



DARING FAITH

TAKING RISKS, STANDING STRONG

January 2020

21-Day Fast - Jan 5-25



The goal of fasting is to draw nearer to God. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose; it hits the reset button of our soul and renews us from the inside out. It also enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of God and prepares our hearts for all the good things God desires to bring into our lives. Remember, your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and, most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

During this 21 day fast we are seeking God for spiritual breakthrough in our lives, our church, and in our community! We believe in a God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we could ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). We are stronger and better together and when we pray together we can accomplish more. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Matthew 18:19)

Why you should fast:

If you do not already know of the power and importance of fasting, here are some very important facts:

- Fasting was an expected discipline in both the Old and New Testament eras. For example, Moses fasted at least two recorded 40-day periods. Jesus fasted 40 days and reminded His followers to fast, **“when you fast,”** not if you fast.
- Fasting and prayer can restore the loss of the “first love” for your Lord and result in a more intimate relationship with Christ.
- Fasting is a Biblical way to truly humble yourself in the sight of God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). King David said, **“I humble myself through fasting.”**
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in brokenness, repentance and a transformed life.
- Fasting can transform your prayer life into a richer and more personal experience.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival in your own life – and make you a channel of revival to others.

If you fast, you will find yourself being humbled. You will discover more time to pray and seek God’s face. And as He leads you to recognize and repent of unconfessed sin, you will experience special blessings from God.

Types of Fasts

Total Fast

This is a full and complete fast, no food or drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16. This type of fast should be done with extreme caution and not for extended periods of time. (Pastor Myron does not recommend this one for this length of time.)

Complete Fast

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option. When Jesus fasted in the desert, the Bible says, "After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry." This verse does not mention Jesus being thirsty. (see Luke 4:1-2)

Partial Fast

This would be not eating one main meal you would usually eat on a daily routine, such as breakfast, or lunch, or dinner. This meal would be skipped until the fast was over.

Half-Day Fast

This fast is sometimes called the "Jewish Fast" and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown. This is the fast John Wesley participated in. (see Acts 10:30-31)

Selective Fast

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

Soul Fast

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

Join us on our 21-Day Adventure where we will have Daring Faith to take risk and stand strong. During this time we will have a 21-Day devotional that you can use. We are also encouraging individuals to read through the book of Joshua because we will be focusing in on that book on Sunday mornings.

***Note:** Avoid caffeinated drinks and chewing gum and mints even if your breath is bad. These items stimulate digestive action in your stomach and may make you feel hungry. Drink decaffeinated mint tea to assist with your breath.*

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON – DAY 1



Verse for Today - 1 John 4:4 (NIV) You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

We are beginning a 21 day Daring Faith Adventure! Why? Because as we enter this new year we need to develop 2020 vision and the best way to do that is to discover what God wants from us and then step out in faith by taking risk and standing strong. As we begin this adventure, we want to encourage you to read through the book of Joshua. There are 24 chapters you will be able to read one chapter a day and still have 3 more to finish once the fast is over. Our goal is to finish this time with breakthrough in our lives (victory spiritually, victory over habits, and victory over the challenges we face), and a renewed faith in what God can and will do through us. This will be difficult but the results will be worth it so hold on for an exciting journey!

As we begin looking at Joshua chapter one we find God talking to Joshua. Moses has died and Joshua is to be the new leader of the Israelites. Joshua was one of only two adults who experienced Egyptian slavery and lived to enter the Promised Land. Joshua was given a monumental task to undertake and I'm sure it came with some angst. He wouldn't just enter the Promised Land, he would lead the Israelites into it! Three times, in just three verses, God told Joshua to be "**strong and courageous**" and three more times, in four verses, He told him that **He would be with him**. That was a great comfort but I'm still his brain was a bit overwhelmed. It was going to take Daring Faith! Having faith is the same as having courage, fear usually accompanies it. Franklin D. Roosevelt once said; "*Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.*" For Joshua the something else that was more important than fear was honoring God, putting him first in everything.

We too have been called to be strong and courageous and we have also been promised that God will be with us. As we face the challenges ahead of us our fears will scream out at us but just as Joshua, we need to be strong and courageous! Joshua had fear and the way he overcame it was by following what God said. In Joshua 1:7-8 (NLT) God instructed Joshua, "**Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed...**"

During this 21 day journey, and beyond, it is my hope and prayer that we too will follow Joshua's example and create a life long habit of doing the same thing that God instructed him to do in the paragraph above. Together we are stronger together and we will see breakthroughs and renewed faith.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY PAUL MACGREGOR
When Leaders Fail - DAY 2

I recently had someone ask me where I went to church. When I told them that we were a Wesleyan church their response was “So you follow John Wesley”? Well, not exactly. We use the Wesleyan name because our theology and beliefs are closely aligned with what Wesley believe. But we do not follow anybody except Jesus Christ! I doubt Wesley would even have been in favor of his name being used. Quick history lesson: John Wesley did not found the Wesleyan church. Wesley started the Methodist church, the Wesleyan-Methodist church (what we now call the Wesleyan Church) is an off shoot of the Methodists. But that is a story for another day.

