

Tough Faith for Tough Times Series:

How to Develop Strong Faith

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- We are focusing on a series of messages that will strengthen your faith. Everyone needs a strong faith.
- Things are different now than they were even a couple of years ago. The statistics for stress related illness and dependence on drugs is going through the roof.
- Strong faith will get you through the tough times and make you who you are meant to be.
- Many Christians come to church and have a form of religion but don't have a strong faith.
- We don't want you to survive – but to thrive!

Romans 12:3 (NKJV) *“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”*

- God has given every man a measure of faith.
- You are born again by hearing of salvation. Then faith comes into your heart and you accept it and are saved. From that moment on, you have faith in your heart.
- One obstacle we have to overcome in building our faith is thinking that somehow it is in God's hands to give us more faith instead of in our hands.
- Many say “I wish I had more faith” looking for someone to give them something from the outside. Even the tone is complaining and of a victim. Someone who is not in charge or responsible.

Luke 17:5 (NKJV) *“And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”*

- When confronted with how many times the disciples were commanded to forgive, they replied “increase our faith!”
- Jesus replied that you don't need more faith, even if it is the size of a mustard seed; you need to use the faith you have.
- You don't need more faith, you just need to grow and develop what you have.
- If we did an MRI throughout the congregation to see everyone's faith level, some of you would have a very weak underdeveloped faith.
- Look at a young man with muscles compared to someone without muscles. Both had muscles but one of them had bigger ones and could lift more because his were developed.
- Even though the second man read Arnold Schwarzenegger's book on body building, his muscles still weren't as big as the first man's. Why? Because he didn't apply his knowledge.
- Some read the Bible and bring it to church weekly but don't have a strong faith. Why? Because they haven't taken the Word and developed the muscle of faith that God has given them.
- The Bible tells us of different levels of faith.
- LITTLE FAITH:

Mathew 6:30 (NKJV) *“Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”*

- Some have “little” faith (worrying, being afraid of bills, what to wear, etc). They come to church, even reading the bible but still worrying.
- GREAT FAITH:

Mathew 8:10 (NKJV) *“When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!”*

- Some have “great” faith. Their faith muscle is developed into a great faith muscle.
- This passage tells of a story of a Centurion with a sick servant. He said “I am a man of authority so I understand it. You have authority over sickness and death. All I need is a word from you for him to be healed”.
- This is a man who understood that he didn’t need Jesus to come to his house, to perform a special service, or to sing a song. He understood that just a word from Jesus was enough.
- This man needed to see nothing. All he needed was to hear a word and that is all it took to know it was done.
- We want your faith to be strong enough that when you are in your darkest hour your faith will carry you through it all.
- Psalms 107:20 tells us that His WORD is what healed them.
- NO FAITH:

Mark 4:40 (NKJV) *“But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”*

- This does not mean they had none to begin with, it means they aren’t using any of what they have.
- Luke 8:22-25 is the story of the disciples out on a stormy sea while Jesus was asleep in the bow. When the disciples panicked, Jesus asked them, “Where is the faith I gave you?”
- Some panic when the tough times come – like the disciples did during the storm.
- Mark 5:34 is the story of the woman with the issue of blood. She kept telling herself, “If I could just get to Jesus I will be healed”. Jesus knew someone had touched him with their faith because the power to heal went out of Him.
- People come to worship and listen to the Word – but their lives are not being changed because they have not made the decision to develop a strong vibrant faith.
- In the story of the woman, Jesus said, “daughter your faith has made you well”.
- Her faith didn’t heal her. Her developed faith tapped into the healing power that is always there and ready to be given.
- How do we develop our faith?
Romans 10:17 (NKJV) *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*
- Faith develops through - and only by - the Word of God; hearing, studying, and getting it on the inside of you.
- The level of the Word you get into you is like bread to your soul.
Mathew 4:4 (NKJV) *“But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”*
- Just as your physical man lives by the bread (food) you put into it, your spirit man lives by the “Word of God” you put into it.
- Just like you need bread for your body, you must have the Word for your spirit.
- You must nourish your spirit so you will grow by the Word of God.
- Joshua 1:8 tells us to meditate on the Word.
- This is like a cow chewing cud to get all the nourishment she can. She swallows and brings it up again and again to get all that is possible out of it.
- We are to do the same with the Word we read. We are to study it and meditate on it to get the most out of it.
- Faith doesn’t just come by hearing with our physical ears. Our spiritual ears must be opened so that the Word we hear goes down into our spirit.
- How are our ears opened? By walking, surrendered and being obedient to God. By talking to Him every day and having spiritual hunger to hear Him speak.
- Then when He speaks something you have never seen before through the Word, you come unglued.
- Your spiritual hearing is opened for specific points that become the nourishment we need. Hearing with our spiritual ears is so exciting.
- Faith is an explosion of God’s word in your life when what you read and hear finally comes to the point that you “get it”.
- Next week we will discuss how to act on it – activating your faith.