

A person wearing a red hat and a dark jacket with a backpack is seen from behind, standing on a vast, white, snowy landscape. In the distance, a large, translucent blue figure of a person stands on the snow, appearing to be looking down. The sky is a deep blue with some clouds. The overall scene is surreal and evocative.

# Trekking Deeper

**PRACTICAL FAITH**



## PRACTICAL FAITH

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### **WEC TREK**

WEC International

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## INTRODUCTION

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**F**aith is having absolute confidence in God, and is vitally important in the life of every believer in Christ. In these studies, we are going to look at various aspects of faith and spend time examining the lives of men and women in the Bible who both believed what God said and acted upon it. Their life of faith was not always easy. Sometimes they faced difficult and dangerous situations but they concentrated on what (or rather who) was important.

Faith is an enormous subject and this booklet is in no way definitive. Whatever the reason you chose this module, please make these studies your own and pray that the Lord will lead you forward in your life of faith.

There are twenty studies in this booklet. The course is designed to take one month, but you can do it at whatever speed you choose. There are two free days each week, but I would encourage you to use these extra days to pray and to look more deeply at any particular topic the Lord has been speaking to you about. Alternatively, you may like to read and reflect on the 'faith' Bible passages that are listed at the end of this booklet.

Most days I have given a relatively long Bible reading. There are two reasons for this. First, every verse must be seen and read in its context. Secondly, the Bible is the only perfect and pure word of God. Therefore, the Scriptures are far better for teaching about faith than these or any other notes could ever be! It is better to take far more time over the Bible readings than my imperfect notes. Don't rush the Bible readings but allow the Lord to speak to you through them. Please note all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

This module is dedicated to my son Nathan who died while it was being written. My prayer for you is that through your Trek experience you will grow in your relationship with God, drawing closer to Him and learning more of Him and from Him.

**Phil Grasham**

January 2004

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## DAY ONE: FOUNDATION FAITH

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### READING – HEBREWS 11:1-19

*Verse 6 “... without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists ...”*

**F**aith should be the foundation for every believer. The man or woman of God who wants to grow spiritually and become mature in Christ must live by faith in Christ. Faith is having complete trust in Jesus; it is not simply accepting that certain things are true, but trusting in the Person of Jesus Christ.

True faith focuses on God and remains steady whatever the circumstances. Our faith should not depend on whether certain things happen or not. If this is how we operate, our faith will swell or shrink depending on our situation. Rather, our faith should be fixed on God and His goodness.

Living faith is depending on Christ for everything. It is essential for our spiritual life and for all that we need all the time (Matthew 6:19-34). In *Here We Stand* (p.27) Stewart Dinnen wrote: “... the evidence of a whole-hearted, whole-minded, whole-bodied faith is not that we say we trust Him only for our invisible, spiritual needs ... If we really mean to trust Him only, then we trust only Him for our material supply.”

Whether your Trek is filled with many incredible things, or you do not experience any amazing incidents, God wants you to live an obedient and Christ-centred life. God is not calling you to be successful but faithful (partly because our measure of success starts in the wrong place ... with ourselves). Praise God whether you see obvious results from your “work”, or if you never see the results of your obedience. Your role is to look to Christ and faithfully play your part in God’s universal plan.

Think about your faith. Who or what do you really believe in? How is your faith affected by your circumstances? Do you trust God for everything? Pray that these studies will increase your faith and help you consider the particular areas in which you will need to exercise faith during your time overseas.

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## DAY TWO: DIVINE CONSTANCY

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### READING – PSALM 102

*Verses 12a & 27 “But you, O LORD, sit enthroned forever ... you remain the same, and your years will never end.”*

**F**aith is about being in a relationship with God, rather than signing up to statements of doctrine. The crux is not so much what we believe in as who we believe in.

Today’s text is so reassuring! We believe in God and God does not change! This means He is totally trustworthy. However many thousands of years ago God created the universe, He has not changed one iota. In the same way that we do not expect the laws of nature to vary from one day to the next, so we can know that God does not alter. Imagine going through life unsure whether the law of gravity will change. You might fear that one moment you will be sitting eating a meal and the next floating in the air surrounded by your spaghetti bolognese!

Malachi 3:6 states that the Lord does not change. Praise God there is divine constancy. Hebrews 13:8 tells us “Jesus is the same yesterday and today and for ever.” God does not have mood swings and He never changes His mind!

As someone has said, God cannot change for the worse because He is holy and He cannot change for the better because He is already perfect.

God does not change and neither do His plans. He “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”.

