

LIVE LIKE JESUS

STRENGTHEN FAITH

**Learning and deepening my understanding of God and His ways,
and growing to trust Him in all circumstances.**

- Welcome, Overview
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- Closing Prayer

This Week's Key Verse to Think About, Soak in, and Memorize:

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1

More Resources to Explore!

See the Spiritual Growth Section of the Twin Cities Church website:

www.twincities.church/spiritual-growth-live2

Click on the “Strengthen Faith” picture to find many helpful resources.

STRENGTHEN FAITH

Faith is the very ground we stand on as Christians. It's how we first connect with God and receive His amazing gift of salvation – that's what Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us. But it doesn't stop there! Faith is also the way we're called to live every single day, trusting that God's got our backs, guiding us and taking care of us.

When we actively work on strengthening our faith, it's like we're not just getting to know God better, but we're also equipping ourselves with this incredible inner strength to handle what life throws our way. It brings a deep-down peace and confidence, knowing that no matter what happens, we can trust in God's goodness and His promises. As our faith grows, it's like we develop a certainty that God is in control, is always with us, and is reliable in every situation. Plus, a strong faith? Well, that's a beautiful reflection of a real, deep connection with God.

So, what are some of the awesome things that happen when we strengthen our faith?

- **Stepping Out Boldly:** Imagine having the confidence to take those big leaps of obedience, knowing that God is right there with you, giving you the strength you need. That's what a strong faith does! Just like Joshua 1:9 says, we can be brave because God is with us.
- **Making God Smile:** Hebrews 11:6 tells us something powerful: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Our faith is a way of honoring God, acknowledging His incredible power and authority.
- **Finding Our Center:** Life can feel like a rollercoaster, right? But faith gives us this solid foundation, an inner peace that doesn't depend on what's going on around us. When we trust in God's never-ending love and His control over everything, we feel anchored, even when the storms of life are raging.
- **Living with Hope in Our Hearts:** Faith helps us look beyond what we can see right now to the amazing future God has promised. It's like fuel for our hope, giving us a reason to live with an eternal perspective.
- **Getting Closer to God:** Think of faith as the language of our relationship with God. The more we trust Him, the deeper and more intimate our connection becomes. We start to understand His character in a whole new way.

The Bible talks a lot about how important faith is in our daily lives:

- **Hebrews 11:1** *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."*

This highlights that expectant and unwavering nature of faith, doesn't it?

- **Romans 10:17** *"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."*

This reminds us of where faith comes from. Spending time in God's Word, letting His promises and truths sink into our hearts, is key to strengthening our faith.

- **James 1:2-4** *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*

Tough times actually help our faith grow stronger, leading to perseverance and maturity.

- **Mark 9:23** *Jesus says, “If you can? Everything is possible for one who believes.”*

This is such a powerful reminder of the limitless possibilities when we truly believe!

Let's look at an incredible example of unwavering belief: the Roman Centurion.

This story in the New Testament is just amazing. This Roman Centurion, a military leader, showed this unbelievable trust in Jesus' authority and power. His story really shines a light on how we can grow our own faith by recognizing God's sovereignty and trusting Him completely.

Matthew 8:5-13: *“When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.” Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” But the centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very moment.”*

Think about this for a moment. This Gentile military leader understood authority so well that he recognized Jesus' complete authority over sickness and disease. He didn't need to see Jesus physically there; he just believed that Jesus' word alone was enough. Jesus Himself was blown away by the depth of his faith, holding it up as an example for everyone else.

The centurion's faith gives us such a powerful model to follow. He believed Jesus had the power to heal without even being physically present. He understood that Jesus' word carried absolute authority. This is such a key part of faith – recognizing Jesus' complete control over everything. He also didn't try to tell Jesus *how* to perform the miracle or when it should happen. He simply trusted that Jesus could act in whatever way He saw fit. And on top of all that, he showed incredible humility, even with his position of power. He knew he wasn't worthy to have Jesus in his home and showed deep respect for Jesus' holiness.

Just like the centurion, we're often called to trust God in situations where we can't see the outcome, where things feel completely out of our hands. In so many ways, we can relate to his worries and his need for help, whether it's about our health, our relationships, our finances, or anything else that challenges us. We all want to have that kind of strong faith that the centurion demonstrated.

So, how can we cultivate that unwavering belief?

