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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

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Life is precious, but it can also be remarkably difficult at times. When going through tough times, whether relationally, financially, logistically, globally, health related, or otherwise, it's easy to get discouraged, and to look toward the future with fear or worry.

I recently went through a time like that. Changes were imminent that implied reduced financial income, and on top of that certain bills were increasing. I had no idea how I was going to manage and make ends meet.

I found myself anxious and looking for additional work to supplement my income, while at the same time worrying about how I'd keep up with taking on more work, considering the workload and family duties that already take most of my time.

Then one evening, while reading a book, the author talked about the importance of not losing hope and faith when things are difficult. He reminded his readers that when we struggle, we should look back on our lives and see all the mountains we've already climbed and conquered.

When I did, and realized that indeed, I'd come through quite a few difficult times already, my outlook brightened. I felt encouraged when I remembered how God had cared for me and my loved ones through some very difficult times. Faith is what had helped me through, and illuminated my path in those times of darkness.

I took some time later on to look up stories and articles on having faith for today and the future, and found quite a few articles on the topic. Reading the stories of people who pulled through incredible hardship by holding on to their faith was very inspiring, and strengthened my belief that things will work out once again.

I hope sharing some of these stories with you in this issue of *Motivated* will encourage and inspire you, too.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Why Having Faith Is Important



By Robert Kanaat, adapted

Sometimes, when things don't go according to plan, we lose faith, not only in ourselves, but also in any potential outcome in our lives. Failure will do that to you. When we experience life's monumental failures, it's easy to lose hope, and even faith.

Faith, at its core, is deep-rooted in the expectation of good things to come. It goes beyond hope. While much of hope lives in the mind, faith is steeped in the heart and the spirit. It can't be explained away by reason or logic, or be understood through a single dimension.

While life can be hard at the best of times, faith is the knowledge, deep down inside, that things will get better. It's taking the next step when you can't see the entire staircase. Simply put, life would fail to have reason if we didn't have faith.

We couldn't drive our cars without

faith that someone won't cross the divider and crash into us. If we didn't have faith, how could we fly in an airplane, a metallic machine soaring 35,000 feet in the air? Without faith, how could we move from one moment to the next without completely second-guessing every last thing that we did?

Without faith, we couldn't expect that things would turn out all right for us no matter what the situation might be.

Faith, then, is just as important as the air we breathe. While the oxygen in the air nourishes the body, faith nourishes the heart and the soul. It's the energy that courses through every single fiber and cell within our beings. It's part of every muscle and every strand of thought. It is the fundamental foundation of our existence.

Simply put, the importance of faith cannot be underestimated. ■



5 Reasons for Faith

By Robert Kanaat, adapted

1. The focused power of faith breeds abundance

In times of trouble, we tend to move away from positivity. We go from a state of abundance to a state of lack. Whatever it is that we focus on in life, we get more of. If we focus on problems, we live solely in those problems and have difficulty moving past the negativity. Alternatively, however, when we focus on positivity and seek out solutions, we can resolve our problems and move from a state of lack back to a state of abundance.

Faith is the pathway to abundance, so be sure to hold it at the forefront of your mind. Don't be afraid to expect the very best for yourself. This isn't about being selfish or aimlessly wishing for things; this is about the true, utter, deep-down belief in your heart and soul that things will improve, and that you deserve the very best in life.

2. Challenging events can make you stronger

There's a powerful story in the Holy Books about a man named Job. Job

was as astute as any man could be. He believed strongly in God and held high his faith. But the story goes that one day the devil paid God a visit. The topic of discussion? Job's faith.

The devil reasoned that Job was faithful because he had been blessed with so much in life. Family, money, land, and respect. But the devil proposed that should God take any number of these things away from Job, he would no longer be the faithful man that God held him up to be. The devil claimed that Job would curse God and that his point would be all but proven. God, of course, disagreed.

So, to prove this, God began taking things away from Job's life. Over the course of these trials, Job lost everything that he had worked so hard to create over the years. His livestock, all his money, his family, his friends, and his health. However, even when his wife told him he should curse God, Job didn't. He remained faithful.

Afterwards, God restored all of Job's worldly possessions, family, and health.

To add to that, God multiplied what Job once had many times over.

The moral of the story? Times might be bad and you might want to throw in that proverbial towel. But never lose faith.