(1 Timothy 2:4). If we do anything to enable this to happen, we know that will please Him. Plus, His promises don’t fluctuate. They are absolute statements because they will be fulfilled absolutely. Furthermore, God’s commands are timeless because God does not vary His standards from one epoch to the next.

Grab hold of God, His plans, and His promises because you can trust Him and all He has said. Recognise, though, that while God never changes, He does change His people! Pray that the Lord would change you to be more like Him.

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## DAY THREE: KNOW YOUR GOD

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### READING – ROMANS 10:5-17

*Verse 17 “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*

The “amount” of faith we have is directly linked to how well we know God. To put it another way, the quantity of your faith is related to the quantity of your understanding of the Lord. Someone has written that many people try to live by faith without knowledge of God. They are trying to live by faith in faith, not faith in God. When people struggle with their faith in God, it’s often because they misunderstand who God is and how He operates. We can have expectations that He will do certain things or He will answer our prayers in a certain way. However, it is often what we have decided and it may not be God’s way. This is because we have not understood who the Lord is and what He is saying.

It may sound simplistic, but if you want your faith in God to grow, you need to hear and read the Scriptures. This will expand your understanding of Him and your awareness of His ways. It has been said that if you have great knowledge of God and His Word, you will have great faith. In fact, if you have confidence in God, you will have confidence in His Word, and if you have confidence in God’s Word, you will have confidence in God.

Pick one of the passages below. Choose one that you have either never read or are not particularly familiar with. Read it slowly and reflect upon who God is. Ask the Holy Spirit to draw you closer to the Lord Almighty.

- ◆ Psalm 103    Psalm 145    Isaiah 40    John 17
- ◆ Romans 8    Philippians 2    Hebrews 12    Revelation 19

What have you learnt? How does this affect your understanding of God and therefore your faith in Him? What promises, commands, or truths are there? Praise God for who He is and what that means to you.

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## DAY FOUR: OBSTACLES TO FAITH

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### READING – MARK 6:1-13

*Verses 5-6 “He could not do any miracles there ... And he was amazed at their lack of faith.”*

There are a number of barriers to increasing our faith. These include sin, a guilty conscience, fear, doubt, and pride. However, the greatest obstacle is the opposite of faith which is unbelief. In *Faith To Live By* (p.10) Derek Prince explains that in Ancient Greek there is no distinction between “faith” and “to believe”. In the Scriptures, believing is exercising faith and exercising faith is believing. In fact, in Ancient Greek, “faith” is *pistis* and “believe” is *pisteuo*. It is the same root word.

Therefore, our faith is linked to what we do or don’t believe. Unbelief is dangerous because it attacks our faith and causes us to move away from God. We can break it down to two attitudes towards God: faith, which enables us to establish a personal relationship with God, or unbelief, which separates us from Him and actually destroys our relationship with Him.

The accounts of Christ’s death and resurrection reveal the unbelief of the disciples. Jesus had told them many times that “the Son of Man must suffer many things ... and that he must be killed and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). However, they did not believe Him, either by choice or lack of belief. In Mark 16:14, Jesus appears to the disciples and rebukes them “... for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.”

In short, we can choose to believe by accepting the truth of God’s Word or we can choose not to believe by rejecting the truth of God’s Word. If we do choose to believe God’s truth, this will also help us with our sin, fear, doubt, and pride.

Recognise that there are hurdles to your faith. Pray that the Lord will help you to immerse yourself in the truth, so that you are saturated with it and can hold on to Him in times of doubt and unbelief.

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## DAY FIVE: ARE YOU HAPPY TO SACRIFICE?

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### READING – MATTHEW 14:22-36

*Verse 31 “You of little faith’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’ ”*

**H**ow are you doing on your Trek? Do you feel that you have stumbled in your faith or tripped on your beliefs rather than walking confidently in dependence on God? Do you feel the Lord is ready to give up on you because your faith is weak? If so, remember that God’s love and acceptance are unconditional. That means that when your faith is strong, God loves you. And when your faith is weak ... God loves you! God’s love for you is consistent however inconsistent you are in your faith (2 Timothy 2:11-13). You are accepted and loved and nothing (no, nothing) will ever change that.

Consider the Bible “greats”. Who out of Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, David, Jeremiah, Zechariah, John the Baptist, Martha, Peter and Thomas doubted? Yes! All of them!

Peter’s failed attempt to walk on the water is often used as an example of weak faith (Matthew 14:22-32). Note, however, that the other eleven disciples were nowhere to be seen! Although Peter began to sink, the Lord immediately caught him by the hand. I don’t think Jesus’ rebuke to Peter was harsh. He seems to be saying “Well done, Peter. You were actually walking on the water. Why did you stop believing it was possible?”