So how do we picture John Wesley in our minds? As some giant pastor, a man of large stature and fierce dedication to preaching the gospel? Well that is only partially true. First off Wesley was actually a rather short man, only about 5 and ½ feet tall. While it is true that later in life Wesley had an immense passion for preaching the Word, Wesley had what we might call a bit of a rough start. Wesley, then an Anglican priest, traveled to America in 1735. John witnessed to many Indians and Europeans while there and saw conversions in both groups. However, while he was there John also fell in love! The object of his affections was Sophia Hopkey. Wesley put off marrying Sophie because he feared that a serious relationship would take away from his missionary work with the Indians. Sophie later marries someone else instead. Wesley determines that this marriage means that she has turned away from her devotion to God and denies her communion at Mass. This leads to a series of defamation lawsuits, appearances before a corrupt judge (who just happens to be Sophie’s uncle) and threats of Wesley’s imprisonment. Wesley flees the colonies and returns to England a broken man. It was at this point Wesley sought out the council of a friend Peter Bohler, a Moravian. Wesley had previous experience with the Moravians and was impressed with their faith. Of his own faith Wesley felt that he had none. He asked Bohler how he could go on preaching with no faith (he planned to quit preaching). Boehler’s response was “Preach faith until you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith”. Because of Bohler and the influence of the Moravians Wesley did continue to preach. He became a preacher of quite renown, traveling over 250,000 miles on horseback to deliver early morning sermons around England. He often faced opposition and ridicule but continued to preach well into his 80’s delivering over 40,000 sermons!

I do not tell you all this to disparage Wesley’s name nor impugn his character. Rather I see Wesley as an example of leadership that we can all desire to imitate. He was not a perfect man, though he did strive for perfection. The Bible is full of stories of imperfect men (and women) who serve a perfect God. King David comes to mind, he was an adulterer and a murderer, yet the Bible describes him as a “man after God’s own heart”. Moses was also a murderer, had speech problems, a lack of confidence and bit of a nasty temper (he did BREAK the Ten Commandments). Sampson, Peter, **Rahab** and Paul are other examples. The truth is every person in the Bible besides Jesus is imperfect, because we are all imperfect. But God can still use us. Despite our weaknesses, despite our sin God loves us and has a plan for our lives. Only through him can we find the faith that Wesley sought after and then like Wesley we can lead others in their faith journey.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER ST.CLAIR
Fresh Starts - DAY 3

Ah. A new year. A fresh start. A time when we decide that we need to get fit, eat right, break bad habits, start good ones, and ultimately resolve to be better this year than we were last. It's the time of year that the gyms are busy, the weight loss companies offer deals we can't refuse, and the organizational tools are all on display and on sale.

You may even find yourself, in the midst of planning your meals and your garage overhaul, deciding that this is THE YEAR you're going to read through the Bible from start to finish. I joke often with people that I'm well versed in the book of Genesis because I've read it at least thirteen times – every January when I start my Bible in a year program...again.

What is surprising to most are the religious roots of resolutions. Believing to have been an ancient Babylonian practice over 4,000 years ago, their celebration of the new year took place in March, when the crops were planted. They had a massive celebration, honored the king, and vowed to repay any debts or return anything they had borrowed. If they kept their word, they would be blessed by their gods in the upcoming year and if not, they would fall out of their god's favor.

Julius Caesar established January 1st as the beginning of the year in 46 BC. January was named for Janus, the god spirit found in doorways which has special significance for the Romans. Believing he looked back at the past year and ahead at the future, they would offer sacrifices to Janus as well as make promises of good conduct for the year.

Early Christians would take the first of the year and reflect on the mistakes they made in the past year and resolving to do better. John Wesley created the **Covenant Renewal Service** in 1740 which included prayer and hymns and were held on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day and were often attended as an alternative to the traditional New Year's celebrations.

While there are religious roots to the concept of resolutions, to make or not make them is not found in the Bible. What the Bible does is to encourage us to examine our lives regularly and to seek God's assistance to become better people every day.

“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord” (Lamentations 3:40)

Reflect on your resolutions for this year. Have you invited God to be a part of them? You have much chance for success if he is, depending on your commitment for **John 5:15** declares, **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”**

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
Late Revelations - DAY 4

I don't have very many memories of my biological father. One memory I do have is my brothers and I acting up early one Sunday morning, I believe, while we were waiting on our mother to finish getting ready for church. She came out of the bathroom and made us all sit on the couch and taped our mouths shut including my father. I didn't think much about it then but years later I wondered why he would have allowed such a thing. Maybe he was a bit of an instigator and felt bad that we got in trouble. (*I know I would never do anything like that.*) Recently I had an epiphany (*A sudden and profound understanding of something.*), I believed he did it because he was choosing to identify with us. This small epiphany was very meaningful to me and gave me greater insights into my father and a positive memory. In the same way Jesus came in order that He could identify with us. **Hebrews 4:15 (NCV)** says **“For our high priest is able to understand our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way that we are, but he did not sin.** Christ identifying with us gives us a greater insight into our Heavenly Father. We realize how much he loves us and that gives greater meaning to **John 3:16 (NLT)** which says, **“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.”**

In Joshua chapter 4 the Israelites were instructed to have each tribe grab a stone from the Jordan River. These stones would be piled up and form a memorial to remind them and the world of what God had done. In the same way Jesus gave something in order that we can remember what He had done for us. That is the sacrament (*a religious ceremony or ritual regarded as imparting divine grace*) of communion. The early church participated in this memorial sacrament frequently and when John Wesley was asked how often a person should take communion he stated "*as often as you can.*"

May we never forget what our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ has done for us. In order to have spiritual breakthrough, we need to remember!

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 **“For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it.”**

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY PAUL MACGREGOR
Click Bait - DAY 5

I have a confession! I love click bait! You know those completely pointless stories that show up on your news feed? Sure, we complain about them, that they clog up our feed and are full of annoying ads and pop ups. But if we are honest we all have probably clicked on a few... from time to time... every day. How else are we going to find out the 21 things we never knew about the Beverly Hillbillies or which favorite child stars are leading lives as hardened criminals?? Getting sucked into click bait is easy. We click on one and then another... and another. We know we are supposed to be doing something important (like writing devotionals for church) but we just have to find out what 15 clever tricks only the most productive people know (#15 will shock us, it should probably be read less click bait). Before we know it we have wasted an entire hour (or more!) pointlessly browsing the Web. Don't believe me? Studies show that the average person now spends 24 hours a week (an entire day!) on the internet! Some of that time may be work related, research, emails etc. But the majority of that time is on social media (2 hours and 22 minutes a day).

