

"Faith Thoughts for Living"

"Faith isn't the ability to believe long and far into the misty future. It is simply taking God at His Word and taking the next step"

- Joni Erikson Tada

God has graciously given us a battle-tested shield of faith, but we have to utilize it or it will do us no good. To keep our faith fresh, strong and ready for any challenge, it is important to study faith in God's Word. The Gospels are filled with Jesus' faith teachings and Hebrews 11 gives us a whole chapter on how faith works. As each verse introduces another character their stories teach us rich lessons about faith:

- ◆ **Abel** taught us that our sacrificial faith will outlive us as a continuing legacy.
- ◆ **Enoch** taught us about faith for a daily walk that pleases God.
- ◆ **Noah** taught us about faith that endures for the long haul (it took 120 years to build the ark) and stands up against criticism.
- ◆ **Abraham** taught us about faith for the journeys we take in life where the outcome isn't known in advance.
- ◆ **Moses** taught us about faith that can follow a leader that cannot be seen.
- ◆ **Joshua** taught us about the faith to carry out the mission the way God directs.

The list of those that live by faith goes on and on. We should go back and reread each of their stories to compile a list of "faith lessons" so our thoughts can become faith-filled. The better we understand faith the more prepared we are to face life's discouragements.

"Think on These Things"

As the Apostle Paul closes his letter to the Philippian church he says, "***I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me***" (Phil. 4:13). This is a "faith-thought" for us to meditate on. He

builds up to this verse by recognizing our tendency to become anxious about many issues in our lives. He recommends some steps for us and gives assurances for what God will do. First, we need to bring every anxiety-producing thing to God in prayer. Lay everything before Him no matter how insignificant it may seem.



God then assures us that He will grant us peace that surpasses understanding every detail and will securely "keep" [like locking away] our hearts and minds (4:7). He does this because He knows how hard it is for us to control our thoughts and emotions.

Next we need to carefully control our thoughts only dwelling on those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (4:8). We should do this while huddled behind our shield of faith so that thoughts of doubt, fear or Satan's accusations cannot reach us weakening our confidence and trust in God. Let's raise our shields of faith to protect our minds and win the battle over doubt!

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The Shield of Faith

"Protection for the Believer's Mind"

By Pastor Curt Carter

The Shield of Faith

**"I fix my thoughts on You,
Holy God, on You;
All my dreams, all my joys -
I have made my choice.
I fix my thoughts on You.
Always, only You.
I am free when I am fixed on You.**

**Chorus:
Not drained by fear
But strong in faith;
Not bound by pride
But freed by praise;
My goals set aside,
My life's open wide
To be filled by You alone!"**

- Words & Music by Ken Bible

**"Above all, taking the shield of faith
with which you will be able to quench
all the fiery darts of the wicked one"**

-Ephesians 6:16 New King James

Recently a brave nine year old boy in our local area underwent a dramatic surgery called a hemispherectomy where the right side of his brain was removed.

This was necessary to overcome the frequent, incapacitating seizures caused by the rare Rasmussen's encephalitis disease. The good news is that the surgery was a success and he is beginning therapy to retrain his brain.



Retraining our Mind

The little boy that had this rare surgery will have to undergo long hours of therapy to retrain the left side of his brain to direct the activities of the missing right side. This will be a long-term challenge and our prayers continue to be with him and his parents.

As I read this amazing story, I thought of my own struggles with "double-mindedness" (James 1:8), particularly the ongoing battle between faith and doubt in my soul. James tells us in no uncertain terms that someone who wavers between faith and doubt should expect nothing in return from the Lord. And here is where I longed for a spiritual hemispherectomy where God could cut away all the old nature doubt leaving me with a completely faith-filled soul. Too often I find myself in the same quandary as the father to whom Jesus said, **"..if you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. Immediately the father of the child cried out and said in tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"** (Mark 9:23-24). I want to live completely in the realm of faith as I should in my renewed Christian nature but doubt lingers nearby to drain the effectiveness of my beliefs.

While searching for a remedy I realized the usefulness of the "shield of faith", so for the remainder of this pamphlet I will be exploring this vital tool for the believer. The Apostle Paul described the shield of faith as a prime piece of spiritual weaponry by saying, **"above all, taking the shield of faith..."**. It represents our greatest armament in the battle over deadly, faith-draining doubt!

"Taking Up Our Shield"

Our most challenging struggles are not played out on physical battlefields, but within our hearts and minds (Ephesians 6:12) according to the Apostle Paul. So the armor he describes is not for physical but for spiritual deployment as we fight against wicked Satanic forces. I also believe that these spiritual weapons are to be used to give us victory over our own inner negative thoughts including doubt and fear. **"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but**



mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,..." (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

The shield of faith should not be slung over our arm like some Roman soldier but placed strategically within our minds where it can resist all our old nature negative thoughts and the hurtful accusations of Satan. As the **"accuser of the brethren"** (Revelation 12:10), Satan is artful at slinging just the right accusation against us to weaken our confidence. But our built-in shield of faith is able to resist and defuse all of his attempts to hurt us when we trust God and huddle behind our divine protection. This is clearly a battle carried out each day in our vivid thought-life.