3. Faith helps you to discover your purpose in life

Going through life and all of its ups and downs can take a toll on us. At times, it's enough to question our very existence. But through all of the trials and tribulations we might face, it's faith that sees us through. It works to guide us in the right direction, and moves us towards and allows us to discover our purpose in life.

This doesn't happen overnight. Usually, when we're faced with a difficult situation, it gets harder before it gets better. Little by little, a part of us is broken, until one day, we dig deep down inside and somehow find the strength we need to make it through. That strength comes from our faith, and that faith sets us free. Faith is the guiding light that helps push us towards our purpose.

4. Faith trumps stress, anxiety, and fear

It's easy to allow stress, anxiety, and fear to run our lives. We go from moment to moment worried about one thing or another. Sometimes, those worries manifest themselves into highly-stressful situations, causing not only mental anguish, but physical problems as well. There's a clear and documented connection between stress and the increased likelihood of disease and illness.

When we allow our minds to move into that realm unchecked, there's no telling of the damage that can be done. But faith can help to keep those things at bay. Even when we have no reason to believe that things will get better, it's through faith that our situations do improve. When you hold the utter expectation of that in your mind, no challenge is too difficult.

Learn to harbor faith and use it to eliminate stress, anxiety, and fear. Think back to situations in the past when you made it through something you thought was insurmountable. Believe and expect that good things will happen, and they will. This isn't about ignoring your problems; this is knowing deep down in your heart and soul that your situation will improve.

5. Faith acts as the pathway to finding solutions

Faith is the pathway to finding solutions in life. Keep in mind that human beings were made to thrive, and not just survive. If you're only surviving, there's far greater in store for you. There's a pathway to all of your solutions, and that pathway is steeped in faith and the expectation of greater things to come in time.

If you really want something in life, faith is the thing that helps you to see that through. It's at the core of a persistent heart. Never give up on your hopes and your dreams just because you face some initial setbacks. Lean on your faith as often as possible and you'll soon come to realize why having unwavering faith is so important in life. ■

Finding God through Struggle

**What do we do
when life becomes
difficult?**

By Irteza Binte-Farid, adapted

In times of uncertainty, struggle, and loneliness, it is easy to wonder if our prayers are heard. We can seem like such an insignificant part in the universe. Why would a Higher Power care for us, we may ask, when we are often ungrateful for the infinite blessings we receive in our lives? After much reflection, I have found that faith is tried in experience, and that belief is tested in prayer. Even in the darkest moment, God has never left my side.

Though my life has been blessed, I often wondered why my family and I went through so many arduous trials. At times

I feared they might never end. When we first immigrated to the United States from Bangladesh, we suffered financially. My father and mother struggled to make ends meet, and I remember feeling helpless at my inability to contribute financially to my family's survival. Transitioning from affluent physicians to humble wage-laborers practically overnight, my parents made huge sacrifices to ensure a better education for their children.

It was in those early years of struggle that I began to form a close bond with God. I asked Him to bless my parents and to help us survive our financial hardships.



I prayed that He would help my siblings and that I would succeed in school, so that we could make our parents proud. Most of all, I asked for patience and faith to see us through these uncertain times. Still, though my faith did not fail, it was difficult to remain strong after realizing how much we did not have in life.

When I witnessed my father on the brink of death in a hospital surgery ward, I begged God to return him to us. He had unexpectedly developed a rare form of pancreatitis—only one in 100,000 people in the U.S. have it, and his chances for survival did not look good. He was still quite young. I feared a future in which he would not see me get married or know any of his grandchildren. How could this happen to this man, a caring unselfish dad, after all he had been through, and when he was so needed by his family? For nearly a week we watched him suffer, wincing at his every breath through a ventilator, and agonizing over the extreme pain he experienced as a result of his multiple operations. The prospect that he may die loomed heavy. But when his life-threatening surgeries proved successful, and my father returned to normal life, I knew I had just witnessed a miracle.

Whenever I doubt, I think of this special moment. This experience was deep and visceral. I share this story not to romanticize hardship, but to serve as a reminder of how pain and uncertainty can sometimes bring us closer to God.

My mother also endured her share of tribulations in life. As a child, when I saw her day after day straining to eke out a living, I was both inspired and disheartened. She had to take a 1.5-hour bus ride to and from her workplace.