The point of all this is not to say that we should less time online and more time in the Word (though that is certainly true). Nor is it to argue that if the Bible were written like click bait maybe more people would read it (Ten life changing rules we should all follow. But Jesus says these two are even more important!). My point is this. Sin is a lot like click bait. It's attractive, we know we shouldn't do it, but we get sucked in anyway. The more we sin, the easier it becomes and like click bait we soon don't even notice it. Here's another thing about click bait. Have you ever noticed that once you start reading one article, similar articles appear? Pretty soon your whole feed is full of stories about Star Wars, or whatever it is you like to read about. Just like internet bots learn what attracts us most, Satan does the same. Satan knows our weaknesses and exploits them. He puts the same temptations in front of us and waves them in our faces, daring us to reach out and take hold. It is only through the power of Christ that we are able to overcome these temptations.

James 4:7 “ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER ST.CLAIR
Chasing Squirrels - DAY 6

Ever just forget what day it was, remember, lose track of time, and then not finish something you started?

That is me, more often than I care to admit. It typically happens when my to-do list isn't a mile long. I have days where I can't stay focused on one thing in particular. I'll start a project, get sidetracked, do something else halfway, and then, while I'm trying to fall asleep, I'll remember I didn't finish what I started.

It wasn't because I was busy and didn't get to it. It wasn't because there were more pressing tasks that I needed to do. It's not anyone else's fault that it didn't get done. I just didn't make it happen.

Often times I think we are the same way about our time with God. It's not that we don't WANT to spend time with Him, because I think we all get that nagging feeling, the one of Him tapping us on the shoulder and saying "Hey... I'm here. Come spend time with me." It's that we say we're going to, lose track of time, or something else gets in the way and then we don't. Or at least that's how it is in my world.

It's a discipline that some just have and others have to really work toward. I'm in the latter group. There are so many squirrels running through my brain that sometimes I don't even realize God is there. (Hey, I'm not proud of it, just being honest!) I picture Him standing there, arms folded, staring at me, the same way I stare at the students who are doing anything but paying attention to me.. whether in youth, when I'm subbing, or even in my own home. Eventually, they realize I'm waiting on them and they come around... and in the same way that I think to myself, "kids will be kids" and shake my head, I see Him doing that, too.

I tell you all of this because maybe you're like me and you just aren't perfect. (Shocking revelation about me, I know. ::grin::) It's okay. You're still very much loved.

By God and me both.

And I hope you never forget that.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
Rooted In - DAY 7

I like the different kinds of decorative grasses and I like to use them in landscaping. Pampas grass can be a very beautiful decorative grass until it takes over an area and kills out the other plants. I never realized how deeply rooted Pampas grass became. I read on the internet that it was almost impossible to kill so we decided we would transplant it. What we found is that it is VERY difficult to dig up and you end up using a lot of energy, determination, and effort.

Pampas grass is a great illustration of sin. Sin can look very attractive and the Bible even says that it's fun for a season (Hebrews 11:25), but it can get very rooted in, and like cancer it begins to take over our lives slowly killing out the good. (Romans 6:23).

In Joshua chapter 7 we find Israel losing a battle all because of one man's greed. Achan saw a beautiful robe, some silver and some gold. The greed within him spread like a cancer and was getting rooted in. When Joshua confronted him with the sin he said, "**I wanted them SO MUCH that I took them.**"(emphasis mine) His sin not only affected him but that of the entire Israelite community. It seemed like drastic measures were taken to rid the community of the sin but it would have spread and that would have been extremely detrimental. I've heard it said that **sin takes us farther than we want to go, causes us to stay longer than we should, and costs us more than we can pay.** This is the reason why it's vitally important to confess those sins to God and surrender our desires to Him. (I John 1:9)

True life and hope only comes through Jesus Christ! **John 10:10 (The Message)** says, "**A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.**" It takes some effort to dig sin out but the good news is you are not alone! He will never leave you or forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5) and He will guide you and help you. (John 16:7-15)

What deeply rooted sin or habit do you have that you need to confess to God and seek His help to overcome during this 21 day adventure?

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY PAUL MACGREGOR
Star Wars - DAY 8

If you know me well at all you know that I love Star Wars! I was born in 1977 just after the release of the original film. Have you seen the originals? No, have you really seen the originals? Unless you were in the movie theater in 1977 you have not seen the original (meaning I have not seen the original!). Up to 1996 the changes were very minor, so if you have an old VHS you have a fairly close copy. But after 1996 something crazy happened. George Lucas started making changes and he made LOTS of changes! Special editions, and revised special editions and ULTIMATE editions were released (the list continues from there). I tried look it up see exactly how many he made, there was too many to count. From adding aliens and CGI characters to the infamous Han shoots first controversy Lucas became notorious for making changes to his original work.

Fortunately, when it comes to the Bible we can be assured that God's word has NOT changed.

Psalm 119:89: Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever

Certainly, there are many different translations of the Bible (*though studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls show that today's translations are very similar to those from 2000 years ago*) and we know that the ancient Hebrews nor the Disciples carried around Bibles like the ones we have today. But whether you prefer King James, NIV, NLT or NRSV the message is the same! GOD loved the world SO MUCH He sent his ONE AND ONLY SON to die for OUR SINS, so that all who believe in Him may have everlasting life! (John 3:16).

We live in a world of constant change. People change jobs, change houses. Families change, kids grow up and move out. Financial situations change, one day we might have money and the next be broke. Many of those changes are out of our control (even Star Wars movies). Aren't we glad that God's word and God's promises never change?