Where are you, metaphorically speaking? Are you in the boat, walking on the water, beginning to sink or being held by Jesus? If you’re in the boat, how about stepping out in faith? If you’re walking on the water, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) and not your circumstances. If you’re beginning to sink, reach out your hand and know that Jesus is there. He won’t let you go. If Jesus is holding your hand, find comfort and strength, but know that He wants you to step out in faith ... again and again (Matthew 21:21).

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## DAYS SIX AND SEVEN: **PRAYING INTELLIGENTLY**

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**R**eflect on this quote:

*“Faith hears the inaudible, sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible.”*

How about taking time out to write to your church? I’m sure they are praying for you on your Trek. Share honestly how you are feeling, and be specific in your prayer requests, so that people can pray intelligently and effectively.



## DAY EIGHT: FAITH AND THE FLOOD

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### READING – GENESIS 8:1-22

*Verse 5 “The waters continued to recede ... on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.”*

**T**he problem with this story is that we know it so well we have relegated it to a children’s story with fluffy animals marching two by two. In fact, it is a story of astonishing faith.

God commanded Noah to build a huge boat way away from any body of water capable of floating such a vessel. He was told that animals of every shape and size would come to him and enter his ark. What must have run through Noah’s mind? How am I going to make sure the elephants don’t cause trouble and rock the boat? How am I going to keep the woodpeckers happy?

Noah’s faith gave him tremendous patience. The rain was constantly lashing down and there they were shut up in a floating zoo. Day in, day out, the same routine, the same problems, the same smells. Noah could do nothing but watch and wait.

Commentators agree that from the time Noah and his family boarded the ark to the moment they once again stood on solid ground, more than one year had passed. It was only when the time was right that God told Noah to leave the ark.

Sometimes things in life move slowly. We want action and intervention. We want answers and we want them now! But in God’s eternal timing, things don’t always move as fast as we would like. We have to remind ourselves that delay can produce a greater dependency on God and strengthening of character (James 1:2-4). In fact, there is no place for faith if we expect immediate answers. Faith does not equal quicker results. It may be the opposite as God tests our faith which is of greater worth than gold, so that it might be proved genuine (1 Peter 1:7).

Noah’s faith enabled him to hang onto God’s promise, when all he really knew were the waves rolling and the ark rocking. How about you? Noah had no idea when he would leave the ark, but trusted that God was in control. Do you believe that?

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**DAY NINE: SELF-CENTRED FAITH**

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**READING – 1 SAMUEL 17:1-11**

*Verse 10 “Then the Philistine said, ‘This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.’”*

**T**he story of David and Goliath can teach us many things. Over the next four days we will examine the faith of the four individuals or groups in this remarkable story. By the end of the week, we will have read the whole account.

We start with the big man: Goliath’s faith was in himself. He had grown up fighting and learning the intricacies of combat. He was probably a school bully and was now a man of colossal proportions; at nine feet tall he must have been extremely useful as a lookout! He was the champion in all sports and victor in every fight. He had complete faith in his own strength and was proud of his abilities. As he screamed abuse at the Israelites, it never entered his head that he was about to meet his match. Goliath had always succeeded at everything and did not believe that he could possibly be beaten.

You don’t have to be a giant to trust only in yourself. How often do you feel that you’re in charge? You believe that you can do it – you don’t need anyone else. You know best, because you know your own capabilities. You want to be in control because you know how to use your strengths and avoid your weaknesses. Do you trust in your own ability, intuition, and experience? Do you think that whatever it is you can do it, and so God is left out? In fact, there’s no room for God to work, because your faith isn’t really in what He can do through you, but in the knowledge of who you perceive yourself to be and what you think you can do. Do you ask God to bless your plans rather than ask God what He wants of you? If so, remember that for all of Goliath’s strength and experience, he was about to lose everything in the most humiliating way!

Reflect on where your faith lies and how much control God has of your life.

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## DAY TEN: FAITH IN OTHERS

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### READING – 1 SAMUEL 17:12-28

*Verse 21 “Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other.”*

**A**s we continue in 1 Samuel 17, we turn to the Philistines. Their faith was not surprisingly in Goliath! He was their champion, their hero. All their trust was pinned on him. After all, he could not possibly lose, could he? He was built like a rhino and ate Israelites for breakfast. They had seen him defeat everyone else, so they believed he was their man for this mission. But the inconceivable was about to happen. The indestructible man-mountain was about to crumple. In the end, their faith would be futile and a single stone would destroy all their dreams.