Though my mother never complained and navigated her trials with grace, I sought to know why things were so difficult for her. Despite my questions, it was my mother's unshaken faith, my father's devotion, and faith-building stories that sustained me through my doubts. When the two people who love me most in this world also love with the core of their hearts the same Being I rely on, I know there is something profound and true in this faith. I continue to pray because it is one way to deepen my relationship with this compassionate God.

Mercifully, we survived the hard times. My two siblings and I received scholarships to esteemed universities and completed our education. My parents studied diligently to receive their Registered Nursing degrees while working, raising children, and running a household. My mother always reminded us that we'd made it through so much hardship, we'd surely make it through this time as well. "Stay strong in your faith and ask God for help," she'd say.

Whether it is loneliness, professional uncertainty, or fear of the future, I hold fast to the belief that things will get easier. I hope that whatever suffering and adversity I may have yet to endure will only strengthen my faith. Instead of focusing on loss, I marvel at my infinite blessings.

My hardships have inspired me to be more compassionate towards people in pain. Suffering is not a punishment for sin. Instead it is an experience which has allowed me to reflect on my life, remember those who came before me, ease the anguish of my fellow beings on Earth, and thank God for loving me. ■

“Got a Decision to Make?”

By Coke Newell, adapted

PARENTING
FROM THE HEART



Two years ago my youngest daughter was trying to choose a university. She was clear on her course of study, and had been admitted to both her top schools of choice. But since both were great choices, she couldn't decide which to attend.

I had a business trip to the city in which one of her “finalist” universities was located, so I invited her to come along and visit the school while I was in meetings. She spent hours that day talking to professors and visiting facilities, and

when we got back together that evening, she told me, “I loved it.”

Believing it only fair that she measure both schools on equal footing, however, my wife and I encouraged her, at our expense, to visit the second school as well. After a similar day visiting the faculty and facilities of that second school, she called us on the phone. With both experiences fresh in her mind, she told us with a touch of awe in her voice how this second program was in fact “the program of her dreams”—perfect

in every way. So imagine our surprise when she told us that now she wasn't sure which school to pick.

Thomas S. Monson has said, "The door of history turns on small hinges, and so do people's lives. The choices we make determine our destiny."

While some decisions—wheat flakes or rice puffs? Red shoes or white?—will have only marginal impact on either our day or our future, others can change the course of our lives. Such decisions are the ones with which we could really use some help, even divine help, should such be available to us.

Hundreds of millions of people testify that such help has in fact been their experience—oftentimes receiving light, direction, knowledge, and clarity far beyond their normal capacity of reasoning or discernment.

But certain mini-steps precede being able to make the large leaps required in the "exercise" of our faith:

- **Breathe deep and ponder:** Is this a matter you could resolve clearly if you just took an afternoon to study it out? Have you dealt successfully with something similar before?
- **Balance and alignment:** How does it "stand up" to things you already know to be right? Or wrong?
- **Focus:** Sometimes there is no wrong answer—just a good answer and a better answer. See if you can zero in on the precise details and thus find clarity.
- **Stretching:** Can you "play it forward" and see where a given decision leads? If/then reasoning, and probability projection, is a common technique in

high-level decision making.

- **Reaching:** Reach out to others of wisdom or experience you have already come to trust, and seek their input.
- **Get in the zone, then get out of the way:** Commit time to prayer or meditation as befits your beliefs, and don't be lukewarm about it. Philosopher and author Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Humility, like darkness, reveals the heavenly lights." We must truly open ourselves to potential answers that come from beyond our limited experience.
- **Finally, use a heart monitor:** "In meditation, go deep in the heart," states the Tao Te Ching. The Holy Books also instruct us, "when you pray, enter into your closet," which in the original Aramaic may be better rendered "secret chamber" of one's soul, and that after meditation, enlightenment, guidance, and mercy will come to the hearts of the believers.

Many authors oriented toward faith have noted that "revelation is scattered" throughout our world of personal, private tutoring by a God who cares. What emerges as the cumulative wisdom of the above exercise faithfully performed may be trusted as your best answer.

As for my daughter, the accumulated power of both her previous experience and her present efforts led to a clarity that simply wasn't there before the exercise. After studying it out, talking with many, pondering deeply, and projecting forward where each would take her, she went deep in her heart, and then to her knees. And the answer came. ■

How to Stay Positive in a Negative World



By Christi Hegstad, Ph.D.

“There are two ways to live your life,” Einstein reportedly said. “One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.”

Which do you choose?

You don’t need to look far to find negativity these days. Scroll the headlines or turn on your TV and you could quickly come to the conclusion that we live in a dark and angry place.