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER ST.CLAIR
Chasing Squirrels - DAY 9

There's a not-so-popular Christmas Carol entitled "A Bleak Midwinter." Clearly it was written prior to the invention of twinkling lights and the author didn't live in current times. December is anything but bleak. But January. Oh January. January, to me, is the bleak midwinter and one of the most depressing months. Think about it. For at least a month, more if you start celebrating before Thanksgiving, it's been bright with twinkling lights, loud and cheerful with all the Christmas carols, gatherings to celebrate, gifts, and more. There's been time off work, lazy days, and then a celebration to bring in the New Year. And then.... January. We're back in the grind. The lights come down, the carols stop, and there's not a paid holiday on the horizon until May (unless you're fortunate enough to get one in February).

Yes, January is bleak and the first stanza of Rosetti's poem, now Christmas hymn, describes it perfectly. "In the bleak midwinter/ Frosty wind made moan,/ Earth stood hard as iron, / Water like a stone;"

That also describes the world before Jesus; and our lives before we came to know Christ in a personal way. Bleak. Gloomy. Dark. Lifeless.

The light came when there was darkness.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:1-5

So, this January, when life seems bleak, when we're mourning the loss of the twinkling lights, the festive songs, the presents and the gatherings, focus on the Light. Remember, Jesus said, **"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." John 8:12.**

"In the Bleak Midwinter" ends with all you have to do to receive the light.

What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring him a lamb;
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him;
Give my heart.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
Taking a Risk - DAY 10

Tithing is one of those issues that people hate hearing about yet it is directly linked to our spiritual faith in Jesus Christ. Pastors may go months without ever saying anything about it but when they do preach about it... they risk people getting upset and saying, "All he ever talks about is money." Acknowledging the risk... here I go.

What is tithing? The tithing is that *tenth of our income* that we give to God, which enables Him to move on our behalf in the area of blessings. The Bible records numerous accounts of man tithing to God. God is the creator of everything that exists. He owns everything and we are simply stewards of what we have been entrusted with. The tithing principle is this: "**He gives unto us, we give back to Him one-tenth of all that He has blessed us with.**"

The lack of a Christian tithing is 1. *An indication of our lack of faith & trust in God* – God will meet our needs and He takes care of us, He has promised it! (Philippians 4:19 Matthew 6:31-34) **2.** *An indication of our spiritual vibrancy and who or what we worship* – God tells us that we are not to have any other gods before him. (Exodus 20:2-4) Whatever we cling to and put before Him becomes an idol, a god, and an object of worship. It's amazing how much \$20.00 or \$50.00 looks when the offering plate is going by but how small it looks at the grocery store! **3.** *An indication that we do not comprehend the extent of God's great love for us.* (John 3:16-17)

Isn't tithing just an Old Testament thing? It is commanded in the Old Testament. and reiterated in the New Testament. (Matthew 5:17-19, Matthew 23:23) Jesus went even further and said that we should give everything away to come follow Him (Matthew 19:16-30)..

Why should I tithe? **1.** To show your Love for God (Mark 12:30, II Corinthians 9:7) **2.** To Worship and Honor God (Proverbs 3:9) **3.** To show your Obedience to God (Malachi 3:8) **4.** To receive blessing – However... it's not some Christian lottery! (Malachi 3:10)

Ultimately tithing boils down to a heart issue. God loves us beyond what we can ever fully comprehend! He made us, He gave His only Son for us and He longs to have a relationship with us. When we begin to grasp this just a little we will not only be willing to give Him our tithing, we will want to give Him our all!

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY PAUL MACGREGOR
Kids Camp! - DAY 11

Kid's Camp! One of my favorite times of year. The kids are so excited to get there! They can't wait for all the crazy games, fun music, swimming, hay rides, Bible Bowl competitions, BB guns and of course the snack bar! One thing they don't really look forward to (at least the boys) is taking a shower! Who would? Most kids don't like taking baths on normal days, who wants to stop all the fun at camp to take a shower? And I have to admit the showers at camp aren't that great! One year a brave councilor tried to tell the boys they should take a shower every night. That quickly became every other night and then, "well you have to at least take one before you go home!" I'm sure the parents are glad they did! Kids often come back from camp having missed a few showers and some may have worn the same outfit all week! In all the busyness and excitement it's easy for them to forget these things, because let's face it showers and clean clothes just aren't important to kids! (It's okay mom and dad, we will make sure they get home clean and safe!)

As adults we would hardly skip showers for a week! Most of us can't even fathom starting our day without a hot shower! We (hopefully) don't have to be reminded to change our clothes and brush our teeth either! Why? Well for one reason we don't like to smell gross and for another most of these things are habit part of our daily routine. But while we are so careful about caring for our physical bodies we often neglect our spiritual health. Just like the kids at camp, we get busy and we only focus on the things that are important to us. Shouldn't spending time with God be one of those things?

We know that Jesus often went off by himself to pray. **Mark 1:35** says: **And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.**

We see many more examples in the Bible of Jesus praying. If prayer was important to Jesus shouldn't it also be important to us? We need to make it a priority in our lives to seek out God and spend time with Him each day.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER ST.CLAIR
Gotta Have Faith - DAY 11

George Michael told us all in his 1987 hit that we gotta have faith but it seems so much easier to say “you gotta have faith,” than it is to actually HAVE faith. I wrestled with this concept as I studied Hebrews 11 with our Bible quiz team. I was so discouraged after reading about all those who went before me and their faith, because I felt as if I could never measure up to those listed.

So, I do what I always do when I’m struggling with a concept and I took a step back to define faith. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:1 that “faith is being **sure** of what we hope for and **certain** of what we do not see.” Faith is being sure of God’s character; that he is who he says he is. But it’s also being certain that he will do what he says he will do.

We believe things we don’t see every time we send an email, right? We hit send, and we trust that the message we have will be deposited automatically into the inbox of the person it was intended for. That’s faith – believing even when we can’t see it.

What if God told you he was going to destroy the whole world and start over with only you and your family, but you had to first build an ark with very specific instructions? Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah did it, though. And he did it not knowing what a flood even was because the Bible says that prior to that, it had never rained! That’s faith – obeying when you don’t understand it!

