

Building Strength

09/25/2022
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Notes

Genesis 12:1-2

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.

Philippians 4:12-13

I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. 13 For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

To operate by faith like Abram, we often have to leave what is familiar. Christ strengthens our faith the same way we would strengthen our muscles: we need understanding, training, and a goal to work toward.

Philippians 4:12-13 are verses that are often taken out of context. They don't mean that just because we want to do something, it means we can. What these verses are saying is that our faith doesn't have to be guided by the circumstances. So how do we make sure that our faith isn't circumstantial? Jesus helps to strengthen our faith in these ways:

1) He strengthens our faith with God's Word

John 1:1, 14

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God ... So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work

God's Word equips us to handle a multitude of situations. It strengthens our attitude toward life so we are prepared to handle whatever comes our way. Having a firm understanding of God's Word helps our faith do what it is supposed to do.

2) He strengthens our faith with the reps

James 1:2-4

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

If you want to learn to run a mile, you first have to be able to run a half mile. If you want to be able to do 100 push-ups, you first have to be able to do 50 push-ups. We have to work our faith and practice in the small things so that we're ready for the most difficult challenges. We can't quit every time we face resistance, or our faith won't grow.

3) He strengthens our faith with a love sign

John 3:16

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

The cross is a love sign from Jesus for us to remember how to get through challenges. There are two major ways to remember the cross: 1) communion, which is to encourage our faith by remembering who Jesus is and what He did for us; 2) worship services, which are when we come together to declare by faith who He is.

Group Questions

- What is the difference between circumstantial faith versus non-circumstantial faith?
- How can we strengthen our understanding of God's Word?
- What does it mean to "work your faith"?
- In what ways is the cross a love sign?

Prayer

We want to strengthen our faith to be based on who you are, not in ourselves or what is going on around us. Help is to persevere through whatever comes our way and to have courage to do what you'd have us do.