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**MAPPING OUT FAITH AND RELIGION IN ANTHONY BURGESS'
MAN OF NAZARETH**

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ABSTRACT

The lack of faith in some religion is obviously the cause of the problem the world is facing as religions matters, the doubt. That is the reason why the problem that this research work raises are the Faith and the religion to means what can we do to strengthen our faith in any kind of religion or in everything. This research work is focused on Faith and religion in Anthony Burgess' Man of Nazareth. It starts from the problem statement to the exploration of the study with a focus on New historicism as a literary theory. It explores Religion and Faith and states its importance, its nature, gives some suggestions that may help to succeed in the aim of to evangelising people about Faith.

Keywords: Faith, religion, man of Nazareth, disciples, God.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in the nineteenth century, sociology and other disciplines have assumed that religion would fade away as modern life progresses. We now know, of course, that predictions of religion's demise were seriously premature. As a prominent social institution, religion has both direct and indirect impacts on individuals' lives and shapes belief systems as well as practices. It is simultaneously an institution that anchors people's lives in communities and one that builds walls between us. Religion can serve as a source of values that we celebrate together and also as a major cause of divisive social conflict. Before and After Jesus Christ, the problem of religion is one of the mainly problems that the God Men like Moses, Elie and John try to solve. Anthony Burgess' Man of Nazareth is a fictionalized historic account recalling the story of Jesus from his birth to his death. Throughout this Book, Antony deals with the events before and after the birth of Jesus mainly his teaching about faith and the way that the Pharisees and Sadducees by jealousy have caused the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, for they could no longer bear his teaching. The truth Jesus says shocks them and they could not bear to lose their influence and authority over the Jews. He also talks about the division of religion that's why you can notice Judaism, Buddhism as example. The Man of Nazareth was published in 1979 and is made up of 357pages.The historical novel Man of Nazareth by Anthony Burgess based on his screenplay for Franco Zeffirelli's TV miniseries Jesus of Nazareth. It is one of a trilogy of Burgess Books with biblical themes.

The present work is based on Religion and Faith in Anthony Burgess' Man of Nazareth. Burgess through this novel made a historical account of Jesus of Nazareth's life and works.

The novel raises problems such as religious matters, hatred, jealousies, selfishness, human animosities, tyranny, anger, and evil.

This research work is organized into three sections. The first introduces the study and its theoretical framework. It sets emphasis on the problem statement, the purpose, the significance as well as the limitation of the study. It also contains the research methodology with a reference to new historicism as the literary theory that drives this research work. And finally, the conceptual clarification. The second focuses on Man of Nazareth, its general conceptions, and its characters. In the third, this research paper explores the advantages of religion and faith and their importance in our society. In addition, it discusses the disadvantages and their influences on our communities and finally indicates as perspectives some ways and means to strengthen religion and faith for social welfare.

2.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Problem statement, significance, and purpose of the study

The main problem I want to solve concerns the question of faith and religion in Anthony Burgess' Man of Nazareth is the lack of Faith in some religions because religion teaches us Faith in everything. Some people are confused and ask themselves if it is good to believe in their ancestral things or God. This problem explains what we can see in the World about the troubles engendered by division by religious conflicts, animosities, and injustice. This study is significant in other words to show the importance of Faith in Religion. Without Faith, there is no religion because religion is based on Faith. The purpose of this study is to base on the lines of Anthony Burgess' Man of Nazareth to explore Religion and Faith and to critically overview the importance of Faith and Religion in people's lives and religious spheres.

2.2 Conceptual clarification

In this study, the concept of Religion and Faith must be clearly defined and analyzed in detail, and the analysis based on Jesus of Nazareth's life and work. It shows the importance of Faith in religion in order to solve the religious conflicts and pave the way to guide the future generation.

In order to achieve my goal, I have conducted this research starting first by reading the dissertations of my elders so that I could identify commonalities and better understand how to advance my ideas. I then carefully read a few novels about religion and faith, starting with the Holy Bible. One of the most important tools I have used in my research work is the internet, which has allowed me to explore some websites and collected information available on my topic. I have done documentary research in different libraries with the aim of conquering new information allowing me to evolve in research. To let the readers to well understand, possess, and easily implement the results of this study, it is important to conceptually clarify the key points of this research paper.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 9th the Edition States that Religion is the belief in the worship of superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. Moreover, it is also a man-made belief system, a collective practice of observing rules and regulations based on interpretations of scriptures considered to be holy; books that were

recorded by men, and conceived by the divine. Briefly speaking, Religion can be viewed as an organizational structure.

