

HOW TO KEEP IT
Faith and Self Esteem
Part 3
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We're looking at the theme "Faith and Self Esteem." I've made confession that since I'm not a psychologist, not trained to be a psychologist, I have therefore tried to avoid therefore applying a psychologically overlay to the subject of self esteem and have purposely even avoided reading books on the subject during this time. But I might instead concentrate on the biblical word "faith" and do my own skullduggery with the text looking at how the word "faith" is employed in the scripture. Out of an understanding of the usage of the word faith transferring concepts that the scriptures teach us about faith to the whole area of self-esteem.

This is the third in a series of four messages on self-esteem. We already looked at How to lose it and when we gave that message we were not trying to take people back to their earliest days of formation of self esteem. But to simply start with where we are now and reaching a decision as to whether or not if our self esteem is lacking we're going to continue that way for the rest of our lives or whether we're going to do something about it.

The second message had to do with self-esteem, How to get it. This message has to do with self-esteem and faith, how to keep it.

Luke 8:13 the parable of the sower and the seed which contains a reference to this word faith. "Those on the rock are those who receive the word with joy when they hear it. But they have no root. They believe for a while. But in a time of testing they fall away." Here is a category of people described by Jesus as receiving the word of the kingdom but who do not keep the faith. They only believed for a while. There is such a thing as a temporary supply of faith, which is not kept well stocked and therefore not sufficient to last in upcoming hours of trial.

Think of faith and self esteem as much like the helium that is in a balloon. You know the air eventually begins to run out and the balloon begins to small group. Balloons, in order to keep aloft must have a fresh supply of helium. Renewing our faith is so critical if we are to abound in it. We simply cannot go on last year's supply. I'm intrigued when I read the book of Acts how many times it describes people as being filled with the Spirit. There are some friends who think that all the spirit you ever get is at conversion. There are other friends in the Pentecostal renewal, charismatic renewal, who think all the spirit you ever get is when you receive the baptism in the spirit. But the biblical experience of the spirit is that we are continually expanding because of contrary circumstances and needs and there is more of us to be filled everyday with the Spirit of God than there was yesterday and we need a fresh supply for today's needs.

Faith is like that. The working of the spirit in our life is like that. Self-esteem operates on those same principles as well.

I'm intrigued when I come to the gospel of Mark, 6:51-52, and find that that scripture is a follow up to the feeding of the 5000. Jesus had gone up into the hills to pray and after the feeding of the 5000 the disciples had gotten into a boat and had fought adverse winds all night long then Jesus walks across the water and calms the storm. Then verses 51-52 says "He climbed into the boat

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with them and the wind died down. They were completely amazed because they had not understood about the loaves their heart was hardened.”

You read that text initially and you say, What in the world does “they did not understand about the loaves” have to do with Jesus walking on the water? It simply was this. When they saw him do the miracle in one area the feeding of the 5000 their faith was increased. But they did not somehow transfer that idea that what Jesus could do in that circumstance he could do in a totally different circumstance. So he rebukes them. Because their hearts were hardened they did not understand about the loaves. They did not understand that they had had a new crisis on their hand and they needed a fresh supply of faith to face that crisis.

I always need a fresh supply of faith and I need fresh dosages of self-esteem. You do too. Jesus says you can lose your faith, Luke 8:13, we may also say that you can lose self-esteem. Having made a good start for building a healthy self-concept that is right in God’s eyes it is possible to sink back and lose the gains, which have been made.

Because I am not a psychologist I am at liberty to file all kinds of disclaimers. I recognize that my message this evening has three points. I recognize in giving you those three points that that is not all there is on the subject of keeping self-esteem. I’m leaving a lot out. But I’m going to suggest to you that it seems to me that these are the three more critical elements as we look at self-esteem and faith from a biblical concept. If we’ll get a hold of these three I think we’ll gain sufficient momentum that the other kinds of dimensions that need to be added. But these three really constitute really getting down the road toward keeping self-esteem.

The first viable scriptural teaching on keeping self esteem, on doing more than believing for a while, is that we go on believing God’s evaluation of us.

God has a very high opinion of us. He declares us saints when we are not. He calls a man Rock when he is Sifting Sand. He calls us righteous when we feel unrighteous. He calls us his children when we don’t feel like his children. God is always getting through to us, sharing with us that his reality must invade the reality of our world. We must begin to shape our understanding about ourselves from the view that he has of us.

