

**HOW TO
DEVELOP AN**

Even If Faith



Bubblegum Flavour Is Awful

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”

– Exodus 34:6b NIV

Think of someone you are close with. Is there a random fact you know about that person that others don't? Maybe you only know something about that person because you were there when it happened. For instance, I hate bubblegum flavour, but you would only know that about me if we were buying Steri Stumpis or ice cream together. If you want to get to know someone closely, you spend time with them.

So, if you were asked to describe God, how would you describe him? Pause and think about it for a moment. Is the way you described God similar to the verse above? Many things, such as TV, media, our upbringing, experiences, other people, and more, can influence how we see God. That does not, however, mean that we see him for who he really is. If you want to get to know God, you need to spend time with him, learn what the Bible says about him, and ask him to correct your misbeliefs. We all need to develop our relationship with God. It is not about performing religious duties to try and please him. It is about loving him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30).

The more you know who God is, the easier it becomes to trust him and believe in what he has said. You will know that the plans he has for you are good. You will know why you need to obey his word and you will be empowered to live out an even if faith as you develop a deep intimate relationship with him.

***Pray:** Dear God, thank you for who you are. Please reveal more to me about who you truly are. I ask that you show me any misbeliefs that I have about you and point me to Bible verses to replace that lie with the truth. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

Practical Step: Write God a letter being honest about how you are feeling. Look up what the words used to describe God in Exodus 34:6 mean.

One Moment Can Change Everything

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.” – Isaiah 6:1 NIV

As a Christian, it is important to get into God’s presence daily. Now maybe you have been around church a while and you’re thinking, “You’re probably going to tell me to read my Bible, worship and pray. Is there not something more profound I can do?” But to think like that misses the point. When the church encourages people to read their Bible, worship, and pray, what they are actually saying is to get into God’s presence. The outcome of being in God’s presence is very different from ticking off on a to-do list that you have read your Bible, worshipped, and prayed. With that in mind, ask yourself, when was the last time that I was in God’s presence other than at church on a Sunday? This is not to say that God is not with you all the time, but it is when we get into God’s presence that one moment can change everything. Experiencing God’s presence can change our mindset, perspective, emotional state, energy levels, plans, and even our physical health through a miracle of healing.

Read Isaiah 6:1-8. I’ll pause so you don’t skip this... Welcome back. When Isaiah saw the Lord, this experience had a profound impact on him. Firstly, he was in awe of God. Secondly, he was convicted of his sin. Thirdly, he was cleansed of his sin. Lastly, he was moved to go and serve the Lord and his people. Are you experiencing these four things when you get into God’s presence? They don’t have to be all experienced every time. God can do much more than that. Your responsibility is to create a space and time to get into God’s presence.

Practical Step: For the prayer today, either take a walk outside in nature and speak to God (often when we see God’s amazing creation, it becomes easier to connect with him) or spend time in worship but try do one or two songs more than you usually do so that you create space to linger with God and hear his voice.

LOOK BACK TO GO FORWARD

“I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.” – Psalm 77:11-12 NIV

Please read the whole of **Psalm 77** (it is 13 verses). In this psalm, we see that Asaph the writer is crying out to God because he is in a difficult situation (vv.1-2). It seems like who he knows God to be and what God is able to do is not lining up with what he is experiencing. So, Asaph begins to question God (vv.7-9). Have you been there before? Are you there right now?

God, I know you are a healer, but why am I still injured/ill?

God, I know you are a provider, but why am I struggling financially?

God, I know you are just, but why did that person get away with betraying/hurting/abusing me?

God, I know you are good, but why are you allowing all these evil things in the world to take place?

Then there is a turning point in Psalm 77. Asaph looks back at all the good things God has done in the past to see who God truly is. Often it is hard to see what God is busy doing in a difficult situation. It is in these moments where we begin to doubt his character and our faith caves in. BUT if you want to be able to move forward and have an even if faith, then you need to look back at all the good things that God has done for you before. This does not change your circumstances, but it will give you hope to keep moving forward. Then one day you will look back at that moment and be able to understand why you had to go through that difficult season.

Pray: *Dear God, right now I am hurting in this season I am in, and it is difficult for me to see what you are doing, but because I know you are good, I am going to choose to trust you. Please show me how you have answered my prayers previously. Amen.*

Practical Step: Make a list of 3-5 prayers God has answered or ways that he has come through for you in the past.

Socks, Ice-Cream, and Sunshine

“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NLT

Yesterday, we looked at the importance of looking back to see how God has answered our prayers and what he has done for us in the past. In these moments, we can often see how the bigger picture has turned out and yes it can help us in our moments of today but there is something more that we can do. We shift our focus from the big things of the past to the small things of today.

To be able to develop an even if faith, there is an essential heart quality that you need to develop and that is a heart full of gratitude. No matter what circumstance you are in, there is always something you can find to be thankful for. Some days it will be easier to find things than other days but sit with God until you find something. This is where it helps to look for the small simple things. Begin every morning when you wake up saying “Good morning, Lord. This morning I want to thank you for (example)...

1. Fluffy socks
2. Chocolate mint ice-cream
3. Warm sunshine to sit in

It is a very simple exercise (**try it now**), but it has an enormous effect because it shifts your focus off your circumstances and puts it onto God. This will also allow you to keep moving forward even when a season is difficult. If you’re struggling to think of something, look around you to see what you can say thank you for or think of something you did yesterday or know is coming up today that you can say thank you for. Big or small. Silly or meaningful.

Pray: Dear God, thank you for all the amazing blessings that you have given to me. Thank you for everything you are doing in my circumstance right now even if I can’t see it. Thank you that you are faithful in both the little and the big things. Please create a heart of gratitude within me. In Jesus Name, Amen.

GROW DOWN TO BUILD UP

“And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”

– Colossians 2:6-7 NLT

Imagine the tallest tree that you have ever seen. As you look way up high, you can see the leaves and the branches blowing in the breeze. The wind starts to get stronger, and the tree starts to bend. A huge storm is approaching so you go take shelter. After the rain, you run back to the tree to see if it has survived the storm. It is still standing strong. You wonder how that's possible because you see the tree is so tall. The tree has a secret. Underneath the ground is a strong root system that grows deep down into the soil to anchor the tree in place so it can withstand the storm.

If you want to withstand the storms in life and have an even if faith, then you need to put down deep spiritual roots. How do we do that? We develop (grow and mature). This means praying and asking God to create a depth of character within you. This depth is something which many people lack. Not just non-believers, but some Christians too. Why? Because to develop character means that you need to persevere through trials (James 1:2-4) and be obedient. Two activities which people would rather avoid. To pray something like this takes courage. So many people will not do it but then they will miss out on experiencing and getting to know God in a way that you only can during tough times. If you're going to pray this simple prayer, remember to keep doing those other practical steps listed within this devotion so that you are built up in your faith.

Pray: Dear God, please give me the courage to pray this. Will you please create a depth of character in me so that I can withstand the storms of life and become more like you? In Jesus Name, Amen.

Practical Step (do as many as you like): Read a Christian book, watch a sermon series, join a life group, or go for counselling if needed.



A New Life Church Devotional
By Lauren Whitfield