Christians can also have champions and heroes. Are there certain people you believe are right and you want to follow them? Are there people you trust and look to? They may be church leaders, Christian authors, or believing friends. But what happens when they let you down – and there’s a good chance they will – because they’re not perfect. They cannot possibly live up to all your expectations. Sooner or later, they will let you down. They will say something or do something that you just can’t handle. Your faith in human nature will take a knock. Maybe your faith in God will take a hit.

I’m sure you can think of instances when you looked for something in someone and they let you down. Don’t look for reliance and trust in people, whoever they are. Look for reliance and trust in the Lord! There is only One who is perfect and will never let you down. Only God can work everything together for good. Only God has no ulterior motives and has only your best interests at heart. Your faith must be in the Lord, not in those who can be as faithless as you can be! As unbeatable as Goliath seemed to the Philistines, all it took was one boy and one rock.

Reflect on whether God has your complete trust or whether you have given someone else a portion.

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## DAY ELEVEN: **ABSENT FAITH**

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### READING – 1 SAMUEL 17:29-44

*Verse 33 “Saul replied, ‘You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him ...’ ”*

**F**or our third study in 1 Samuel, we look to Saul and the Israelites. To be brutally honest, weak simply isn't the word, faith seems totally absent, but who could blame them? Would you have volunteered to go out and fight Goliath, who stands before you spitting out words of hatred? For forty days they sweated in fear. Not one man in the whole of the Israelite army could be found to face this big brute. Saul was the tallest Israelite and the anointed king of Israel, but he was as terrified as everyone else. Saul was so brave that he offered great wealth and even one of his own daughters in marriage if someone else would face Goliath! But no one believed it could be done. They were no fools, who could imagine taking on such a monster-man?

Have you ever been in a situation like that? “God, you want me to do what?” You simply don't believe it can be done. It sounds ridiculous and you know it would be crazy to even try. You know your limitations and you're not going any further. The risk of failure is enormous, so that's the end of the matter.

In totally unreasonable or impossible situations, you need to remember that when you have faith in God all the resources of heaven are at your disposal. Mark 9:23 says that *everything* is possible for him who believes. Not some things or even many things, but everything. You can have a supernatural confidence that whatever comes your way; you can deal with it through your commitment to God. It doesn't matter what you think about yourself or how little you might feel you have to offer. God is able to use your trust in Him to do incredible things. Who would have thought that a shepherd boy with a sling would topple the sword-wielding Philistine fighting machine!

Reflect on whether you really believe that you can do *everything* in Christ.

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## DAY TWELVE: DAVID'S BOLD FAITH

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### READING – 1 SAMUEL 17:45-58

*Verse 45 “... I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.”*

**F**inally, in this story we turn the spotlight on David. His faith was, of course, in God. When he heard Goliath's challenge, he did not say, “Well it's getting late, I must be getting back to my sheep.” David exclaimed, “How dare he challenge God and treat His people with contempt!” King Saul pointed out that he was only a boy. But David replied that “this boy” had killed both the lion and the bear. David knew exactly where his faith was. He did not put it down to his own strength or intelligence, but to the deliverance of God. When he finally strode out to Goliath, David was not afraid to tell him, “You come against me with sword and spear ... but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty ...” David did not think, “Wow, he's so big, I can't win,” but “Wow, he's so big, I can't miss!” David's focus was not on Goliath, but on the Lord. In the end, David triumphed because of a giant faith in God.

Do you react like that in your troubles? You may have seen the Lord do incredible things in other people's lives – maybe even in your own life – but when you are faced with a giant problem do you think it's time to retreat? It could be that the opposite is true. God may want you to advance in His name and in His power. Just as David relied on God, that needs to be your strategy too. Remember that David was not fighting for himself, but to defend the name of God. If you step out, wanting to bring glory to God, trusting in Him to work in you and through you, be assured that the Lord will guide, strengthen and inspire you.

It may be that right now on your Trek you are facing a monster difficulty that seems to you like physical, emotional, or spiritual combat. If so, remember to keep your focus on God. As David said, “The battle is the Lord's!” Reflect on how much you trust God to work in you, even with mammoth-sized struggles.

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## DAYS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN: **SET THE SCENE**

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Space below for notes and doodles.

**H**ow about drawing a sketch based on the battle of David and Goliath, or a poem, or a limerick, on the same event?

Don't forget the Further Reading (page 27).





## DAY FIFTEEN: JOSHUA'S FACTS, FAITH, AND FEELINGS

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### READING – JOSHUA 6:1-27

*Verse 2 “Then the LORD said to Joshua, ‘See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands along with its king and its fighting men.’”*

I wonder how you would have felt: “What’s that Lord? I’m going to defeat Jericho? Amen! What’s the battle plan?” (Pause while the information is digested.) “Let me get this straight, Lord. Our main attacking force are musicians and our secret weapon is wind instruments!”