Scholars have failed to agree on a definition of religion. There are however two general definition systems: the sociological/functional and the phenomenological/philosophical.

Emile Durkheim defined religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them."

Max Lynn Stackhouse, defined religion as "a comprehensive worldview or 'metaphysical moral vision' that is accepted as binding because it is held to be in itself basically true and just even if all dimensions of it cannot be either fully confirmed or refuted".

The concept of Faith has been made the subject of many investigations. That's why there are numerous definitions of the concept of "Faith». Each researcher and each thinker defines Faith according to his/her philosophy.

Faith, derived from Latin fides and Old French feed, is confidence or trust in a person, thing, or concept. In the context of religion, one can define faith as "belief in a god or in the doctrines or teachings of religion". Religious people often think of faith as confidence based on a perceived degree of warrant, while others who are more skeptical of religion tend to think of faith as simply belief without evidence. Human faith can only believe what it can see, taste, hear, smell, or feel; it's limited to the five senses. Using natural human faith, we can sit in a chair we've never sat in and believe it will hold us up. We fly in airplanes when we don't fully understand how they work, and we don't know the pilot, but we trust that everything will be okay. That takes human faith, which God gave to every person.

According to Oxford Advanced, Learner's Dictionary 9th Edition, "faith (in somebody/something) trusts in someone's ability or knowledge; trust that someone or something will do what has been promised."

Faith isn't just a notion that some people hold onto in tough times; faith is an important element of all human life on earth. Faith is what helps to get us through, illuminating the pathway in times of darkness, and helping to give us strength in times of weakness. Without faith, we are nothing.

3.0 MAN OF NAZARETH, GENERAL CONCEPTIONS AND CHARACTERS

3.1 Man of Nazareth

Man of Nazareth is one of Anthony Burgess' brilliant novels. It is a historical account of Jesus of Nazareth's life and doctrine. It is a novel of 357 pages, structured in 6 books. The narrator of the events is Azor, a Greek merchant. The protagonists of the novel are Jesus, the main protagonist, and John the Baptist. According to the prophecies, Jesus is formed in the womb of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is in the substance of God, entirely man and God. Jesus calls people to repent their sins and to devote themselves completely to God. He tells his followers to adhere to Jewish law, although he is perceived by some to have

broken the law himself, for example regarding the Sabbath. When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus replies: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind ... And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Other ethical teachings of Jesus include loving your enemies, refraining from hatred and lust, turning the other cheek, and forgiving people who have sinned against you.

In fact, Jesus' teaching is based on faith and love. Jesus said that anybody who trusts in him will be saved and the kingdom of his father will be open to this kind of person who believes in his words. Whoever you are; Pharisees, Sadducees, or prophets. Though his teaching is peaceful and does not abolish the Law of Moses, many are his enemies. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the zealots could not bear it. They could not bear the fact that he says he is the son of God, the father because that means he is God. That is blasphemy for them and though they do not find any fault in Jesus, referring to the Law of Moses, they try in vain to find one in the law of Rome. Indeed, Israel was subjected to the supremacy of the Roman Empire. Finally, at the end of the events, Jesus is betrayed by one of his disciples Judas Iscariot, though according to the novel, Judas does not know that the Pharisees would kill his master. Besides, he thinks his master would be put in a place of seclusion, in order to escape from his enemies and achieve his mission, a mission that Judas himself has misunderstood. Unfortunately, Jesus was brought to Pilate the Roman procurator, and was accused of treason by the Pharisees. Besides, treason is the fact of speaking against Emperor Caesar. Although Pilate finds no guilt in him, the Jew asks Pilate to condemn him to crucifixion. Jesus was crucified for the sake of all. Like the priest Caiaphas could say " It is meet that one man die [sic] for the people (Page 270). And according to the prophecies, Jesus has risen the third day after his death. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared many times to his apostles and believers. He has ordered them, especially the apostles, to preach the good news.

