

Faith Builders
As Presented by Lisa Bishop
Air Dates: March 14 - March 18, 2022

Day One

There are five things that are essential to build and grow your faith. The first faith builder is trust.

Several years ago I was on a company retreat at a camp in Lake Geneva. One day we did some team building activities. One of the activities was something called the trust fall. Picture climbing up a set of stairs and standing on a wood base, turning around and then falling backwards off of it hoping that the people below you catch you.... so, you don't end up falling 10 feet and landing on the hard ground. (I still get a little anxious just talking about it). When it was my turn to fall, I really had to assess; do I trust my teammates to catch me? If I am honest, I was nervous. Willingly falling **backwards** 10 feet off the ground, with my arms crossed and eyes closed didn't exactly seem like a great idea, but I did it and my team came through. They broke my fall and thankfully I ended up in one piece unharmed. **It required trust.**

When it comes to our faith, trust is essential.

Every day challenges can test our trust in God. Fear and anxiety can rob us from faith. The future may seem uncertain, and worry may be trying to take up room in your heart and in your mind, but this is when we need to remind ourselves of God's character. That Jesus is faithful and trustworthy.

When your faith feels weak, remember the words in Isaiah 26:3.

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

And Hebrews 12:2

Keep your eyes fixed on the author and perfecter of your faith....Jesus.

Building your faith in God requires spending time with Jesus.

Your faith is not built in the battle it is built in your consistent relationship with God - spending time with him consistently, not occasionally.

How has your time with Him been? My trust and faith in the Lord grows exponentially when I take time to be in his Word, to pray, and journal. Sometimes I will put on some worship music and praise him. I'm not sure what season you are in but remember that Jesus is trustworthy. Take time this week to thank him for his faithfulness. Declare your trust in him. Say, "Jesus, I trust you! Thank you that you are faithful. Help me to grow my faith in you no matter my circumstances because I know you are with me and you are for me. When I feel like I am falling or my faith is wavering, help me to trust in you."

Day Two

I am talking about five faith builders. Five things that are essential to build and grow our faith. Yesterday's faith builder was trust and today's faith builder is, remember.

I don't know about you, but I have a tendency to be very forgetful. Just the other day I was trying to get out the door for work when I started frantically looking for my car keys. I looked high and low and for the life of me I could not recall where I put them. I was going to be late for my meeting and not remembering where I put my keys put me in a panic. Have you ever been there? The point is, sometimes, we are forgetful.

That happens in our faith too. We can be so fixed on our current circumstances, and especially when things are not going the way we planned, we forget God's faithfulness. In challenging times, we can fail to recognize that the God who was with us before is still present amidst our current hardship. We get spiritual amnesia.

I am reminded of Psalm 103 where King David instructs his heart to remember.

*Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me.*

David is preaching the truth to himself. He is remembering.

Because I know I am prone to forget, one thing I started doing at the beginning of the year is journaling. I divide the page into three sections - gratitude, confession, and prayer. In the first section I write down all of the things I am grateful for as I reflect on the previous day and how I experienced God at work. Reflecting on the day that has passed I ask, Lord, show me where you were at work in my life. In what ways did I experience your goodness and where did I hear you speak? And then I begin to write what comes to my mind and heart. When I take time each morning to reflect and record all of the ways I experienced Jesus and his blessings of the prior day, I am reminded of God's faithfulness and my faith grows.

So, if you want to grow your faith, practice remembering. Consider taking a few minutes at the start or end of each day and recount and record all of the ways you experienced God's blessings and goodness.

Day Three

There are five things that are essential to build and grow our faith. Trust and remembering are the first two. The third faith builder is a spiritual practice that has been essential to my faith and relationship with Jesus: Stillness. It is difficult to find time to be silent and still in the age of technology. Statistics show that the average person or group can only bear 15 minutes of silence. Stillness challenges our addiction to busyness, amusement, and noise.

