

Renew...Refresh...Restore...Retreat

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...  
(Mark 6:31)



## JUST BELIEVE...!

In the face of some of the most difficult, even seemingly impossible things,  
God asks us to believe.

Not only is he asking us to believe in him and who he is, but also to trust in him, to trust that he is holding all things in his hands, to trust that he is true to his word and to his purposes.

He asks us to trust in his might and power,  
to trust in his love, and compassion,  
to trust in his mercy and goodness,  
and to trust in his plans for us,  
He asks us to simply believe that he will do what he has said he will do,  
to believe that his plans for us are good and perfect,  
and to rest, deeply and peacefully, in that trust.

“Just believe”. Simple words that God has spoken again and again through the ages - words that he might just be saying to us today.

Here is the video link if you would like to follow this on-line:- [https://youtu.be/DcLexa\\_j-Fs](https://youtu.be/DcLexa_j-Fs)

## Just believe...!

“Don’t be afraid; just believe.”  
Mark 5:36

### Call to Worship

You, Lord, are forgiving and good,  
abounding in love to all who call to you...  
Among the gods there is none like you, Lord;  
no deeds can compare with yours...  
For you are great and do marvellous deeds;  
you alone are God.

The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we are filled with joy.

From Ps 86:5-10 and Ps 126:3



### Prayer

I exalt you, my God and King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.  
Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.  
LORD, you are great and most worthy of praise; your greatness no one can fathom.

Your majesty blazes in glorious splendour,  
your wonderful deeds are always in my thoughts.  
Your works are powerful and awe-inspiring  
and I rejoice in proclaiming your greatness and might.

Lord, we celebrate your abundant goodness  
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

Our hearts are full of joy and thanksgiving as we come before you.  
You are the great God and the great King above all gods.

We sing for joy to the LORD.

Based on Ps 95 and 145



### Scripture

<sup>22</sup>Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup>He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” <sup>24</sup>So Jesus went with him.

...

<sup>35</sup>While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader.

“Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

<sup>36</sup>Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

<sup>37</sup>He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup>When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup>He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.”

<sup>40</sup>But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup>He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha kum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup>Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. (Mark 5:22-24;37-42)

## Song Suggestion: ????

### Scripture

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”<sup>19</sup> Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.<sup>20</sup> Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,<sup>21</sup> being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Romans 4:18-21

### Prayer

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My Lord, fill it.  
I am weak in the faith; strengthen me.  
I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent, that my love may go out to my neighbour.  
I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether.  
O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you. Amen  
Martin Luther (1483-1546)

### Reflection

Just believe!

Noah believed – and built an ark – without ever having seen rain or even being able to imagine a flood!

Abraham believed – and a son was born – even though both he and his wife were old  
and well past child-bearing.

Moses believed – and received water from the rock – even though they were in the middle of a desert.

Mary believed – and gave birth to the Messiah – without ever having been touched by a man.

A centurion believes in the authority and power of Jesus – and his servant is healed from afar.  
A child lies dead, and Jesus says, “Just believe”!

These people heard the voice of God and believed what must have seemed to them to be impossible:

A flood when there had never been rain?  
A son born in his parents’ old age?  
Water from a rock in the desert?  
A baby born from a virgin’s womb?  
A servant healed simply through words spoken at a distance?  
A dead child raised to life?

The belief that these ancient ones showed changed lives and altered the course of history.  
Their belief revealed the power of God at work in ordinary lives.

**Just believe!**

It sounds so easy...

Yet dare I believe, when it seems impossible?  
When the situation looks so black there seems to be no hope?  
When God’s word spoken to me so long ago seems to be no more than a blur in my memory?  
Dare I believe when I am afraid and uncertain, and don’t know what the future holds?

Still, the voice of Jesus says, “Just believe.”

*What is he asking me, and you, to believe?  
What promise am I holding on to for this new year?  
What hope breathes life and energy into me?*

*What do I actually believe?*

*God speaks to each one of us – he whispers his desires for us deep into our hearts.  
He guides us and leads us with his love.  
He has plans for us as his people, and he has an individual purpose and calling for each of us.*

*Have we heard what God is saying to us as this new year begins?  
Have we heard what he might be whispering into our hearts?*

*Take some time to reflect on these questions and offer to him your silent prayer...*

*May we each be able to say with Mary, “May your word to me be fulfilled.” (Luke 1:38)  
May it be said of each one of us,  
“Blessed is she/he who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her/him!” (Luke 1:45)*

## Silence

## Scripture

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup>“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?” <sup>8</sup>The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup>For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

<sup>10</sup>When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. <sup>11</sup>I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>12</sup>But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.”

And his servant was healed at that moment. Matthew 8:5-13

## Prayer

O Lord God,  
who called your servants  
to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,  
by paths as yet untrodden,  
through perils unknown:  
Give us faith to go out with good courage,  
not knowing where we are going,  
but only that your hand is leading us,  
and your love supporting us;  
to the glory of your name.