- **Recognizing Jesus' Authority:** Just like the centurion, we need to truly believe that Jesus has authority over every single part of our lives. This means trusting that God is in control, even when things feel chaotic and uncertain.
- **Trusting Jesus Completely:** The centurion trusted Jesus' word without needing any proof. We're called to have that same kind of trust, believing God's promises even when we can't see the results right away.
- **Having Faith in God's Timing:** It's so easy to want God to act on our timeline and in the way we think is best. But the centurion's example teaches us to trust in God's perfect timing and His ways, even when they're different from what we expect.

Isn't it just remarkable to think that a Roman Centurion, of all people, would have such profound faith and trust in Jesus? It really speaks volumes about this man's heart, but also about the incredible power of Jesus, who is so deserving of our trust and faith.

We're going to be exploring the spiritual practice **Strengthen Faith** together. As we do, this journey has the potential to deepen our trust in God and bring us into a closer, more intimate relationship with Him.

Just imagine what it would be like if you, like the Roman Centurion, trusted Jesus' authority over every area of your life – knowing that He can heal, restore, and transform even the most difficult situations. Picture yourself walking confidently in faith, resting in God's promises, and facing challenges with a deep sense of peace because you know that God is completely trustworthy. As you actively strengthen your faith, you'll experience a deeper, more personal relationship with God and a greater sense of peace and purpose in your life.

Strengthening your faith will take intention and effort. But as you continue to practice this, you'll see your life move from doubt towards trust, from fear to confidence, and from trying to do it all on your own to relying on the One who is always faithful.

GROUP STUDY: Strengthen Faith

Begin with Prayer and Silence

Gather as a group and say a quick prayer to invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time together. Then spend a moment in silence, expressing a desire to hear from God.

Explore the Scriptures

1. As we've said, faith is foundational to our Christian life. Let's read Ephesians 2:8-9. Think about the moment you first understood and accepted God's grace through faith. How has your understanding of faith grown since then? What are some ways you see this foundational faith impacting your daily decisions and perspectives now?
2. Let's read Matthew 8:8. What aspects of the centurion's response demonstrate his unwavering trust in Jesus? Can you recall a time in your own life when you had to trust God's "word" or His promises, even when you couldn't see the outcome? What did that experience teach you about God's authority and your own faith?
3. Let's read James 1:3-4. How do you think God uses life circumstances to strengthen our faith? What specific area of your life do you feel God is inviting you to trust Him more deeply? What is one practical step you could take this week to actively strengthen your faith in that area?

Read Through the Practice Together

Read through the practice on the next page together, and then answer these questions:

- Do you feel you understand the practice? Do you have any questions about it?
- How do you feel about practicing this, any concerns?

Share Your Personal Action Plan with the Group

I will practice this on (day and time) _____

in this place (location) _____

Close in Prayer

PRACTICE: Strengthen Faith

One of the most effective practices for strengthening our faith is meditating on God's Word. Just as the centurion's faith was rooted in his understanding of authority, our faith is strengthened by meditating on Scripture and reflecting on God's promises. When we actively engage with God's Word, His truth shapes our hearts and minds, building trust in His goodness and faithfulness.

Scripture Meditation

1. Choose a passage – Start with a Bible verse or passage that speaks to God's promises or His faithfulness. Examples include Philippians 4:6-7, Isaiah 41:10, or Romans 8:28.
2. Reflect on God's character – Ask yourself questions like, "What does this passage teach me about who God is?" "How does this reveal His trustworthiness?"
3. Apply to your life – Consider how the passage applies to your current circumstances. In what areas of your life do you need to trust God more?
4. Pray and surrender – After reflecting on God's Word, pray, asking God to increase your faith and help you trust Him in the areas where you struggle.

Example Exercise:

Read Matthew 8:5-13 (Centurion's Story). Spend time reflecting on how the centurion trusted Jesus' word alone, and ask God to help you trust Him in a specific area of your life. Write down any thoughts or feelings that arise and pray through them.

Taking Thoughts Captive

Another helpful exercise for strengthening faith involves thought correction, which focuses on challenging negative or limiting thoughts and replacing them with truth. This exercise is particularly useful for those struggling with doubt or fear.

2 Corinthians 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

1. Identify negative beliefs – Pay attention to thoughts that indicate a lack of trust, such as "I don't think God will help me in this situation" or "This problem is too big for God to solve."
2. Challenge the beliefs – Compare these thoughts with the truth found in Scripture. For example, replace "This problem is too big for God" with "With God, all things are possible"
3. Replace with truth – Reframe your thoughts with God's promises, such as "God works all things together for good for those who love Him" - Romans 8:28. Consider memorizing key verses that ground you in God's truth.
4. Speak faith over fear – Practice repeating words of faith and trust in God, replacing fear with confidence in His provision and sovereignty.