

CITY CENTRAL CHURCH WEEK 3 DEVOTIONAL

January 16 | Learning to Walk by Faith, Part 1

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7

When God tells you the same thing three separate times, it's time to get with it. “The just shall live by faith” (See Habakuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11). This is not a suggestion for theological debate, it's His will for your life. Clearly, God has made faith the only way to live! No alternative is offered. “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” (Hebrews 11:6).

Let's take a moment and consider some questions arising from this life-transforming truth:

- Who are “the just”? Paul writes, “Know that a person is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 2:16). Justification (just-as-if-I'd-never-sinned) can't be earned, it's a free gift that comes by faith. If you have placed your trust in Christ then you are fully accepted in God's eyes. How good is that?
- What is “walking”? Paul says, “We walk by faith and not by sight.” Walking requires that you get up and start moving. You can't just sit around aimlessly, waiting for the rapture. Walking involves motivation (you're moved by a purpose), direction (you've chosen a destination, a goal to reach), motion (you're committed to mobilizing your energy and resources in the pursuit of your God-given destination and purpose). To walk by faith you must be engaged in consistent, forward movement intended to bring you into God's destiny for your life.

Consider: Are you engaged in consistent, forward movement in your walk with the Lord? What excuses are you currently making to keep yourself stagnant? In your fast this week, exert yourself to action...hear His voice and obey immediately.

January 17 | Learning to Walk by Faith, Part 2

“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” Mark 9:24

Here is another question to consider: What is “walking by sight”? (See 2 Corinthians 5:7). It's living your life based on how things look to the natural eye. It's deciding and acting according to your perceptions and circumstances rather than God's Word. It's being dictated to by your feelings and thoughts. Your thoughts and feelings are yours! Examine them and don't let them hijack you. Use your spirit-controlled temperament to bring them under control. Too often, we are sandwiched between faith and doubt in a “catch-22” between what our transformed spirit says and what our carnal mind says.

One day a distraught father brought his son to Jesus for healing. Jesus told him, “Everything is possible for one who believes” (Mark 9:23). At that point the boy's father said, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” At times we experience both faith and doubt. This man was honest about his doubts, yet Jesus still worked a miracle for him. If he had needed correction, Jesus would have corrected him. If his faith was not genuine, the Lord would have known it. But Jesus accepted his declaration of faith, despite his doubts.

CITY CENTRAL CHURCH WEEK 3 DEVOTIONAL

There are three lessons here for us:

- Don't be afraid to acknowledge your doubts.
- Don't let your doubts overrule your faith. God's Word in the matter is God's will for you; stand on it.
- Hand your doubts over to the Lord and say, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" How long does it take to learn to walk by faith? A lifetime!

Consider: The power of faith is very real. Many people say, "I believe God, but..." If you find your faith lacking, ask for Him to grow it in you and you repent of unbelief.

January 18 | Learning to Walk by Faith, Part 3

"Faith comes from hearing the message...through the word." Romans 10:17

What does it mean to "walk by faith"? (2 Corinthians 5:7). It's radically different from walking by sight, reason, emotion, or intellect. It calls you to live above these things. It enables you to enter the realm of supernatural possibilities because Jesus said, "All things are possible to one who believes" (Mark 9:23).

Here are some scriptural principles about faith that will help you:

- It's not rooted in human effort
Self-confidence and intellectual acumen don't qualify. Optimism, good luck, and social connections don't qualify. Learning religious formulas won't do it either.
- It's rooted in God's unlimited power and unchanging Word
"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word." The Word of God, received and residing within you, continuously produces faith within you. No teeth-gritting super-effort is required; you simply decide to believe what God says and respond to it.
- Walking by faith calls for action
"Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds" (Jas 2:18). Until you act, your faith is useless. "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (v.17). The moment you act your faith springs to life, inviting God to move on your behalf.

Consider: Today He's waiting for you to act so that He can respond to you. Even if you don't feel like it, ask yourself, "What would my first step of faith be if I really felt like taking action?" Do it! You'll be walking by faith and reaping the rewards! (See Hebrews 11:6).