3.2 General Conceptions about the novel

The man of Nazareth is a fictionalized historic account recalling the story of Jesus from his birth to his death. Published in 1979 and made up of 357 pages, this novel, It addresses many societal issues such as religion, political governance of the nation, history, evil... To better understand this novel, I am going to develop four main concepts in the novel. There are the concepts of "Roman Empire", "The Law of Moses", "Religion and faith" and "Zealots".

***Roman Empire**

"An empire is a political system in which a group of people is ruled by a single individual, an emperor or empress"²³. The Roman Empire was founded when Augustus Caesar proclaimed himself the first emperor of Rome in 31BC and came to an end with the fall of Constantinople in 1453CE. The power of the senate was limited and became an organ to support the emperor. Israel was ruled by the Roman Empire even before the birth of Jesus. No administrative affair was done without the agreement of Rome (meaning the emperor Augustus).

There were chiefs established by Augustus on each of the nations and towns under the control of the Roman Empire. King Herod the Great is the one ruling over Judea at that time. The second chapter of the first book of Man of Nazareth tells about the visit from Rome of L.

Metellus Pediculus to the king Herod. In fact, Metellus has visited King Herod in order to see the state of his health for a prospect of how Rome would rule Judea after his death. "Metellus watched him covertly, for it was his true mission to report back to Rome on the state of Herod's health and how many years more he probably had to live" (page 13). Rome rules the Empire by force. People were forced to pay taxes to Augustus and provide food to the Roman Army. Rome throughout the governor Pontius Pilate played a crucial role in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Pilate is the one who has ordered the crucifixion.

***The Law of Moses**

The Law of Moses is the gathering of the rules and recommendations God, the father, has given to Moses for Israel including the 10 commandments. The writing of the prophets and the Law of Moses is the basis of Jews' beliefs, one of the priesthoods and everything in Israel. Everybody from the little one to the highest in Israel is subjected to the Law of Moses. Disobedience to this law is severely punished even by death. For example, blasphemy is punished by death. The priests are the depositors of Moses' law. They have a prestigious and respectful status in society. They scrutinize the law and make sure that everybody respects it. It was written in the Law of Moses and the writing of prophets that the Messiah will come in a specific time for the redemption of Israel. The Messiah shall be from the descendants of the king David and that he will reign over Israel. "He shall be very great, he shall be called the son of the Highest. The Lord God shall give the throne of David's blood. He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. Of his kingdom, there shall be no end" (page 26)

***Zealots**

It is a sect, a group of people with an ideology. Zealots claim the freedom of Israel from slaveries and from foreign unbelieving Romans. They are fool enough to fight against an empire. They believe that the world could be changed by changing its governors that's why they want to assassinate king Herod. They want to reverse the order of things by boisterous activity, which is literally impossible.

3.3 The characters of the novel

3.3.1 Protagonists

***Jesus of Nazareth**

He is the main protagonist of the novel. He is also called Jesus Naggar, meaning blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised and broken. To preach the kingdom his teaching on love for the reason that God is love and no one can go to heaven without agape love. He has suffered crucifixion for the sake of Israel and has risen the third day. He has appeared to many and has sent his disciples to spread states clearly his mission. It is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, High, the Christ, the Messiah, God in the flesh. The book of the prophet Isaiah of the Lord God" (p.141-142). Actually, Jesus preaches the kingdom of before he has started his mission at the age of 30. He is the son of the Most heaven which is a kingdom of agape love. He calls sinners to repentance and bases heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, to give sight to the carpenter for he has learned and practiced the work of his earthly

father Joseph because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to teach the good news.

***John the Baptist**

On the day of his circumcision, the prophecy comes as follows: his path, to give knowledge of salvation to his people, you shall go before the face of the Lord to make ready "you shall be called the Prophet of the Highest, for the mercy of our God." (p. 34).

This prophecy comes true to him. He is the prophet of the Almighty, the one who has prepared Israel – especially his disciples – to receive his Messiah with his call for repentance and his baptism of water. He cries in the desert and even in prison:

"Repent. Seek baptism of the Spirit. The Christ is abroad. The one whose shoe none is worthy to unloose. He will cleanse you and grant remission of your sins. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is upon us!" (p. 124).