Silence and stillness are difficult because we are easily distracted. Silence asks for patience and waiting, and patience and waiting makes us uncomfortable. We feel unproductive and sometimes emotions or thoughts surface for us that we would rather consciously or unconsciously avoid by being busy and not being still.

If I am honest, sometimes it can be easier to scroll through Facebook or Instagram than to spend that time in stillness with God.

Psalm 23:1-3b

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside **still** waters, he **restores** my soul.*

Notice the still waters.

God invites us to take time to be still and experience his presence, his delight, his restoration, his refreshment. To come into his presence with no agenda other than the desire to delight in his presence as he delights in us. Not consuming more information but being consumed with the presence of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit.

A lot of religions practice silence but what makes us unique as followers of Jesus is that we come and we are silent before the Lord himself. Our aim is not to empty ourselves as a form of self-actualization but to grow in our realization of our experience of the presence of Jesus.

Henry Nouwen, well known theologian says, "Silence is the furnace of transformation"

And Jan Winebrenner states, "The discipline of stillness, when exercised in faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit, will always yield fruit."

Take time to be still before Jesus this week. Replace time in social media with a few minutes of settling into stillness and silence, allowing thankfulness to bubble up in you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you center your mind and heart on him. When practiced in faith your life will be transformed and you will bear fruit.

Day Four

Do you ever think about what you are thinking about?

We're talking about five faith builders, and I want to talk about minding your mind as our fourth faith builder.

A recent study estimates that we have approximately 6000 thoughts a day. It is further estimated that 80% of our thoughts are negative. Our thoughts impact our lives. We become what we think about. Our thoughts about ourselves, about others, about God, turn into feelings and our feelings can influence and turn into behaviors. The thoughts we believe will determine how we live.

But here is the good news! You don't have to believe every thought that enters your mind and you are not supposed to!

2 Corinthians 10:5 instructs us when it says:

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.

To take captive means to capture, to gain possession or control. And we are instructed to take control of our thoughts because faulty thinking can seriously hinder our faith. So taking back control of our minds from captivity to lies and liberating them with the truth is essential to flourishing in our faith.

Romans 12:2 is another powerful instruction.

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
Minding our minds is serious business.*

Try this exercise: for 10 minutes (or however long you need), write down every negative thought about yourself, others, and God that pops into your head. Don't judge yourself for the thoughts; simply observe them and write them down. Once they are recorded, you can begin to examine them. You can bring your thoughts into the light. As you examine them ask yourself: Do they honor God? Are they

aligned with truth? Look for Scriptures that replace the negative thoughts and ask the Holy Spirit to help you realign them to Jesus.

Only when we mind our minds can we capture our thoughts, correct them according to the truth in God's Word, and be set free from the lies. Choose to bolster and strengthen your faith by making your thoughts truth filled and obedient to Christ.

Day Five

We are wrapping up our week on faith builders and so far we've talked about how trust, remembering, stillness, and minding your mind help you grow your faith. The final faith builder is community.

Hebrews 10:24-25 is a familiar passage that instructs us as it relates to community.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another....

Especially over these past two years, meeting together in person has been difficult. But as Scripture tells us, it is ever so important. After such a lengthy time of being isolated, it can be difficult to get the motivation to be in community.

But not only is it a biblical instruction, it is also better for our health, mental state and longevity. You were not meant to do life alone. You are not meant to walk out your Christian faith alone. Companionship and community started with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in community with each other. We see the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis. God knew that it was not good for man to be alone so he created a helper, a companion for Adam. The point is, we need one another.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

We are not meant to bear our burdens alone in isolation: we bear each other's burdens which implies community.

When you surround yourself with people who have their minds and hearts fixed on Jesus it will help you build your faith and be more like Christ. Find friends who are faithful followers of Jesus by being a part of your local church, joining a Bible study or a Christian group that serves your city, town or neighborhood.

If you had been a part of one of those groups and are just a little rusty coming out of the past few seasons, take one next step to being in community. You need it, your faith needs it, and others will benefit from knowing you.