

## #blessed | Blessed to Believe | Discussion - Luke 17:5-10

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### 3 Ways to Strengthen Your Faith.

In 1856 at the age of 21, Hudson Taylor set sail for China. One year later, when his Mission Board could no longer pay him, he chose to stay. He was unorthodox for his time. He offended most of his English peers when he grew a ponytail and donned Chinese clothing. But he was there at God's call, not England's.

In 1861, he became very sick and was forced to return to England. There he translated the Bible into Chinese and laid the foundation for a dream. His dream would one day become the China Inland Mission. His plan was for an army of missionaries that simply trusted God for their support and protection. He dreamed of missionaries who became part of Chinese culture and pressed into the interior provinces of China.

It was no easy pursuit, and he once was close to a breakdown over the issue. During a retreat to pray about it, he found peace on the matter. His words were...

*"There the Lord conquered my unbelief, and I surrendered myself to God for this service. I told him that all responsibility as to the issues and consequences must rest with him; that as his servant it was mine to obey and to follow him." - Hudson Taylor*

Hundreds of Missionaries followed Taylor into his dream. A dream built completely upon Faith and Passion.

Would You Like More Faith? And if so, why? What would you do with more Faith? And, how does one get more Faith? Is it some kind of Heavenly item? Do you order it from the Heavenly Superstore? Or, is it like a Muscle? You are reborn with it. You just need to exercise it and wait for it to grow? Here are a few ways to increase your faith.

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### Encourage Your Faith.

When We Study The Bible with an open heart and mind, actively listening for His Voice, we encourage our Faith.

**Romans 10:17 (NLT)** So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

When we realize that God is speaking to us, it will definitely encourage our faith. But, we are also greatly encouraged in our faith when we share what we have learned from Him with others. So, spending time with other believers, sharing our finds and listening to theirs, will also greatly encourage our faith.

**Romans 1:12 (NLT)** When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

When We Ask for More Faith, just like the disciples did in **Luke 17:5**, we encourage our faith. But, we must be patient. Often we want more faith, and we want it NOW! Impatience is not very helpful when it comes to growing in faith.

When We Stir Up the Faith we already have we encourage our faith. We could celebrate the things we have already learned and experienced. When we call those things to mind as we pray and worship, we build our Faith fueled memories. We should spend lots of time thinking about God's goodness, His word, and His faithfulness. Also, we could learn to enjoy our faith by enjoying worship and other believers.

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## Establish Your Faith.

**2 Corinthians 1:21 (ESV)** And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,

We establish our faith as we "live by faith". What does that mean? We learn to live each day trusting God to care for us and empower us. There is a BIG difference between Discipleship and Religion. Religion is most concerned with an appearance and its primary concern is the past. Discipleship believes in God right now and appearances are just not that important. "God says it, I believe it, therefore, I take action" is the cry of a disciple.

We must not let go of our faith either. Circumstances should not dictate your faith. Abraham was a father 25 years before he was a Father. David was a king long before he was a King. Circumstances don't DICTATE who you are. God STATES who You Are.

We will establish our Faith as we embrace it, live it, and, time and again, see it *become* our very life. It may be frightening but God will not fail you. Now, He MAY freak you out. So we need to learn to...

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## Stretch Your Faith.

When We Endure Trials we stretch our Faith. The Bible calls it Longsuffering and it's a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Remember that trials are actually meant as a cause for Joy.

**James 1:2-4 (NLT)** 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.

Rejoice in our trials?! Sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? Not if we consider that the Fruits of the Spirit are actually God's Character. They are WHO God is! So, rejoicing is our response to God's Nature. No wonder the psalmist wrote, "In Your Presence is Fullness of JOY!" **Psalms 16:11**

When We Take Risks we stretch our Faith. To be clear, risks that Jesus invites us into are what we are thinking about here. He invited Peter onto a raging sea. Paul was invited to be a light to the Gentile world. John's presence was requested in Heaven. Those invitations reveal Christianity as a life of response to Jesus. He constantly invites us into a larger experience of Him. Of course, that experience is often filled with new challenges and opportunities. After all, Promised lands are usually occupied by Giants. But, they are giants that God will fight.

What is the POINT!? Faith is a Gift we are meant to exercise! It is meant to be a daily part of our lives. It doesn't have to be perfect. It is living by the Simple Faith that God loves me and is active in my world.

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## Talk About It...

- *What are your first thoughts regarding today's topic? Please share with the group.*
- *How would you respond to the question, "Would You Like More Faith? And if so, why?"*
- *How would you define "Faith"? How do we get more Faith?*
- *Discuss some practices that have encouraged your Faith.*
- *How does someone "live by Faith"? Discuss **2 Corinthians 1:21**.*
- *Have you ever held on to your faith during a trying experience? Would you share?*
- *How has your faith been "stretched" in the past? Discuss the faith of those Bible characters mentioned above. (Abraham and David) How was their faith "stretched"?*
- *Is there anything in today's topic that you would be excited to share with a friend?*