The Lord spoke to Joshua and in faith the people marched around Jericho and sounded their trumpets. The fall of Jericho helps us to understand the role of faith, facts, and feelings. Or is it feelings, faith, and facts? In which order of importance would you place those three elements?

The Scriptures are full of facts or truths. These must come first, because the truth is our foundation. We build our lives on God’s truth, because God’s Word never changes. Faith is next because faith reaches out and holds onto the facts of God’s Word, whatever the circumstances. Feelings come last, not because they are unimportant but because they can jump around and do cartwheels. Facts can always be trusted, feelings cannot. Joshua knew that blowing trumpets does not normally damage city walls. Yet, God had promised Joshua that Jericho was his. When God’s truth promised him the city and his feelings told him that marching around blowing trumpets was pointless, Joshua held on to God’s promise.

For you there may be an enormous difference between the promises and truths in the Scriptures and what you see and think about a particular situation. Your feelings can pull you in different directions, so you need to build your faith on the solid rock of God’s Word and not the shifting sand of your emotions.

Joshua heard from the Lord and shared the vision with those around him. How about you? Joshua believed God and implemented a seemingly ludicrous plan. How about you?

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## DAY SIXTEEN: RAHAB'S ACTIVE FAITH

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### READING – JOSHUA 2:1-24

*Verse 12 “... please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you.”*

While Joshua and the Israelites marched outside the city walls of Jericho, there was one woman inside who had already shown great faith in God. Joshua had sent two spies to suss out the city. Rahab acted in faith when she welcomed the spies because by sheltering “the enemy” she put her own life in danger. Rahab had heard how God had brought Israel across the Red Sea and, even though that had happened 40 years earlier, she stated that her people were “melting in fear” when they heard that the Israelites were coming! She threw herself confidently on the mercy of the spies in the belief that the God who delivered His own people would save her when Jericho was destroyed. James 2:25 says, “In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?”

Rahab said, “I know that the LORD has given this land to you.” Although it was a future event, she used the past tense. To her it was a done deal. It already belonged to the Israelites even though they were camped out in tents in the wilderness and her people were the ones behind the high, rock-solid walls.

There were many other people who believed that Jericho was in trouble when they heard that Israel was marching towards it. But faith takes action and does not just sit back to see what will happen. Through faith, the things that are realistic for God are made equally realistic for the believer. Faith allows you to reach out to God and turn the impossible into the possible. Rahab was the only one to act on her belief and, in the end, she and her family were the only Jericho-ites to be saved.

Rahab listened to what God had done and believed He could save her. How about you? She weighed up the evidence and took action. How about you?

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## DAY SEVENTEEN: GIDEON'S MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

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### READING – JUDGES 7:1-25

*Verse 14 “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon ... God has given the Midianites ... into his hands.”*

**G**ideon’s story gives hope to us all. God took a fearful man and turned him into a faithful man. As with all the Biblical champions, it was not that they were great men and women who accomplished incredible things for God, but that a great God did incredible things through very ordinary men and women.

We first encounter Gideon arguing with the angel of the Lord that his clan was the weakest in his tribe and he was the least in his family. How could he possibly be God’s chosen man? The Lord patiently explained things to Gideon. However, a seemingly bizarre situation was around the corner. The Bible tells us that Gideon’s foes “settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore” (verse 12). Gideon’s mission – defeat this multitude!

As he prepared for the battle, the Lord told him that he had too many men. If Israel defeated the Midianites, they would boast in their own ability. So, under the Lord’s directions, Gideon reduced his troops from 32,000 to 300! How would you have felt? 32,000 men was still a half decent army. With 300 men, I think the word suicidal springs to mind! The Lord graciously let Gideon eavesdrop at the enemy camp and with renewed faith and the Lord’s help; Gideon triumphed over the opposition’s hordes.

Gideon tackled hundreds of thousands of enemy soldiers with 300 men. It may have seemed foolish, but it was in fact faith because the Lord told him to, and the Lord always knows what He’s doing. Gideon did not win in his own strength. The Lord accomplished His plans through His faithful servant.

Gideon was prepared to do “the impossible”. How about you? Nothing is too difficult for God. If He says go, you can be sure that He will help you to complete the task He has given you. Are you prepared to do that?

