

faith,
Faith,
or FAITH?



Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... what did you get for Christmas? Was Santa good to you and gave you that Red Rider BB gun? Or were you a Level-4 Naughty Lister and wound up with a lump of coal? Ready, go!

Opening Prayer

**God of Faith, help us to put our full trust in you,
and remind us of your unfailing love.**

Introduction

Do you have *faith* that you have FAITH? Okay, that's going to take some clarification. Faith has a few different definitions. First, one might say, "I have faith that, when I flip on this light switch, the light will turn on." That's what we might call *faith* with a lowercase 'f'. This faith is simply an expectation that a cause will have an effect based on past experience. Faith, with a capital 'F', is different. This *Faith* is a strong belief in God or a set of doctrines of a religion where there is no proof. "I have Faith that God exists." Many of us have this type of

Faith. But there is one more definition of this word that will be the foundation for this mini-series... one that goes beyond simple expectation or hope, one that comes with a firm foundation or reliance upon God. But first...

Review Question: Did you make a New Year's resolution this time around? What was it... did you commit to exercising or eating better? Did you commit to supporting the Cardinals no matter how bad they are? Share!

Scripture

Today, we're going to talk about making a New Year's Resolution to deepen your FAITH. How? Well, let's take a look at a character from the Bible who exemplified this as well as anyone else. His name was Job. Job had bigtime FAITH, all caps. Here's your set up... Job was a righteous man, faithful to God, and was richly blessed. But up in Heaven, God and "The Adversary" have a conversation, suggesting that Job only had FAITH because he was so blessed, and that if he lost everything he would curse God. So, God allows The Adversary to strip away Job's blessings...

Read Job, chapter 1, verses 18 through 22.

Job's livestock, his family, and his health were taken away. And yet, Job still refuses to curse God. The rest of the book outlines conversations between Job and his friends, as he struggles to reconcile his current situation with his unfailing FAITH.

Question 1: Put yourself in Job's shoes. How would you have responded? Would you have been able to say with peace and resignation, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." Or would you have been curled up in the fetal position unable to face life? No shame either way... discuss!

Reflection

Part 1 – Do You Have *faith* that you have *FAITH*?

So, what is *FAITH*, all caps? What does Job's story tell us about how we can move beyond a simple belief that God exists to a strong, unwavering conviction in our loving, trustworthy, faithful Creator? This type of *FAITH* allow us to trust in God's character and promises, inspires trust, love, and obedience, and is the pathway to a deeper relationship with God. Job's *FAITH* helped him navigate life's challenges, and gave him a way to declare hope, even in his devastation. It can offer us the same. How? Well, in the first week of this series, Shelly gave us 4 reason having this type of *FAITH* is important.

First, *FAITH* is the foundation of our relationship with God. Job spent time in prayer and worship. He developed such a deep connection with his Creator that they had one-on-one conversations by the end of the book. Our *FAITH*, then, like Job's, can be built on trust and communication through prayer, and allows us to hold onto the

character of God we find in the Bible... that God is holy, loving, generous, and faithful. Job's story reminds us that God is good and working in the situation.

Second, *FAITH* gives us hope and strength daily. Like plugging an appliance into an outlet, plugging into God's power allows us to function. *FAITH* is the cord and God is the electricity, allowing us to focus on Him instead of the struggle, receiving the courage to do what scares us, to stand strong in the turmoil, and receive peace when life seems chaotic. Job focused on his relationship with God instead of his problems, giving him hope for the future. In chapter 13, verse 15, Job even says, "though God might kill me, I will hope in Him." (NLT)

Third, *FAITH* allows us to look at the world through God's eyes. The Bible tells us that Job was compassionate toward others, something that didn't fall away, even in his trials. Our *FAITH* inspires acts of kindness and service and helps us to see people as we see them.

Finally, *FAITH* connects us to salvation and eternal life. In the 19th chapter, verse 25, Job says, "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last." (NLT) Our *FAITH* allows us to hope in a future where we will see God face-to-face, and all our struggles will cease. Do you have faith that you have *FAITH*?

Question 2: Analyze these 4 benefits of *FAITH*. Is there one that you feel you do well? Is there another you struggle with? Which speaks to you the most?

Part 2 – Building Your Faith Routine

Now with a clear understanding of why *FAITH* is important, in week 2, Shelly gave us some tips on *how* to develop it. As a yoga instructor, she likened it to exercise... building your *FAITH* muscles. The more you work your muscles, the more they grow and support you. Also, when you don't use your muscles, they begin to fatigue, shrink, and waste away. Our faith is the same way... it strengthens under pressure, weakens under neglect, aches when tested, and builds through resistance. The more you use it the stronger it grows.

So, how do we build our *FAITH* muscles? Just as with any self-improvement plan, having a plan or routine helps keep you on track. Shelly gives us 3 categories of *FAITH* building practices that can help build your *FAITH* routine, and the first is...

Spiritual Exercises

These include things like prayer, meditation, reading the Bible, and daily devotionals. These activities are like lifting weights to build muscles for your *FAITH*. Spiritual practices deepen our relationship with God and build the foundation of trust and reliance upon God. The second category is...

Living Our Your Faith

Shelly offers examples like stepping out of your comfort zone, using your belief to make mindful decisions, taking advantage of serving opportunities, seeing others through God's eyes, and a practice of gratitude in this category. These are where you take the spiritual exercises and bring them out onto the practice field. What good is building the muscles if you don't use them... put your spiritual exercises into practice. Finally...

Connect with Your Faith Community

In this category, we have things like fellowship, mentoring, sharing your story, and ministering to others. Staying on a workout routine is tough if you have no one to keep you accountable and support you through it. Your FAITH works the same way... connect to others who are working on it, too.

Question 3: Shelly encouraged us to pick one or two of these to focus on to start our 2026. Take a look at these 3 categories of Faith Building exercises. What category or specific practice speaks to you? Which are you doing well and which are you needing to work on? (Are you skipping spiritual leg day?)

Closing

How is your FAITH? As we start 2026, make this a focus for you this year. FAITH is the foundation for the relationship we have with God and knowing him personally. FAITH gives us strength and hope

through the midst of our trials, trusting God's guidance, provision, and promises. It allows us to live differently, loving others and seeing them as God sees them. And finally, FAITH gives us the sure and certain hope of a future where we will suffer no longer. FAITH isn't a tool or a finish line or reward. FAITH is a muscle you have to keep working every day. Exercise that muscle, and develop the kind of FAITH, all caps, of Job.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations
and close in prayer.**