3.3.2 The Antagonists

***Caiaphas**

He is Chief Priest of the temple of Jerusalem. "He was a formidable man prow-nosed, Sharpe-eyed deeply read in the three tongues, quietly, polite" (p. 266). Personally, he thinks that Jesus is a menace to the Pharisee's self-esteem, a witness against their complacency, a very dangerous man. He stands before Pontius Pilate and accuses Jesus of treason.

*** Zerah**

He is a priest in the temple of Jerusalem. He is an old fellow student and friend of Judas Iscariot. He gives a bag of money to Judas in ransom for his betrayal. He heads the troop of soldiers for the arrest of Jesus of Nazareth

***Eliphaz, Samuel, Jonah, Ezra, Nicodemus, Ezekiel, Haggai, Habakkuk**

There are all priests and elders of the faith and have been placed on the Great Religious Council. They are fiercely against Jesus' teaching and think he is a blasphemer, a breaker of Moses' commandments. They criticize him and have contributed a lot to the accusation plotted against Jesus.

***Rabbi Gomer**

The chief priest of the synagogue of Nazareth

***Herod the Great**

He is the king of Judea. "Herod was at this time in his seventy-third year, gross, indulged and big-bellied, given to mad fits of cruelty, with a rich record of murders behind him, many of them of his nearest and even dearest, his feet growing cold as stone but the pains in his calves ferocious." (p.9).

This passage deals deeply with the character of Herod. He is cruel, bloodless, and egoist. His favorite amusement is the whipping of slaves. When he gets informed of the birth of the Messiah, he orders the execution of all baby boys under the age of two in the town of Bethlehem and the surrounding region, as he considers the Messiah as a menace to his reign.

***Abbas**

Chief of a sect called zealots. He is by trade a butcher. He claims the freedom of Israel from slavery and the supremacy of Rome. He also worked for Israel's religion to be respected by the Romans. He clearly says to Pontius Pilate that they could not accept the personage of the emperor as literally divine. "The introduction of the image of a mere temporal ruler into the sanctuary of the Highest is a blasphemy that shakes the very heavens." (p. 85). He is the one who "Removed the image of Tiberius from the temple while it was still in procession towards the Holy of Holies and fought fiercely, though to no avail, with the Roman troops who had brought it in." (p. 84). Abbas is ready to die for the purpose of Israeli faith. He dies, executed by the Romans.

4.0 EXPLORING THE TOPIC UNDER STUDY, DISCUSSIONS, AND PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Exploration of the study

Religion and Faith in the present novel involve in the first place an exploration of it. The opening of this roman begins with the birth of the messiah (The man of Nazareth). The prophets waiting for all of the kings of Rome and Jerusalem. They define a prophet in the novel at page 11 as "a Man who prophesies that wrath of God is coming" this explains that Jesus will come to help people stop sins. He is the man who Can bring us to the new kingdom, the Kingdom of God. Before the birth of Jesus, God's Archangel Gabriel Come to announce to Mary that she will have a Man and his name will be Jesus. This son will be protected by Joseph as his father. This explanation can be easily understood in these words:

"I am Gabriel; the Archangel I stand in the presence of God. Do not be afraid, child-you have found great favor with the Lord. Believe now this unbelievable, that you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He shall be very Great; je shall be called the son of the Highest. The Lord God shall give the throne of David to him, for being of your blood he must be David's blood. He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever. Of his kingdom, there shall be no end. Cast out unbelief as you have cast out fear. I am a messenger of God's truth." (P.25-26)

Then, Jesus began to preach the good news, and so one day he entered the synagogue and spoke to them about God from where he revealed himself as the Messiah and all were jumping for joy. This is how he evangelized everyone and many of them believed in God.

In some verses of the holy Bible, we can see illustrations of Faith's power in Hebrews 11-1.5
"Hebrews 11:1-16 . Verse 1 Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Verse 2 indeed; by faith our ancestors received approval. Verse 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

Verse 4 by faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain's. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks. Verse 5 By faith Enoch was taken so that he did not experience death; and "he was not found, because God had taken him." For it was attested before he was taken away that "he had pleased God." Verse 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Verse 7 By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith."

Without faith it's impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), so our relationship with the Lord is dependent on it. Faith is what brings the things God has provided for us from the spiritual realm into the physical realm (Heb. 11:1). Our faith is the victory that enables us to overcome the world (1 John 5:4). Everything the Lord does for us is accessed through faith.