I never understood that God had faith in me before I had faith in him. I heard a great deal about faith but it was always a manward faith, directed in God’s direction. We needed more faith in God. It’s been a tremendously refreshing thing in my life to discover that God has far more faith in me that I have in home. Just as he loves me far more than I will ever love him. There is no flaw or imperfection in his love. There is no flaw or imperfection with his faith. So his faith toward me is greater than anything I have had toward myself. His faith is stronger than any else. I must catch his evaluation of myself and you must catch God’s evaluation of yourself.

There are three Old Testament illustrations I want to use to support this point because they’re all radical and they’re all people that we would discount whom God did not discount and who as a result they wind up in the heroes hall of fame.

The first illustration out of the Old Testament is the man Abraham. Romans 4:3 describes him “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him, or credited to him, as righteousness.” This Romans 4:3 references is a back reference to Genesis 15:5 where the Lord one evening met with

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Abraham and took him outside of his tent and showed him the limitless stars of the heaven. At that time Abraham just before that had been considering adopting Eliezer his servant as his own son that there might be a genetic line flow out of him through Eliezer. The Lord takes Abraham outside of his tent, shows him the stars of the heaven and says “Abraham can you count the stars? So will your seed be.” That is the point at which the text says Abraham believed God.

Until I saw that I always thought that what Abraham believed about God was something theological in God himself. Abraham believed in God as the omnipotent one. Abraham believed in God as the omniscient one. Abraham believed in God as the immutable one. Abraham believed in God as the eternal one. Abraham believed all these things about God but the first time Abraham is described as believing God is related to this: Abraham believed what God said about Abraham. In believing God Abraham was believing in what God had for him. Abraham was believing in God’s opinion of him. So that Abraham was trained to look up into the stars and to hear the stars saying back to him as though they were his descendents, “Father Abraham.” And Abraham believed. And the Lord credits faith as righteousness saying Abraham for your faith I will credit that as your righteousness and vindication before me.

I would like to suggest to you that there were some people in Abraham’s life that probably weren’t quite sure that they agreed with God concerning Abraham.

Sarah. Sarah you’ve lived with Abraham for a number of years. Abraham a righteous man? I can hear Sarah. “He twice denied our marriage bonds and passed me off as his sister. He was willing to make me an adulteress to save his own neck.” One of the things we find the most difficult is believing what God believes about the person we live with. The person we live with we see all their bad points as well as their good points and it is very difficult for us to get a hold of the fact of their godliness.

You will never ever bring out a trait in someone by harping on their weaknesses. If you want to change someone then quit reminding them of the things they don’t do. “You’re not a spiritual leader. If you were a spiritual leader you’d do...” When we apply those techniques, we freeze a person in a grid. We lock them in and make it difficult for them to change. But God came along to Abraham and said, “Abraham, you’re righteous.” And Sarah said, I don’t believe it. That guy? Righteous?

Hagar. Hagar is Abraham a righteous man? “Some man of God he is! When Sarah, for whom I am the maid, didn’t have a child she went to Abraham and said, take Hagar as your concubine and have a child by her. And Abraham never protested at all. Abraham did whatever Sarah told him to do. Man of God? Through Abraham I became pregnant and then he let his wife abuse me.”

Or Pharaoh or Abimelech. Do you think Abraham is a righteous man? I think either one of them would say, “I don’t know all the things he is but this I do know. He’ll do anything to save his own skin.”

But Romans 4:20-21 tells us the charitable view that God has toward Abraham. It’s difficult for us to get a hold of. Some of these Old Testament people are the kind of people you wouldn’t want to be close friends with. Some of them were so corrupt in dimensions of their life. Yet God is saying things like “Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God

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but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.” Abraham did not waver in his faith? At what point does that describe him?

I think what Paul is doing in Romans 4:20-21 is picking up the moment when Abraham comes to offering his only son Isaac and Abraham ultimately in the course of his lifetime became the man of faith and the man of righteousness that God initially saw him as. But in the development of those phases in his life he would have times when he did fall away in unbelief, when he would pass his wife off as his sister, when he would take the concubine Hagar. When God finally told him at the age of 100 you’re going to be a father, the scripture says Abraham laughed.