Eric Milner-White (1884-1963) and G.W. Briggs (1875-1959)



## Scripture

- <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.  
<sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,  
<sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”  
<sup>34</sup> “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”  
<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.  
<sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail.”  
<sup>38</sup> “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

Luke 1:26-38

## Benediction

May you continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.  
May your heart be open to hear his voice,  
your spirit be willing to trust his word,  
and may your whole being have the courage to believe  
and to step out in faith wherever and however he is calling you.  
May your faith bring water in the desert,  
offer hope where there is despair,  
and give birth to what does not yet exist.



## A Prayer for Further Reflection

Lord, you lead us by ways we do not know, through joy and sorrow,  
through victory and defeat, beyond our understanding.  
Give us faith to see your guiding hand in all things;  
that being neither lifted up by seeming success, nor cast down by seeming failure,  
we may press forward wherever you lead, to the glory of your name.

Eric Milner-White (1884-1963) and G.W. Briggs (1875-1959)

**GOING DEEPER:** Here are some suggestions that may help you to engage more deeply with this theme.

- **The Bible** has many accounts of God asking his chosen ones to not be afraid but to believe. Often this belief required a deep-seated trust in God and a willingness to not only embrace mystery, but to step out into the seemingly impossible (sometimes literally, such as crossing the Jordan River). Some examples of this are on the next page.

Choose one such Bible passage and read it through slowly. Reflect on the circumstances around this story and what it tells you about God and about you. Think about what God might be saying to you in your circumstances through his words.

- **Reflect** on how God may have called you to “Just believe” in the past and what that was like for you. Think about the circumstances and how you responded. What have you learnt about God (and yourself) and how has that impacted your relationship with him? Are you facing a situation now where you need to ‘just believe’? What is God saying to you about this?
- You could use one of the Bible passages or prayers provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**. (see page 8)
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose a Bible passage where God has challenged someone, or his people as a whole, to believe in the face of overwhelming reasons not to. (It may be helpful to use a concordance). Read it through slowly – all of it or some selected verses. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? How is God revealing himself to you through this? How could you act out these verses? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- **Meditate** on a verse or passage of Scripture that encourages you to stretch your faith. A concordance may also be helpful here.
- If you enjoy being **creative**, find some way to express your experiences or challenges about believing what God has spoken to you. What does that look like for you? What does it feel like? How would you describe it to someone else? You can create a collage, or draw, paint, use clay, write a poem or compose a song. If you enjoy working with clay (or plasticine) take a piece of clay and knead it in your hands. As you feel it moving beneath your fingers, let it move into the shape of something that speaks to you of faith and belief.
- Go for a **walk**. As you walk, be open to what God may say to you, or reveal to you, about your own faith and where he might be challenging you to believe in what might seem impossible. Look around you...what do you see? Is there anything that challenges or inspires you to respond to his work or his word in you in a different way?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your experiences. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:
  - Thank God** for Who He is and what He is doing in your life
  - Notice** what is happening around you and in you
  - Respond** to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him
- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. Gen 15:6

The LORD answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. <sup>6</sup> I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. Ex 17:5-6

The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. Jonah 3:5

<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. <sup>22</sup> Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup> He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. <sup>25</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup> She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. <sup>27</sup> When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup> because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” <sup>29</sup> Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

<sup>30</sup> At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” <sup>31</sup> “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

<sup>32</sup> But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup> Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

<sup>36</sup> Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

<sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.”

<sup>40</sup> But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat. Mark 5:21-43

<sup>27</sup> As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

<sup>28</sup> When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied. <sup>29</sup> Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; <sup>30</sup> and their sight was restored. Matt 9:27-30

<sup>17</sup> A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. <sup>18</sup> Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

<sup>19</sup> “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.” <sup>20</sup> So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. <sup>22</sup> “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

<sup>23</sup> “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

<sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” Mark 9:17-24

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

<sup>34</sup> "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.

<sup>37</sup> For no word from God will ever fail."

<sup>38</sup> "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.  
Luke 1:26-38

<sup>39</sup> At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, <sup>40</sup> where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! <sup>43</sup> But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

Luke 1:39-45

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

<sup>38</sup> Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. John 9:35-38

But when you ask, you must **believe** and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. James 1:6

Heb 11 – The chapter of faith



## **EVEN DEEPER**

### **LECTIO DIVINA**

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

#### **Practicing Lectio Divina Individually**

##### **1. Text**

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

##### **2. Preparation**

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

##### **3. Reading/Listening**

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

##### **4. Meditation**

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

##### **5. Prayer**

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

##### **6. Contemplation**

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

## THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

### 1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

### 2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

### 3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

#### Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

### 4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church [marshill.org/teaching/sp](http://marshill.org/teaching/sp)