In Ephesians 2:8, Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" It's God's grace that saves us, but not His grace alone. If that were so, then everyone would be saved because God's grace has come to all men (Tit. 2:11).

We have to put faith in God's grace, but the faith that we use isn't our own human faith. This verse says that faith is the gift of God.

There is a human faith that is inherent within every human being, and there is a supernatural faith of God that only comes to those who receive the good news.

Human faith can only believe what it can see, taste, hear, smell, or feel; it's limited to the five senses. Using natural human faith, we can sit in a chair we've never sat in and believe it will hold us up. We fly in airplanes when we don't fully understand how they work, and we don't know the pilot, but we trust that everything will be okay. That takes human faith, which God gave to every person.

4.2 Discussions

Religion has its insufficiency because the arrival of Jesus by the missionary changes the mentality of African people. They left their own culture and followed the religion Come from stranger's people. This work will show the advantages and disadvantages of religion and faith. Talking about advantages of religion, we can say that it can help people to overcome their insecurities. Especially people who have quite low confidence levels are attracted to religion since they can get a feeling of community out of it. While society will often not value them too much, they may play an important role in their religious community and may get plenty of confirmation out of it. Religion Can help in hard times in life, every one of us faces quite hard times in our lives sooner or later. While some people just push through those times and become stronger, others struggle quite a lot and may suffer from serious mental problems. In such a case, religion can help people to get back on track since religions often promote values that give people stability in their lives. Therefore, if you have a rather unstable personality and are not good at dealing with emotional pain, religion may help you to overcome difficult periods and horrible events in your life. It can also May give people

trust in life after death; many people are also quite afraid of death. We as humans are often not able to accept the fact that we will not be on this planet forever and that we have to go after a certain period of time. Therefore, many people struggle to deal with death since they are afraid of what's coming afterward. Many people are also not willing to accept that their parents or other loved ones will have to leave this planet sooner or later. In all those cases, religion may help people since religions often propose the concept of life after death and people may be more willing to accept their death if they have a perspective afterward. Religion can also be helpful when it comes to inventing or changing certain social value systems. Since religions often propose values that foster social cohesion, the promotion of those values through religious practices may lead to a strong feeling of community for the general public means the promotion of common social values. Religion can also help you to socialize. If you go to church, you will have the opportunity to sit next to many different people over the years and you might be able to make many new connections. Additionally, you can also join the church choir or participate in other activities that are organized by your church. Through all those things, you can further socialize and find really good friends over time. Another benefit of religion is that it may prevent us to act like animals. In fact, we are animals in a certain sense and also have some of the raw and unpleasant traits animals have deep inside them. Yet, religion can help us to control those negative attributes and may help us to create a society with positive social values.

Apart from the many important advantages of religion, there are also some issues related to this. One problem of religion is that it is often misused by fundamentalists. Even though the majority of believers have moderate attitudes and want to practice their religion in a peaceful manner, there are small radical groups which try to use religion for their purposes in order to start radical movements and organizations, which in turn can lead to the death of many people all over the globe. Therefore, if religious beliefs are misused by fundamentalists, this can lead to quite unpleasant outcomes. It can lead to serious discrimination of minorities while many religions propose social acceptance amongst their members, they often also claim that everyone who behaves not in line with the values of those religions should be socially excluded or even discriminated against. Throughout the history of mankind, religions had also been used to keep the general public under control. In fact, it was the perfect tool for political leaders to point to different religious aspects in order to keep people under control and to sustain their power. Hence, religion has been used to control people over the course of human history and is still used to make people do certain things, even those things may not be in their own best interest. In general, religion often takes away a great level of freedom of people. People are often confined in their way of life since they have to make sure not to violate any rules that are proclaimed by their religion. Moreover, believing in certain religions prevent people from believing the opposite, which leads to a quite narrow world view. Thus, believing in religion may greatly reduce your overall level of freedom, which is almost never a good thing. Religion often also leads to serious conflicts inside countries or even across country borders. In fact, many people fight each other on a regular basis since they feel that they have to defend their religion against other people who do not believe in those religions at all. Therefore, religion can also be a major factor for conflict and from an ethical perspective; this can never be regarded to be a good thing. Another downside of religion is that it can lead to quite bad decisions for people who believe in those religious arguments. For instance, in many religions, you are obliged to marry at some point in time. Therefore, people decide to marry only for the purpose to be in line with their religious