CITY CENTRAL CHURCH WEEK 3 DEVOTIONAL

January 19 | Four Lessons Learned on Your Journey, Part 1

“In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.” Proverbs 16:9

Remember needing a road atlas when you took a trip? Now you just program your destination into a GPS and it tells you where and when to turn, how far to the next gas station, and when you'll arrive. No guessing, confusion, and wrong decisions. Just choose the shortest or fastest route and it will get you there. As a follower of Christ you have a divine GPS, the Holy Spirit. He chooses the route and the timing, and guarantees that you'll get to your destination. By listening to Him you learn four valuable lessons. Let's look at them:

- **First, you learn to depend on God rather than yourself**
Assuming you know all the twists and turns of life makes you act without consulting God. Samson believed he'd "figured how the system worked." When Delilah sold him out and the Philistines bound him with ropes, he thought he'd handle things the way he always did: "I will do as before and shake myself free." But he didn't realize the Lord had left him" (Judges 16:20). Living victoriously means living in total dependence on God, not yourself. Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).
- **Second, you change your perspective**
You may not always look where you're going, but you will always end up going where you're looking! Your perspective determines your choices and direction in life. After paying dearly for following his lower impulses, David changed his perspective and prayed, "My eyes are fixed on you...Lord" (Psalm 141:8). You should pray that too.

Consider: Where are your eyes usually focused throughout your day? If it is something of this world then realize trajectory. Ask the Lord to change your perspective as you discipline your gaze toward Him.

January 20 | Four Lessons Learned on Your Journey, Part 2

“Call to me and I will...tell you...things you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3

- **Third, you learn the secret of prayer**
Do you feel lost in unfamiliar territory, uncertain as to what your next move should be? God uses such times to get your attention, call you back to Himself and encourage you to lean on Him, your unfailing source of strength and wisdom. Stop trying to figure everything out by yourself! God says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you...things you do not know." Take your problem to the Lord and ask Him for a solution; He won't disappoint you. "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (Jas 5:16).
- **Fourth, you learn the power of patience**
When the Holy Spirit gives you direction and puts a goal or dream in your heart, it's easy to be quick on the trigger and want it to happen overnight. Timing is crucial. And it's under God's control, not yours! Waiting for God's timing isn't wasting time, it's essential in developing two qualities you need—faith and hope. "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it

CITY CENTRAL CHURCH WEEK 3 DEVOTIONAL

patiently” (Romans 8:25). While you are learning patience, God is at work arranging things on your behalf, and also producing Christlike qualities in you.

Consider: The Psalmist said that his hope was in God. What’s your hope in? Good luck? The economy? The doctor’s prognosis? As long as your hope is in anything other than God’s unfailing love and goodness, you’ll wrestle with uncertainty. What’s the answer? “Their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord” (Psalm 112:7).

January 21 | This Year, Live by the Beatitudes, Part 1

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Matthew 5:3

For the next few days, let’s look at the Beatitudes (what our attitudes should be). Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus wasn’t saying He’s against you having money, He was saying He’s against money having you. He will actually prosper you so that you can finance and fulfill His purposes in the earth, but He doesn’t measure the size of your faith by the size of your bank balance. In one of His parables Jesus called a wealthy man a “fool.” That wasn’t because the man was rich, it was because he wasn’t “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

Old John D. Rockefeller once said, “I’ve made many millions but they brought me no real happiness. I’d barter them all for the days I sat on an office stool in Cleveland and counted myself rich on three dollars a week.” Having more money may give you social status, but serving God gives you kingdom-significance. Big difference! So keep your focus on what matters and live for what lasts. In Kemi, Finland, they supposedly built a sprawling ice castle that featured a theatre, a playground, an art gallery and a chapel. The castle walls were 13 feet high and stretched for 1,650 feet. The chapel was a popular wedding venue and the theatre could seat 3,000 people. In it they held rock concerts, musicals, modern dance and opera recitals. The problem was, its upkeep cost millions of dollars, and it all melted in the spring.

Consider: Are you getting the idea? Focus on what lasts, not on what doesn’t. **SERVING GOD GIVES YOU KINGDOM-SIGNIFICANCE.** Are you serving the Lord?

Devotional resource adapted from Jentezen Franklin, <http://www.jentezenfranklin.org/daily-devotions>