If you’ve never read the story of Colonel Sanders of KFC fame, google him. The short of his story is that after retiring at the age of 65, he traveled seeking someone to sell his chicken. He heard no 1009 times before he said yes. In 1964, he sold his company for \$2 million while remaining the spokesperson. What would’ve happened if he gave up after the 1008th no? That’s faith – persisting even when you don’t feel like it.

God is not a vending machine where we put money in and pick what we want. Just like our parents didn’t give us everything we wanted; God won’t give us everything we want either. He will meet our needs, not our wants. He’s more interested in making us holy rather than happy. Hebrews 11:39-40 says, “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” Faith is trusting even when we don’t get what we want.

Faith is trusting even when our minds and bodies are screaming “this is not the right way!” It’s believing when we can’t see it; it’s obeying when we don’t understand; it’s persisting when we don’t feel like it.

So yes, George Michael, we do need to have faith, but our faith won’t “**rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**” (1 Cor. 2:5)

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON

I'm glad I didn't quit! - DAY 12

When my son was young I took him with me to West Virginia for his first skiing experience. This was his first experience and needless to say he was excited until he put on his skis and immediately fell down. He got up and we eventually headed to Ski school so he could learn the basics from a seasoned instructor. After we went through Ski school he was ready to hit the slopes. Unfortunately, in going down the first big hill he immediately fell again, and again. He was about ready to call it quits; I could hear the discouragement in his voice. I, along with some others, would help him up and continue to encourage him not to give up. By the end of the day he had advanced from the bunny slope to the green slopes and then to the blue slopes just one step below the most difficult black slopes. At the end of the day I'll never forget my son's words, "**I'm glad I didn't quit!**" I was very proud of my son's persistence. He was rewarded with a sense of accomplishment and some great stories to tell. I only wish I would have done as well.

Often in this life we face difficult times. We fall down, we get bruised, and our determination to proceed is challenged. During these times as a Christian we need to realize that we are NOT ALONE! God has given us his Holy Spirit as the encourager and counselor. (John 14:26) He has also surrounded us with many others to encourage us and cheer us on. (Hebrews 10:24-25, 12:1-3) In the end we will have a great reward. My favorite verse in the New Testament is **Galatians 6:9 (The Message)** "**So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit.**"

We are now just past the half way point in our 21 day Daring Faith Adventure. Let's continue to believe for breakthrough and not quit! Keep pressing on! There is a great reward for the Christian and in the end you will say, "**I'm glad I didn't quit!**"

Philippians 3:12-14 (CEV) "**I have not yet reached my goal, and I am not perfect. But Christ has taken hold of me. So I keep on running and struggling to take hold of the prize. 13My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead. 14I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven. This is the prize that God offers because of what Christ Jesus has done.**"

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY PAUL MACGREGOR
The Loftiest Monk - DAY 13

There is a story that I love about an ancient monk named Simeon who, during the first century, decided to construct a pillar as his place of abode. Simeon, who lived in the general area of Antioch, had become an anchorite (or solitary monk) during his early adulthood. At some point later in life Simeon went out into the dessert and began to construct this pillar. He remained perpetually on the pillar for the last decades of his life, which he continued to construct until it reached a great height. Simeon obviously felt that this act of self-isolation allowed him to concentrate solely on spiritual realities and to prepare him for taking an active part in the supernatural warfare that enveloped the Earth. I'm not sure how well his plan of isolation worked! People found Simeon fascinating and a steady stream of visitors soon arrived. Many conversions happened at that pillar and warring factions were reconciled there. All because of a sunburned monk passing messages up and down in a bucket.

When we think about monks isolation is exactly what comes to mind. Indeed this was the intention of many of the monks. To give up everything, except life's most basic necessities, to fully focus on God. But monks were also known for their kindness, their generosity to strangers, visiting the sick and for missionary work. The Cistercian Monks were known for going into wild and difficult locations. In order to survive the monks developed skills in draining swamps, clearing forests, breeding livestock and raising grains. These skills, in turn, they passed on to the community which benefitted everyone.

Most of us probably do not aspire to be monks. But are we isolating ourselves in different ways? Do we keep to ourselves in public? Do we see a needy stranger and cross to the other side of the road? Do we shy away from sharing the gospel or inviting others to church because they might be offended? Who do we want to see in our church? People like us? Other Christians? We should desire to see a church full of lost people hearing the good news! We need to follow the example of the monks, living a life of service dedicated to helping the poor, sick and disabled. We need to engage our communities in Jesus's name and share his love with those who are hurting. So the time has come to come down off our pillars and tell someone about Jesus today!

Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT) Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations,[a] baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER ST.CLAIR
Hyperbole? - DAY 14

The last year has been filled with classes working toward ordination. I'm nowhere near done, but the class work is, most of the time, fascinating. The Old Testament class was one of my favorites, which was a shock to me. But it was interesting to me that many of the things we learned in the Old Testament in the class were stories we skip over when teaching the students. But one week, we dove into a story we've taught the kids over and over again... Jonah.

Remember him? He's the one who turned his back on God's command and went the other way when told what to do and ultimately ended up in the stomach of a big fish. The professor asked us to decide if the story of Jonah was historical or just a fish tail and to defend that argument in a two page paper.

To need to choose was so confusing for me because I just always took the story of Jonah as fact. I certainly don't need two pages for that... a post-it note will do. It's in the Bible, the Bible is true, therefore, Jonah must be true, right? So, in order to dig a little deeper into this, I needed take a step back and figure out why someone might think its hyperbole. The story of Jonah reads very much like a headline seen in the racks at the grocery store checkout, "Man swallowed by fish, spit up on shore three days later."

Quite honestly, we're so scientific today. We need to have a reason for everything. Even I find myself asking "why?" as I drill down into the root cause of something.