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**DAY EIGHTEEN: THE WOMAN WHO REACHED OUT IN FAITH**

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**READING – MARK 5:21-43**

*Verse 34 “He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.’ ”*

Let's focus on the woman in the middle of this account who had suffered bleeding for twelve years. She was penniless, having spent all her money on doctors who have failed to cure her. Society would have regarded her as unclean which would have limited her opportunities to be involved in religious practices and strained her contact with her family and the wider community.

However, rather unexpectedly, we find her pushing her way through the crowd to get close to Jesus.

There is a misconception that this woman grovelled around on the ground, tugging at the hem of Jesus' robe. Remember there is a huge crowd pushing and shoving. If anyone reached down to the ground, they would be knocked over and trampled. The woman actually grabbed a tassel on Jesus' prayer shawl. The Jewish prayer shawl has one long tassel with five knots. This represents the Law as found in the five books of Moses. These Jews believed that when the Messiah came this tassel would have great significance: it had the power to forgive sins and heal diseases. So, the woman's grasping of the tassel was not superstition in magical fabric but a profession of faith in the Living God. She believed that here was the Messiah! Jesus told her that it was indeed her faith that healed her.

The greatness of the woman's faith is in her belief that there in front of her was the Lord and simply touching His clothes would result in her healing. The faulty element of her faith was her belief that it was necessary to actually touch Jesus' clothes and that He wouldn't notice!

This woman was prepared to abandon the usual cultural and religious standards to be near to Jesus. How about you?

She was prepared to face the consequences of her beliefs. How about you?

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## DAY NINETEEN: A CENTURION'S ASTONISHING FAITH

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### READING – MATTHEW 8:5-13

*Verses 8-9 “... But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority ...”*

**T**his centurion was clearly a man of compassion: he was a high-ranking officer in charge of around 100 soldiers and yet found time to be concerned about one young man in his household who was little more than a slave. It seems the centurion had heard what Jesus had done for others and had now come to Jesus to plead on behalf of his ailing worker.

It would have been forbidden for Jesus, a Jew, to enter the house of the Gentile soldier since they were considered unclean. As one who happily ate with prostitutes and tax collectors, Jesus was unlikely to be concerned with these Jewish regulations and would not have refused to enter the man's home. However, the centurion's faith enabled him to believe that all that was necessary was for Jesus to speak for healing to take place.

This was because the centurion understood the whole area of authority. The centurion knew that he could give commands and soldiers would jump to obey him because he himself was under authority. His position had been given to him from his superior officers and so he received power from the rule of the Roman Empire. In the same way, the authority of God gave influence and power to Jesus, so that a word from His lips was enough to drive out any force, whether physical or spiritual.

Jesus was not often surprised by the people He met but He was astonished by the Roman soldier's faith. He accepted the centurion's understanding of His authority as true belief and from a distance, the servant was healed. It was not necessary for Jesus to enter the centurion's home, so He didn't, but I bet there was a party in that house that night!

The centurion believed in Christ's power. How about you? Despite his position, he was willing to come to Jesus in weakness and helplessness. How about you?

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## DAYS TWENTY AND TWENTY-ONE: PRAY FOR THE WORLD

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**I**t is crucial we pray for world evangelisation. Wherever you are, how about interceding for the nation of Israel:

- ◆ The ongoing tension and conflict between Arabs and Israelis needs a breakthrough. While the resentment and fighting continues, lives are lost and hostility grows. Pray for peace, justice and righteousness.
- ◆ The Church in Israel is fragmented and declining in numbers through emigration. Spiritual unity is needed that transcends history, ethnic conflict, national origins and secondary areas of theology. Pray that many more Jews would encounter the Lord Jesus.
- ◆ To the Jews, there are grave misunderstandings and animosity towards Christianity. Pray that the gospel will be understood as a fulfilment of their Jewish heritage and there would be a widespread turning to the true Messiah.
- ◆ Pray for the major outreach challenges which include:
  - The ultra-Orthodox Haredi who hold tremendous political leverage and regard Messianic Jews as subversive and a threat to Judaism.
  - The Arabs who are strongly Islamic. There are few people actively seeking to reach them and a new initiative in evangelism is urgently needed.



## DAY TWENTY-TWO: FAITH THAT ENDURES

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### READING – ACTS 7:1-60

*Verse 51 “You stiff-necked people ... You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!”*

Stephen was in a tricky situation as the religious authorities picked him up and dragged him before the Sanhedrin. With the charges that had been brought against him, he was no doubt considered guilty even before the hearing began. Would your reaction have been the same as his? What would you have said? Stephen stood against the chief priests, elders, and teachers of the law. This is faith against the odds and faith that gets you in trouble! Stephen had spoken with power, but all it got him were false accusations. In the end, after a formidable sermon to the religious bigwigs, he was taken out and stoned to death.