We see Abraham’s faults, looking at the text. But God sees his faith. At times only a grain of mustard seed. But God saw that this man’s faith was ready to mature when Isaac was asked for. The bottom line of his life when it all came down and his life was over it could be said of him that he ultimately believed what God said about him. Man of faith.

We need to recognize that there is a great deal of us in our life that is like Abraham. The good and the bad. God sees us as his children and is wanting us to get a hold of the identity that he has for us rather than the identity by which some people know us whom we have tricked, whom we have connived, whom we have beguiled, whom we have mistreated. And come back to our roots in God.

When the Lord comes to us and calls us son, daughter, saint, man of righteousness, woman of righteousness it staggers us. Yes. He’s pulling us up.

Another great person in the scripture that God saw his identity was Moses. God appeared to him in Exodus 3:9 and said to Moses, I’m sending you to deliver the children of Israel. Moses probably responded “Who am I? Who are You? They will not listen to me.” Then the great deliver says, “I am not eloquent.” Then finally he says to God, “Send somebody else.” Just flat refuses. In fact the scriptures only mention two times that God was mad with Moses. This is one of them right at the beginning when he said send somebody else. Because Moses didn’t really believe that God could use him. Yet because God drafts Moses, Moses along with Abraham gets top billing in the Hebrew’s hall of fame, chapter 11.

Parenthetically I think we need to note the faith of Moses’ parents. A striking verse “By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born because they saw he was no ordinary child and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.” That grabbed me. How would parents of a three-month-old know that he was no ordinary child? Three-month-old children aren’t talking, they’re not reading. He wasn’t saying the Hebrew alphabet. Three-month-old kid looks like any other three-month-old kid except to the mother and the father.

A third great example of God’s tagging a person and then living up to it is David. Samuel says to Saul that the Lord had found a man after his own heart. That’s a reference to David. Then long after David had passed from the scenes, Stephen is preaching in Acts 7:46 and he confirms Samuel’s verdict of David. He says, David who found favor in the sight of God. Paul later preaching himself says God raised up David to be their king. And said “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart who shall do all my will.” David is one of the persons of

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scripture that I didn't like. As sort of a personal protest against God I refused to read the psalms. Anybody that immoral doesn't deserve to have anything in the Bible.

Joab was David's commander in chief, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Israel. Joab could say, "I can tell you about the time he gave me orders to have a guy killed in battle because he was sleeping with his wife."

Or Uriah the Hittite if David is a man after God's own heart. Or Bathsheba. Or even David's son Absalom. God is a reconciler. God is a healer. God is a forgiver. Absalom had murdered his half brother for raping his sister. Absalom had gone into hiding and David finally on Joab's counsel brings him back to Jerusalem but kept Absalom away from him in the capital city for two years. That's a tremendous trauma of partial forgiveness. Don't ever forgive anybody partially. It'll only poison things more. If you're going to forgive do it all the way or just be their enemy. But don't go half way. Absalom could come up here and say "He didn't know anything about the forgiveness of God. When I wanted my dad to put his arm around me and at least say he understood to retain the honor of the family and restore the honor of your sister. If he'd at any point put his arm around me and said 'I love you,' and forgiven me like God loves me and forgives me it'd all been different."

There's so many dimensions of David's life that are not a man after God's own heart. The human thing we would do is to let go of David. But the great thing about God is he didn't let David go. David ultimately in his life comes to acknowledge God in the depths of his being.

Psalm 125 is written by David. As the pilgrims were coming to Jerusalem they would sing this. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about his people. Henceforth even for ever more." David would come into Jerusalem seeing the tremendous hills that cradled Jerusalem. He would be singing this song. He knew that those mountains were fixed and unmoving and as he looked at the mountains he said, That's God's love to me. I've moved many times from God. God's never moved from me. "As the fixed mountains are around Jerusalem so the Lord is round about his people." Out of that care of God for David came a man after God's own heart. I think we have to go on believing what God says about us.

I like the story of Michelangelo David. They said when Michelangelo carved that thing he had gone down to the workyard in Florence, his home, and there was a block of marble that had laid in the workyards for 50 years, passed over by every other sculptor. It was 17 feet long. All the other sculptors had passed it by because geometrically the arrangement was such that prohibited the moving of it. There was a serious flaw in the center of it. There were too many stress points that if you were sculpting it you only had a fraction of an inch to miss. If you missed, your work would all be in vein because the weight of the base wouldn't support the weight of the top so it was passed over.