beliefs and not since they truly believe in this concept. However, this may lead to a great level of unhappiness in the long run since it will lead to plenty of unhappy marriages and to family conflicts on a large scale. For example in some religions, parents oblige her daughter to marry someone who is in the same church with them or the concept of the Muslims cannot marry the Christians and that about the marriage before sex. Therefore, you should make important decisions based on your own preferences and not due to religious aspects since you might get in trouble otherwise in the long run.

4.3 Perspectives

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith, it is impossible to please God. Since pleasing God is essential to an abundant life, building our faith is a natural step. We are living in a world where the temptation to doubt God is constant. His children need more than ever to learn how to trust in His goodness and have strong faith. Below are some practical ways to move toward a stronger faith and a heart that trusts God's promises. Take a moment to review the following list and discover your next step to deeper faith and trust in God

Our faith will naturally grow when we make a conscious effort to look for ways to trust God. Pray and seek the Lord's help when faced with a need or going through a difficult time in your life. Then, watch and wait. He will move because you are trusting in Him. When we stand face to face with spiritual obstacles and feel the crushing weight of our burdens, it causes us to forget what God has already done for us. A simple way to keep your focus on God in those moments is to start a prayer and praise journal.

When we receive bad news or come face to face with a difficult circumstance, often it shakes us to our core and fear sets in. A perfect way to build the kind of faith that does not fail is to always trust in God's plans. He knows your future and has plans to prosper you. Life-shattering moments are no surprise to God, even if tears fill our path.

The Old Testament tells how some of God's children trusted in everything but Him. The results were devastating and painful. Today's culture offers many idols for us to trust, but they are just empty substitutions for the Living God. Good things like church, jobs, and family can become idols, and God directly opposes idols of any kind. Pray and ask Him to reveal if you have based your faith on anything other than Him. Tear down any substitutes the Holy Spirit reveals and request His help to have faith in God alone. Once the Lord helps you remove the obstacles to growth, you will experience a greater measure of faith

Many Christians struggle with doubt, and God's Word teaches us that we are not alone. John doubted Christ's identity, and even Thomas did not believe it was Christ when he saw Him. God is always calling His children out to deeper waters and into unknown areas. Why? To help us learn to trust Him. So, how do you deal with faith-crushing doubt? Pray and confess it to the Lord and ask for forgiveness. Fight against your doubt with the Word of God. Look up Bible verses that will help you make your every thought captive & obedient to Christ. Ask the Lord to grant you the faith to overcome your doubt, and it will surprise you how much your trust will grow.

There's nothing to worry about and certainly nothing to be ashamed about if your faith wavers when times get tough. It's only natural in those times to feel a bit off balance, and to

need some extra comfort and guidance to prioritize your relationship with God. Luckily God is always watching over you, in good times and in bad, and the Bible is a key place you can go to reignite your trust that God is always there for you, even though if you can't see Him. Having a better understanding of what the Bible says about faith will help restore your spirits in bad times and make your connection to the Lord even stronger during good times. And if you find yourself seeking inspiration during a tough time or needing encouragement, the Bible is a great place to find those as well.

Our lives are full of things demanding our attention and draining our time. There is a remedy for these distractions: start listening to the Word of God on a daily basis. Instead of listening to music on the radio during your commute, you could try listening to a podcast of your favorite pastor. Instead of spending two or three hours a night watching your favorite TV programs, set aside some time for a Bible study instead. Philippians 4:8 provides a list of what we should focus on, but life chokes these things out. Taking intentional steps to listen to the teaching of His Word will bring direction, hope, and growth to your life.

There is a simple way to grow your faith: ask for Christ Jesus to increase it. His followers asked Him to increase their faith in Luke 17:5, and they saw His miracles and listened to His teachings firsthand. If they needed more faith to accomplish the Lord's will, how much more do we? To build your faith, ask the Lord to increase it to the measure needed to fulfill His will. God is faithful to His children, and His desire is for us to walk in faith. So, boldly ask the Lord for a full measure of faith.

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