Hebrews 11 is *the* great chapter on faith. In verse 35, there is an important transition. Up to now the author has been carried away thinking of those who conquered kingdoms and became powerful in battle. Now there is a huge shift to those heroes of faith who did not experience miraculous deliverance. Many unknown men and women were not delivered from difficult circumstances and were persecuted and murdered. Hebrews 11:38 says, “The world was not worthy of them.” Verse 39 tells us that all of them were commended for their faith. While some believers were delivered and triumphed, others were victimized and killed, but God blessed them all (Revelation 12:11).

In *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (p.321) Wiersbe writes: “... we must never conclude that the absence of deliverance means a lack of faith on the part of God’s children.”

God will allow our faith to be tested. It has been said that it takes more faith to endure than it does to escape and, like Stephen, we should trust God and obey Him even if He does not rescue us.

Stephen was faithful to the end. How about you? Stephen’s faith in Christ meant facing opposition and ultimately having a willingness to die for his Lord. How about you?

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**DAY TWENTY-THREE: SINGLENES AND MARRIAGE**

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**READING – 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-39**

*Verse 8 “Now to the unmarried and widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.”*

**F**ollowing the Lord may mean all sorts of sacrifices, not least that of marriage. We don't have to begin a vocation in a monastery or convent to be gifted with singleness. Every unmarried believer must tackle this issue: does the Lord want me to marry? We should not assume that either marriage or singleness is our destiny. We need to pray for wisdom to discover God's will for us and an openness to accept whatever the future holds. We should also be prepared for our situation to change. Singleness, or marriage, may be just up ahead or they may be many years away. In and through it all, God is in control.

If we remain single, we are free to concentrate on serving God with exclusive devotion. Verses 32-35 explain that a married person has other concerns and divided interests, but unmarried people can single-mindedly focus on the Lord and the work He wants them to do.

It should be stated that marriage is not a right and singleness is not second best. The Lord directs people along different routes and so one person might marry and another might not! (Matthew 19:3-12).

The Lord said He came to bring life in all its fullness. As an unmarried man, Jesus knew perfect joy and peace and showed that satisfaction in life is not chained to wedlock. Or take Paul, who was probably a widower without family ties. He was able to be God's travelling emissary, because he had been released from "relative" responsibilities.

If you do marry, praise the Lord for your husband or wife and all you will achieve together with Him. If you remain single, praise the Lord for your singleness and all you will achieve on your own with Him. Remember that married or single, the Lord calls you to keep your eyes on Jesus, the foundation of your faith.

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## DAY TWENTY-FOUR: THE CHURCH'S FAITHLESS FAITH

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### READING – ACTS 12:1-19

*Verse 16 “... Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.”*

**T**his is a fascinating story. Peter was arrested and thrown in prison. He had sixteen guards to look after him, but remarkably showed no sign of fear – he actually fell asleep. If you were on death row and facing the likelihood of being executed the next day, would you fall asleep? It is such a deep sleep that when an angel appeared he had to jab Peter in the side to wake him up! Peter followed the angel out of the prison thinking at first that he was simply dreaming. He soon realised that he was free!

All this time the church had been “earnestly” praying for him. Peter went to the house where they were meeting and knocked at the door. The servant girl was so overjoyed when she heard his voice that instead of letting him in, she ran to tell the others. They in turn didn't burst into praise that God had released Peter from prison. No, they didn't believe the servant girl and told her she was out of her mind or that it was Peter's angel. There's faith for you! Neither of those ideas was anywhere near as likely as the truth. They wanted answers to their prayers and the answer was standing at the door! The Lord had graciously answered their prayers even though they didn't seem to have expected very much would happen. When God decides to move, nothing can stop Him! God can break through anything. It may seem daunting to have sixteen soldiers watching over Peter, but even if there were sixteen thousand soldiers, if God wanted Peter to be free, he would be free!

How often do you pray intently but don't really expect an answer? How often do you pray but don't believe that God will act on your behalf? Are you reluctant to accept the possibility that God can do the impossible in *your* situation? Take time now to pray believing that God will answer your prayers and that in all things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

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**DAY TWENTY-FIVE: SAVED FOR WORKS**

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**READING – MATTHEW 5:1-16**

*Verse 16 “... let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

Let's continue to examine the truth that “faith” and “works” are not at each other's throats but are in fact walking hand in hand. There have always been difficulties combining faith and works as it is easy for people to fall into the trap of believing they are saved by what they do. There is an underlying belief, even among Christians, that if a person does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn eternal life. The truth could not be more different. Salvation is all about Christ, it's not about doing good. It's His death and resurrection that are important (Galatians 2:20). There is nothing that anyone could ever do that could ever earn him or her the right to stand before our holy God. Only in Christ do we become new creations adopted into God's family. Archbishop William Temple said, “All is of God; the only thing of my very own which I contribute to my redemption, is the sin from which I need to be redeemed.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly states “it is by grace you have been saved through faith ... it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” However, while we are not saved *by* works, we are saved *for* works: living obediently and effectively. This is explained further in the next verse (2:10) which says, “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.”