Michelangelo looked at that piece of block and he wanted to do a David of strength. Not the weak sickly old man so many other artists had done but the David who had just killed a bear or a lion or killed a Goliath. So he drew up blueprints for how that block ought to be moved out of the workyards to his outside studio. It took them a good period of time just to move that thing. For two years he works on it night and day. He did it as a driven person often working 20 hours a day. Ultimately he brought out of that block of marble his David, the David of strength and

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power that is perhaps one of his most gorgeous creations. Only a master artist like Michelangelo could have brought a David out of that rock.

For me that's such a master statement of what the real sculptor did with the real David. The real sculptor, God Almighty, brought a David out of that block of humanity that the rest of us would have passed by and said he's not worth your time and energy.

I must go on believing what God says about me. Keeping self-esteem involves believing what God says about us.

Second key in keeping self-esteem is to abide in the cleansing flow of forgiveness.

Again, looking at how the word "faith" is used in the New Testament I find a reference in Luke 17:5. The apostles come to the Lord and say "Increase our faith." That's a good prayer for keeping faith. Right after they request that the Lord teaches them that "If your brother sins against you, seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you and says "I repent," forgive him."

What is surprising as you read the text is the juxtaposition of those two concepts. That the disciples have come wanting their faith increased and Jesus is saying "Increase your forgiveness." I believe those two are dynamically related to one another.

Cleansing in our life is so important for faith. For example when you come to the book of James, chapter 5 and have the instructions for the prayer for the sick. A part of that instruction is if a person has committed sin they shall be forgiven. Part of the instruction also is "A prayer of a righteous man availeth much." When there is bitterness or anger or hatred or the clogging of sin in our life we do not operate in the dimension of faith or trust in God. But when that begins to clear up in our life it makes faith possible it's like getting the oil changed in our car. It's all clogged up with thousands and thousands of miles and we need that oil filtered out and some clean oil put in.

Jesus is linking faith and forgiveness saying the disciples want more faith, Jesus says get more forgiveness. I think that goes together with self-esteem. If forgiveness is not present on a regular basis in your life then it means other things are present. Anger is present, hatred is present, retaliation is present and resentment is present. Especially these are deadly within family because they are where our tensions are occurring. Husbands and wives, parents and children, marriages and in-laws. These are the people we need to forgive seven times daily. I don't see my neighbor seven times daily. I see my wife seven times daily. So if I'm going to forgive seven times daily it means the people I'm really with. When we let our life get out of sorts with people and carry grudges against them or carry chips on our shoulders it ultimately impacts I believe back to our self-esteem. Then we have trouble accepting them. We have trouble accepting ourselves. We have trouble accepting God's will for us and his plan in our lives.

It seem to me that unforgiveness is the plaque on the arterial walls of faith. There's a build up of plaque that impedes the flow of blood that can cause heart attack and even loss of life. Unforgiveness is that plaque in the inner life, which builds up along the arteries of faith. We need cleansing.

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A person in the Bible that really had to work hard at keeping his self esteem and his life was related to the whole idea of continuing to give forgiveness and that's Joseph. Here is a guy whose self-esteem had to be sorely tested. We know that he started out well with self-esteem because when he was 17 years of age he dreamed that the sun, moon and stars all bowed down to him. Any teenager that has that kind of idea has got stars in their eyes and rocks in their head! The problem with Joseph is he talked too much. Everybody was going to bow down and worship him. At least if God had given him the vision the best he could have done was shut up about it for a while and not tick everybody off by saying to his brothers, someday I'm going to be better than you. I'm going to be richer than you. I'm going to have a bigger name than you. They hated his guts. But he had a great self-image. So he is captured by his brothers, tricked and sold into slavery. Joseph could have descended into a bottomless pit of anger, resentment, and unforgiveness, which would have forever damaged his ability to be useful to God and recover his sense of self.

He could have been angry with his brothers. He could have been angry with Potipher for standing by his side and seeing his innocence. He could have been angry with the butler for having given the butler the true interpretation of his dream and been being forgotten by the butler. He spent a good number of years of his life unjustly as a prisoner. It seemed like every time Joseph did right instead of getting rewarded he was punished. And that's no fun.