But as Christians, we need to have a category for the miraculous. We need to be able to see things that are unexplainable and go "**wow, God...that was amazing.**"

In the beginning of the year, our GC groups talked about the attributes of God and one of them is unexplainable. Nothing is more unexplainable than a man spending three days in the belly of a whale, right?

"That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, '**No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.**'" **1 Corinthians 2:9**

Regardless of where you stand on the Jonah issue, open your mind to the impossible and see where God will take you.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
Retirement - DAY 15

During the season of fall, life begins to wind down and the leaves change their color. Just as there are seasons in nature so there are seasons in life. Many people look at fall as their “retirement” years and look forward to leisurely enjoying life. This concept is relatively new. Before the Social Security Act of 1935, retirement wasn’t something many U.S. citizens participated in. In fact the concept of a “leisure retirement” grew out of a marketing campaign by Del Webb back in the 1960’s.¹ This concept, as idealistic as it is, has caught on and even been brought into the church. There have been many occasions that I have heard the comment that *“I’ve done my part, it’s time for the younger folks to take over.”* The concept of retirement from Christian service is not something that I find in the Bible. There are numerous examples in the Bible and in Church history of people continuing to serve God throughout their entire life. Psalm 71:18 (NLT) says, “Now that I am old and gray... Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me.”

As a child I attended Bible Club². I remember meeting after school in various homes growing up but the classes were taught predominately by one person, Anna Miller. Several years ago I had the privilege of seeing Anna again after nearly 35 years. Anna was 88 years old at the time and was still faithfully serving the Lord and teaching Bible Clubs. At that point she was teaching two a week with one being 30 miles from her home. Not only did she continue to teach Bible Clubs but she also taught the children at her church on Sunday’s and directed the Vacation Bible School. Anna followed Paul’s admonition in Titus 2 as well as his example set forth in Philippians 3:14 **“I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.”**

God is calling each of His followers, no matter what their age, to be making a difference in this life until the day He calls us home. May I be found faithful on that day! (Joshua 24:14, Matthew 25:21, I Peter 4:10)

If Caleb could do this at 85 (Joshua 15) and Anna did this at 88, what is our excuse for not faithfully continuing to make a difference?

1. <http://www.careerthoughtleaders.com/blog/too-old-to-work-too-young-to-die-the-history-of-retirement/>
2. <https://bcmintl.org/>

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY PAUL MACGREGOR

Spoiler Alert - DAY 16

Has this ever happened to you? You are anxiously waiting for the next instalment of your favorite movie, TV show or book to come out, you have been careful to avoid any spoilers, anything that might ruin your experience. Then it happens. You are scrolling through Facebook and there it is, a spoiler. You read it, you can't unread it. "Maybe it's wrong" you tell yourself, "fake news!", but in your heart you know what happened. Or maybe you are a sports fan and your team played the big game, but you had to record it. As soon as you get home you are going to put your feet up and watch the game yourself. You lock yourself away avoiding all forms of news and any human interaction. Then as you step onto the elevator a stranger turns to you and says "Can you believe that the game last night? Who would have ever thought the Lions would beat Dallas?" Spoilers! When James Holzhauer went on his astonishing Jeopardy run last summer viewership went through the roof! Suddenly everyone wanted to watch and see if "Jeopardy James" would live to fight another day. He seemed unstoppable and with former champion Ken Jennings' record squarely in site it appeared James's winning streak knew no end. Then suddenly on his 33rd appearance, James lost. News networks across the nation ran the story of his departure before Jeopardy even aired in most markets. Spoilers! (The funny thing is this spoiler actually increased viewership and drove ratings through the roof!)

Whether you are a fan of Sci-fi, Romance, Drama or Comedy you would probably agree that spoilers ruin the movie going experience. However, the Bible is the greatest story ever told (and it's all true!). It's the ultimate story of good vs evil, the story of a loving, powerful supreme God vs the evils of sin and the devil. Satan has unleashed his forces against us and we have no hope, except for one. That hope is Jesus Christ who defeated sin and death on the cross and who will come again to establish His kingdom on Earth. Many have tried to predict this second coming, but there are no spoilers here. Matthew 24:36 says ""However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows." But there is one spoiler we can all count on, we've read the end of the book and we know..... God wins!

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER ST.CLAIR
Squealing Tires - DAY 17

If you joined us Christmas Eve, you may have heard a scream so loud that you thought something was wrong. Nothing was wrong, quite the opposite really. But the screamer was me, it happened in the Well, was rumored to have been heard in the parking lot and resembled squealing tires, and I make no apologies.

Brazen of me, I know.

My oldest came home to surprise me. I didn't know he was coming. I had been preparing myself for a Christmas Eve and day without all my children for weeks. And then I hear my daughter say, "Mom, I have a Christmas present for you." In my head, I thought, "If it's not my kid, it's no big deal," and that's when he stepped into the Well. I screamed, had the good sense to put down my hot chocolate before I raced across the room to envelope him in a hug as tears formed in my eyes.

I couldn't believe it. For the first time in years, I had my whole family at church and on Christmas Eve. It truly was a Christmas miracle for me.

I couldn't stop looking down the row at all of them. I couldn't believe how complete I felt. I couldn't believe that I was going to have all four of them Christmas morning. Yes, I was one lucky mama.

Nearing the end of the service, still in awe that they were all here, I stopped to think about just how happy I was that one of my kids came home. Matthew wasn't the prodigal son. He wasn't the one that we left the ninety-nine to find. He wasn't lost. He just came home to see his family because it was important to him and to us. (He knows the greatest gift for me is to have all of my children together.)

Don't you think that's how God must feel when we show up to worship Him? It's not that we're lost, or don't believe or don't love Him... but sometimes, we don't show up. And as happy as my heart was when I saw Matthew, I think God feels the same way when we show up whether it was planned or a surprise.