This is crucial: salvation is through Christ alone, but we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Someone has said that it is only through deeds that faith can prove and demonstrate itself. It is vital to note that living by faith means getting stuck in! By getting involved, we show that we are indeed Christ's disciples, full of faith, and full of love. Praise God for your salvation, and ask Him how you can walk by faith and get your hands dirty along the way?

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## DAY TWENTY-SIX: FAITH IN THE FUTURE

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### READING – 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-21

*Verse 7 “We live by faith, not by sight.”*

**T**he world says that to believe in what we cannot see is blindness but, in reality, real faith enables the believer to see the invisible (2 Corinthians 4:18). Faith is not a vague hope but a definite commitment to God and all He has said. “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Arguably, the greatest step of faith is the belief that physical death is not the end. As God’s children, we look ahead to when “what is mortal is swallowed up by life”.

Death is seen as a dark mystery but Jesus has taken away the power of death! This module is dedicated to my second son who was born prematurely and only lived for 17 minutes. Later, as I sat looking at my tiny son in his open coffin, what struck me most was that this was not really my son. It was simply his body, which he did not need anymore. I know, without any doubt, that my son is in no pain or distress. In our world of conflict and suffering, he has peace and joy with the Lord. I have the confidence of knowing exactly where he is and I look forward to spending eternity with him in the presence of God.

Our lives are securely tied to Christ. What does this mean for you? You can live a radical life for Christ because you don’t need to be afraid of dying. Paul wrote that “to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). We can look ahead to a fantastic future with our Saviour and King. This is the faith and hope for all those who believe in Jesus. Praise God for what is to come! Revelation 22:12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”

Commit yourself to truly live by faith and not by sight until you see Him for yourself. For although you cannot now see Christ face to face, one day you will.

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## DAYS TWENTY-SEVEN AND TWENTY-EIGHT: **HEAVEN**

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Space below for notes.

**I** imagine bumping into one of the local men, or women or children, and they say to you “Tell me all about heaven?”

How would you answer them? Try to answer – where it is? What it is? Who goes there? How you get there?



## FURTHER READING

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**W**e can learn a lot about faith by reading and studying portions of the Scriptures. Below is a small selection, but do not be limited by the ones listed here. Read the passages and discover what you can about the individual's faith or the author's teaching on faith. What do you learn about their faith? How do these accounts help you in your own faith-life? Praise God for the examples these men and women give and pray that, in the same way, you will become a man or woman of faith.

- ◆ **Genesis 22:1-19**
- ◆ **1 Kings 18:16-46**
- ◆ **2 Kings 4:1-37**
- ◆ **2 Chronicles 20:1-30**
- ◆ **Daniel 3**
- ◆ **Matthew 17:14-23**
- ◆ **Acts 16:16-40**
- ◆ **Acts 27:27-44**
- ◆ **Hebrews 11**
- ◆ **2 Peter 1:3-11**

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## NOTES

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**Trekking Deeper** is a devotional discipleship programme specifically written for short-term volunteers. The aim of the Course is to help “Trekking Deeper” keep their focus on Christ and to grow spiritually during their placements.

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**Trekking Deeper consists of a series of nine booklets:**

<b>The ABC of Preparation *</b>	<b>Practical Faith</b>
<b>Costly Discipleship</b>	<b>Living Holiness</b>
<b>Dynamic Prayer</b>	<b>United in Discipleship</b>
<b>Exploring God's Word</b>	<b>Returning &amp; Advancing *</b>
<b>God's Guidance</b>	<b>(* new titles)</b>

“Refreshing, stretching, packed with helpful insights, I found the Trekking Deeper booklets an excellent tool for personal discipleship.”  
**Glenn Myers (author of the Briefings series)**

“I learnt a lot about prayer and it was good to have notes with short-termers in mind.” **Gillian Thom (Mexico)**

“I learnt stuff I didn't know before.” **Jeremy Estabrook (Senegal)**

“The questions made you analyse and pray about your feelings rather than just pottering on.” **Lindsey Hale (Mexico)**

“I learnt things that I could apply and think about and they weren't boring!” **Alison Davey (Sierra Leone)**