But the bottom line is when he meets his brothers and says to them, "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good." That shows that he had a continual supply of forgiveness operating in his life. It's what saved him.

Our forgiving other people is very needful. But I really believe also God wants us to forgive ourselves. This often is the most difficult part of forgiveness. As Christians we're taught that God forgives us when we come to him. Although many times that's only intellectual and we need a kind of a deeper emotional application of that. I pray that in your heart of hearts if you're here this evening and have never known it in the emotional sense God's forgiveness to you that you would know that deep in your soul, that God forgives you. It's quite another thing for other people to forgive us and how wonderful it is to be forgiven when a person is saying, I forgive you, they're agreeing not to press charges against us. If I come to your house and break your most costly possession and you say, I forgive you, it means that you pick up the cost of the article and I go away free. That's a wonderful feeling.

But I really believe that most problems with self esteem the one person it is for us to get forgiveness from is ourselves. That's surely what the Lord says about forgiving one another seven times daily. Or in another part of the gospel text, seventy times seven, that applies also to ourselves. Because of what the Lord has done, I forgive myself. I forgive myself for not being all that I've wanted to be. I forgive myself because God has forgiven me. For the times that I have done wrong when I knew that I was doing wrong and yet went ahead and did it anyway. Lord, Let my forgiveness to myself reflect a measure of your great forgiveness toward me. Heal me of my anger. Not only against others and possibly against you. But heal me of my anger against myself. Forgive me, Lord.

The third key for keeping self esteem is not only to capture God's view of ourselves and to live with that and secondly to abide in the cleansing flow of forgiveness but the third step is to continue to shape your response to life from the inside out rather than from the outside in. What

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do I mean by this? I mean that any one of us can choose to live life being controlled by circumstances and external things. Or let our response to life arise out of the depths of Christ in us. So that we are living inward-out rather than outward-in.

Let me illustrate this again from the scripture because the scripture one again has an application on the level of faith about this matter.

Luke 18:1-8. Jesus tells the story about the importune widow. In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about man. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with a plea, "Grant me justice against my adversary." Here is a situation that there are external circumstances. A judge who doesn't care about God or about man and the widow could have let her response to life be shaped by her external circumstances and believed about this guy, There's no use.

How many times have we come up against things in our life and been persuaded right from the start, There's no use. The situation's hopeless so why even try? When we adopt that kind of attitude we're letting life be controlled by those external elements. But she was operating by a different mechanism. By an inside mechanism that was saying, I'm going to keep coming to him with my plea "Grant me justice against my adversary."

The application Jesus makes of this story is very phenomenal because when the whole story is said and done, at the bottom line of it the last verse of that unit of scripture, verse 8, "When the Son of man comes will he find faith on the earth?" That is to say, that at the time of his return the circumstances for his people are going to be difficult and there are people that are going to check out and drop out because the circumstance seems so difficult and they are no longer being ruled by Christ in them. So he's saying am I going to find people, my people that are like the importune widow who are not shaping their response to life by the external circumstances and realities but have found a different compass point and are headed toward that mechanism.

Vertigo in a plane is when you get disoriented and you don't know if you're flying up, down or which way you're going. You might get in vertigo in a cloud bank or something and be flying the plane upside down and never know it unless you looked at the mechanism that is on the dash of the plane that tells you which way the plane is flying. In vertigo one has to totally rely upon the instruments rather than the external feelings of how you're doing.

That's what Jesus is saying here in the parable of the widow who has faith, who keeps faith, that she relies upon this inward mechanism rather than letting her circumstances and her life situation be judged by the externals around her.

There are some people who live believing that those who achieve get the lucky breaks. And that those who don't get those lucky breaks simply didn't know someone or weren't at the right place at the right time. Preachers are especially notorious for this. I've sometimes heard pastors saying, "You know how he got that big church – he knew somebody. If I had those connections..." a few ministers actually talk this way. Whenever we opt for that kind of a thing what we're saying is we've given control for what happens to us outside of ourselves. We want a scapegoat. We want to blame. Rather than taking responsibility and being joyful, whatever station of life God has called us to let us therein be content. God has assigned this person this lot and that person that lot. Let's find our place in life without resentment or competition. Let's not

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blame others for the place we find ourselves in. If we blame others we will never get out of the pit. It's a quick sand pit. The way to stay in the pit is to continue to blame. Then it allows us to advocate personal responsibility and it passes control of our life outside of ourselves to someone else and it says, they're the reason for the shape I'm in. Rather than getting on to the real cure which is the need in our own life to change.