Maybe He doesn't scream and scare those around Him, but I do believe His heart leaps with joy knowing His children are home and all worshiping together.

Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
Retirement - DAY 18

A disgruntled man sat on his porch one Sunday morning when he saw a woman heading to worship. The disgruntled man said in a condescending way, “there goes another worshiper on her way to church.” The woman stopped and replied “**no sir, I am the church on my way to worship.**” Think about that for a moment... “**I’m the church on my way to worship.**”

So often I hear people saying that they are going to “church,” not going to “worship.” Followers of Jesus Christ are the “church!” Ephesians 1:23 (NLT) says, “**And the church is his body.**” I Corinthians 12:27 (NIV) says, “**Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.**” When we gather on Sunday mornings with other followers of Christ we are coming together to worship. The term “worship” is both a noun and a verb; it’s an attitude and an action.

Psalm 100: 1-2 (NIV) says, “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. 2 Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.”

Psalm 150 (Message) says, “Hallelujah! Praise God in his holy house of worship, praise him under the open skies; Praise him for his acts of power, praise him for his magnificent greatness; Praise with a blast on the trumpet, praise by strumming soft strings; Praise him with castanets and dance, praise him with banjo and flute; Praise him with cymbals and a big bass drum, praise him with fiddles and mandolin. Let every living, breathing creature praise GOD! Hallelujah!”

As the body of Christ, the Church when we gather together on Sunday mornings, it’s to WORSHIP. *We don’t go for our benefit; we go to give honor and glory to God, the creator of everything.* However, as we worship God, we also benefit! Too often we have it backwards. We want worship to be all about ME -- what can I get out of it, rather than what can I give. We complain about the music, the preaching, the offering, and everything else. When we have a proper perspective on who we are and what we are doing it will dramatically change our faithfulness, our focus, and our attitude. When that changes we will get so much more out of worship. Join with us, church, every Sunday as together we WORSHIP!

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY PAUL MACGREGOR

Spoiler Alert - DAY 19

An old nursery rhyme I learned as a child asked “Mary, Mary quite contrary how does your garden grow? The answer, according to my six year old self, was with silver bells and ‘taco shells’. My parents found this quite amusing. The correct answer is of course ‘cockle shells’ and even now I don’t know what those are! While the nursery rhyme possibly contains religious references, it has little to do with Wesleyan History. But I would ask a new question with similar phrasing ‘how does your church grow?’.

This is the opening paragraph of a recent paper I wrote for Wesleyan History and Discipline. We were not studying the church growth movement of the 80’s and 90’s but instead the success of the Wesleyan Methodist and Pilgrim Holiness churches during the 1930’s. In the paper I surmised that the key to their success was evangelism. The Pilgrims believed in the importance of evangelism and they saw substantial growth, between 1930 and 1946 their ranks swelled by over 50 percent, both in the number of churches and the number of people attending those churches. They did this through revivals, camp meetings, church planting, bible colleges and Sunday school. While starting a bible college may not be in our immediate future at PFWC. I do think we can take some tips from the Pilgrims in areas of evangelism, especially when it comes to Sunday school and revivals.

I would like to follow with another question of not just ‘how does your church grow?’ but instead ‘how is your church growing?’. In other words, which matters more growing the SIZE of your church or growing the PEOPLE to be salt and light in the community? Does the number of people in the pews matter or is the number of relationships being built? I would propose that it is the latter. Discipleship of our children, teens and adults is essential. Helping individuals to grow in their relationship in Christ and to go out and share the gospel with others is the key.

It is all of our responsibilities to see or church grow, both numerically and spiritually. **Matthew 9:35-38** says “**And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”**

There are people in our community who are hurting, who are looking for answers. We might not have all the answers, but we know the one who does! That is Jesus Christ! It is our job to point people toward Him! So don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and invite someone to church. You just might get a yes!

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY HEATHER ST.CLAIR
Squealing Tires - DAY 20

When your family looks different than others, often times it's difficult to see or to understand. Most of the time, I run into this with people who have never experienced divorce, a blended family, step-parents, and they look at those who come from those situations and they don't understand. I often ask my kids about situations because my parents have been married for 45 years. I don't know what it's like to be shuffled between houses or to maintain two households.

But it was one of my children who helped me to understand that family looks different for all of us. I was divorced, it was just the three of us living in our home and my ex-husband just remarried. If you were to ask me to list my family, I would've told you there were three of us and a dog. That was my family.

But my youngest, seven at the time, came home with an ornament with five heads on a Christmas tree. I was baffled. "Who are these people?" I asked in bewilderment, expecting imaginary friends to be listed. "It's my family," she said, matter-of-factly and then proceeded to list not just her brother and me, but her dad and new step-mom. She saw family differently than I did.

From that moment on, I've been hyperaware of what family looks like for others. For some, it's a family with a mom, dad, and kids. For others it's mom, dad, step-mom, step-dad, step-siblings. It could just be mom and kids or dad and kids, or maybe it's grandma and kids. Regardless of who comprises a family, it doesn't make it wrong, just different.

And no, that's not the way God intended. But it's the way that it is. My family now is very different. I have a husband and four kids. I can't imagine my life without them. Two additional kids in my life has been crazy and hectic as well as a relationship with their mother, but it's been a joy to be able to watch these children grow up; to be impacted in such a great way by them.

No, God did not intend for divorce. He didn't intend for many things in this world. But he is a God of resurrection. From the death of two marriages came a family that isn't perfect, one that has struggled but refuses to be a statistic, and hopefully, one that provides hope for others.

1 Peter 1:3 (NLT)

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation,

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
Squirrel attack - DAY 21

I came home last week after a long day, sat down on my couch and prepared to unwind. After relaxing a while, I decided it was time to head to bed. I opened the bathroom door as I went to brush my teeth and immediately noticed my bathroom was in disarray. As I scanned the room, I noticed a squirrel hiding behind my pedestal sink. I yelled, closed the door, and proceeded to grab a golf club and a bucket. I then opened the door and attempted to capture that squirrel. The squirrel escaped not only from me but from the bathroom as well. The next 45 minutes were a hilarious adventure of trying to rid my apartment of this unwelcome visitor.

