this year and beyond, doing great exploits with God and for God, and also working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

## DAY 40

## GOD HAS A BETTER PLAN

**Hebrews 11:40**

**Romans 3: 25 – 26**

Plan - /noun/ - a detailed proposal for doing or achieving something.

Synonyms: scheme, proposal, formula, arrangement, schedule, system, method, etc.

Have you ever wanted something so badly and come up with your plans and strategies to make it happen, only for it to fall through? And then a few days, weeks, months or years down the line, you breathe a sigh of relief for not getting that same thing? Chew on that for a while and then skip to **Jeremiah 29: 11**.

I am so grateful that I have a God who has plans for me. And we all know what it takes to make a plan. It is a deliberate, intentional and thoughtful act, culminating in action! God, in the grand scheme of the universe, makes time to make plans concerning me. And these are not puny plans.

God says his plans will prosper and not harm us. I know sometimes I feel like asking, 'Really?' (Remember those plans that fell through?). Each time, God's plan for my life has proven to be so much better than anything I could have come up with. This happened on both personal and professional levels. Why? Because God sees the beginning from the end.

Let's look at examples from the Bible of God having a better plan:

Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves for covering – God clothed them fully

The Israelites were willing to go back to Egypt – God took them to the promised land

Gideon thought he would win with thousands – God gave him victory with 300. The world on a highway to destruction – God gave us His only son.

No matter what plans have fallen through for us, or come through even, God always, always has a better plan. So, let us not be moved by all that is going on around us.

Does this mean we should not plan for the future? Absolutely not! **Pr. 16:3; Ps. 37:5 – 6**

*God's ultimate plan is to have us spend eternity with him. What's yours?*





The 7th Edition of the 40 Days devotional has the theme forward by faith.  
This theme inspired the four sub themes in the booklet

The content of this years Power Series was inspired by the Forward by faith concept and the content of Hebrews 11. Forty Daily devotionals were written using the content of each verse in Hebrews 11.

Having everything in life doesn't last. Life is never perfect. We go through storms. Sometimes we may ask why do bad things have to happen? God why? Never doubt during the trials and tribulations. Just trust God and lean on him. Spend time in prayer and his word. Invest in your faith now and through life storms. This years booklet is designed to help you.

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