I'm responsible for my actions. I may not be able to change my circumstances but with God's help I can control how I am going to respond.

Three steps to keeping self-esteem: believe what God believes about you. If you don't know what God believes about you make that a matter of prayer. Sit down with your Bible and work it out. What is God saying about you?

I love the story of Gideon. The Midianites were pressing God's people and the text of Judges says Gideon was threshing grain in a wine vat because he feared the Midianites. If you want to thresh grain what you want to do is get out in an open area where the wind is blowing so a lot of the chaff can be driven away. You don't thresh grain in a wine vat, which is an enclosed structure where you can hide so that people can't see you. All you have in a wine vat is dry stale air. It is a terrible way to thresh grain.

The angel of the Lord comes to Gideon and says to him, "Hail, mighty man of valor!" Gideon doesn't get the message. "But sir," Gideon replied, "If the Lord is with us why has allow this happened to us? [He's judging his life by externals.] ... But Lord how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my family." Guy had a great self-image. God says to him, Mighty warrior, I've got plans for you. Gideon becomes what he becomes because somehow in the depths of him there is a magnet responding to what God is saying to him. For all his warts and failures he does at least to that dimension of his life begin to believe God and he becomes the mighty warrior. Unconventional but mighty warrior. Because he listens to the heartbeat of God and let's God fix his identity for him. Which is what we must do in our own life.

As we do that, then stay in the cleansing flow of forgiveness and live life from the inside out. I believe there are three critical steps toward keeping faith and keeping self-esteem.

Lord, we sing in our worship, "Breathe on me," let the breath of God now breathe on me. Lord, it seems that we never get enough of your breath. Somehow when you breathe on us it is indeed for a season and then unless we keep in the place where you are continuing to breathe on us our spiritual lungs and vitality collapse on us. We pray once more from the depths in us, "Breathe on me." I pray for everyone here who finds themselves struggling with who they are, what you see them as. That these few moments in your word will have inspired and kindled faith in our life an that we'll be willing to open our listening ear to you and hear your still small voice speak to us. We can always identify your voice from the voice of the evil one because your voice always gives us a purpose and a hope. The evil one only accuses us and tells us what's wrong and what can't be corrected. But you believe in us. There are men and women who perhaps do not even think of themselves as a man or woman of God because of the failures in their life that they're keenly aware of seem to have forever taken that title away from them. Even within the body of Christ sometimes we don't live with the mind of the savior so that we too are stripped people of that title which you are

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seeking to call them – man of God, woman of God. Because we base our standing with you on the number of hours we spent this week praying or reading our Bible and if we haven't done that then we feel like we're not a man or woman of God. If we don't do that for weeks or months on end then we cease believing that we are a man or woman of God. We let these things pile up and we begin to go away from you in our heart. We begin to accept things about ourselves that re not true. We begin to accept opinions that "You really don't love God." You move right back into our life and you put your arm around us and you say, "Daughter, son, mighty warrior, man of God, woman of God!" That's the best thing you could ever tell us. It's the thing we would most like to believe but because of our own actions, which exclude us, we feel that it's the thing we least deserve. We come to the foot of the cross where we find your grace given to us, not of our own effort. But your great grace. For sons and daughters of yours that are in this audience this evening that don't feel like they're the man or woman of God wrap your arm around them and whisper in their ear and tell them they are. We will only become what we have faith to see. If your word can put in us the same kind of dynamic that you put in Abraham and Moses and David and Gideon you can do that with us, candidates for failure who have been made graduates of faith. Help us to transfer that then. The grace we have received from you help us to transfer it to one another so that we can look into the eyes of our wife or our husband, brother, sister, child, parent, and say "I see in you a man, a woman of God." Save us from the judgments of life, which are harsh and critical and destructive. Pour an oil of grace upon our life that we may see as you see. Give us faith. Not faith for a little while. But faith to last. Increase our faith as you increase our forgiveness. In Christ's name. Amen.