While squirrels are cute and many enjoy feeding them outside, squirrels can be very destructive. When all was said and done my apartment was a disaster area with one busted out window, a broken broom, a broken stereo speaker and several other issues! The Bible says that Satan appears as an Angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14) yet he is very destructive.

I was unable to get rid of the squirrel by myself. After running around for about 15 minutes I called a friend of mine to come help. Together we chased him, swatted at him, and finally trapped him. When we face attacks of our enemy, Satan, too often we think we can take care of it by ourselves. Some issues are bigger than we can handle. The Bible speaks about the amassed power we have when we partner with the other Christians. It says in, **Matthew 18:19-20 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."** This is a great promise but sometimes we are too embarrassed to ask someone to partner with us. This is an issue of pride and the Bible says (Proverbs 16:18) that pride comes before the fall.

After we trapped the squirrel, we released it outside, and then the cleanup began. I could have simply cleaned up and then head to bed, but the risk of the squirrel re-entering my apartment would have remained. I had to take action to ensure he couldn't get in the same way again. In our lives we must do the same. We must examine the areas that we are strong and the areas that we are weak and ensure that the enemy is not welcome. If we fail to do this we will be open to recurrent attacks of the enemy. Our enemy, no matter how innocent he may appear, carries many destructive diseases. The Bible says that Satan is like a lion seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

In this life, realize that we have an arsenal, which is greater than anything the enemy can throw our direction! First we have the Holy Spirit (John 14:16); second we have the Spiritual Armor that God gives us (Ephesians 6); third we have our Christian brothers and sisters. **Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching"** Stand firm this week and take advantage of all that God has provided to you.

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON

Mistaken for Jesus - DAY 22

Some time ago I was in a fast food restaurant during lunch time. I had just finished my meal and was exiting through the crowd when a woman said "Jesus Christ!" I turned to her and then spoke "I'm not Him." It was an obnoxious response to make her think about what she said but as I began to think about it, I realized that actually I should be mistaken as Jesus. Not just me but every person who professes to be a Christian. **2 Corinthians 3:18** says, "**And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit**"

Robert Wadlow, believed to be the world's largest man at 8' 11" tall had a size 37 shoe. Those are some big shoes but can you imagine telling others to follow your example as you follow Christ? That's exactly what Paul told others to do (I Corinthians 11:1) and by making that comment he was having to fill some very big shoes. The apostle Peter wrote "**1 Peter 2:21** "**To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.**"

When is the last time that you were mistaken for Jesus?

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
NEVER GIVE UP! - DAY 23

Have you ever become overwhelmed with life or just plain tired? Some days can be trying to say the least! Jesus himself said that in this life we will have trouble (John 16:33). During those challenging days we may become overwhelmed and feel like giving up. One of my favorite New Testament Bible verses deals with this: Galatians 6:9 **“So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.”**

In order to not give up it takes persistence and determination. Many a time at a graduation commencement you hear the words of Winston Churchill spoken, **“Never, never, never, never give up.”** These words, along with the Bible, can inspire us. For me, not only do I look to the Bible but I also look at my brother Maurice. He is a person that daily lives a life of persistence and determination. He is an overcomer! Several years ago my mom wrote this about my brother. *“Maurice is a man of integrity and perseverance. When he was in the Army I received a phone call from his commanding officer. He called to tell me Maurice was in the hospital and had been diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. He said he had been admitted because his legs gave out on a two-mile run. He told me that Maurice would not quit; he crawled until he finished the two miles. He continued to tell me of his commitment and perseverance in his pursuit of excellence.”* Wow! That’s some incredible persistence and determination.

We all need some encouragement from time to time not to get overwhelmed. God told Joshua 3 times to be strong and courageous (Joshua 1:6-9). He also reminded him that He would be with him (Joshua 1:5). Just as God was with Joshua, so He will be with you (Matthew 28:20). As we are faithful to Him, as we persist with determination, we can know that there is a reward in store for us (Revelation 22:12). In the midst of it all, the greatest reward will be when we hear God say **“Well done!”** (Matthew 25:21)

What issue are you facing this day that you are overwhelmed by? Surrender it to God and keep moving forward. The greatest days are still ahead!

DARING FAITH DEVOTIONAL BY MYRON ATKINSON
Habits - DAY 24

Our Daring Faith Adventure and Fast have come to an end, or have they? Yes I know this is day 24 and the fast ended on day 21 but the book of Joshua has 24 chapters so we continued the devotions through day 24. Our goal was to set you on an adventure of growing closer to God and experiencing breakthrough in your life. Did you know it takes **at least** 21 days to break a habit and as long as 250 days if it's an engrained habit. On the other side it takes an average of 66 days to start a habit. In order to do either one we need to have

1. A strong determination!
2. The support of others!
3. An understanding of the past!
4. A desired outcome you wish to achieve!
5. Choosing to do it daily!

If you've read the devotions and the book of Joshua, you get the point of the first two but what about 3 and 4? They say hind sight is always 20/20 and as we look back at the Israelites we can see their mistakes. If we take an honest look at our lives we can see our mistakes also. I'm a huge proponent of examining the past because we can learn from it and what pitfalls to avoid. At the same time I don't believe we should live in the past. We are to look forward to the desired outcome we wish to achieve. For me it's found in **Matthew 25:23 (NLT)**“**The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant... Let’s celebrate together!’**” Number five is the sticker. We can attempt the first four but not do it daily and we will fail. Twenty four days are not long enough to develop a life long habit of Daring Faith but it's a start. Choose to, reaffirm your choice every day.

Joshua 24:15 (NLT) But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”