But you can change that—both your belief about the world, and the world itself.

Part of my purpose, I believe, involves contributing positively to the world. I

want to be remembered for making a positive difference, therefore I strive to live that legacy now, every day, with every interaction. Do I always succeed? Probably not. But I hold this aim high and give it my best.

If you could use a boost of positivity in your work and life, consider one of these ideas:

1. Surround yourself with positive people. Who in your life seems to glow with positivity? Who inspires, uplifts, and challenges you to up your game? Consciously build a network of people

who motivate you to be your best, then spend ample time with them. Be that source of light for others, too.

2. Watch your vocabulary. I once heard that Mother Teresa declined participation in an anti-war rally. When asked why, she replied that she did not want to give any attention to war, but she'd gladly participate in a pro-peace rally. Pay attention to your words. They can help you heal relationships, mend broken hearts, reach astounding goals, and craft a beautiful vision for your work and life.

3. Infuse yourself with positivity. Putting poor quality gas in your car will not help it run at peak performance. Similarly, how you fuel yourself will determine your experience as well. Read inspiring books, download helpful podcasts, watch encouraging movies, and follow positive people on social media. Share acts of kindness at staff meetings. Create a physical environment of positivity, too: post fun quotes on your bathroom mirror, or put a light-hearted comic on your office door, for example.

4. Focus on what you can control. So much is out of our hands, isn't it? Focusing on that, however, can leave you feeling depleted and helpless. Determine what you *can* control, and put your energy there. For example, you can control your responses, actions, words, and thoughts; you can be the change you wish to see in the world. You have more power than you realize, and when you keep your focus there, that power expands.

5. Look for the good. Have you ever decided to purchase a certain kind of car, then suddenly you see that car everywhere? We tend to find what we

focus on: If you believe things are awful, you'll find evidence to support that belief; if you believe life is a gift, you'll find evidence to support that. Look for positivity.

6. Examine your daily routine. How do you start your mornings? How do you close out each day? How might you bring positivity into the activities you do regularly? One of my coaching clients uses her commute to send silent blessings to other drivers; another reflects on gratitude every evening as she brushes her teeth. Shine positivity into your already-established routines.

7. Choose to be positive. What? Can it be as simple as a choice? Like most things in life, positivity is a decision we can make in every moment. Set affirming boundaries in your work and life. Take action to support growth and joy. Begin the habit of pausing and thoughtfully choosing your response to situations rather than mindlessly reacting.

Perhaps most importantly, despite the title of this article, don't think of this as a negative world. Yes, negative events occur; people inflict harm, make poor choices, and cause pain. But this is also a beautiful world filled with promise, opportunity, kindness, generosity, and love. Take note of the random acts of kindness and how often they go viral. Pay attention to the small groups of people making significant positive change in their communities. Look for examples of helpfulness and contribution throughout the course of your days.

Continue to feed that positive world—like Einstein said, living as though everything is a miracle—and watch life transform accordingly. ■

Have Faith

NOTABLE
QUOTES



Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy.

—**Norman Vincent Peale**

Keep your dreams alive. Understand to achieve anything requires faith and belief in yourself, vision, hard work, determination, and dedication. Remember all things are possible for those who believe.—**Gail Devers**

In my deepest, darkest moments, what really got me through was a prayer. Sometimes my prayer was ‘Help me.’ Sometimes a prayer was ‘Thank you.’ What I’ve discovered is that intimate connection and communication with my Creator will always get me through because I know my support, my help, is just a prayer away.—**Iyanla Vanzant**

The foundation stones for a balanced success are honesty, character, integrity, faith, love, and loyalty.—**Zig Ziglar**

With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.—**Muhammad Ali Jinnah**

I think you need to go through some stuff to really appreciate life and understand what it means to persevere, overcome, and have faith. I think those tough times make you a stronger person.—**Judith Hill**

The keys to patience are acceptance and faith. Accept things as they are, and look realistically at the world around you. Have faith in yourself and in the direction you have chosen.—**Ralph Marston**

Indeed, this life is a test. It is a test of many things—of our convictions and priorities, our faith and our faithfulness, our patience and our resilience, and in the end, our ultimate desires.—**Sheri L. Dew**

My faith helps me understand that circumstances don’t dictate my happiness, my inner peace.—**Denzel Washington**

To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.—**Thomas Aquinas**

