

# INSURMOUNTABLE

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CONQUERING YOUR IMPOSSIBLE



BY:  
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CONQUERING YOUR IMPOSSIBLE

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## DISCOVER

Have you ever thought about this question: How much faith do I have? Or maybe it is a slightly different question: How do I grow my faith? There is a subtle belief that looms in the back of our minds, wondering how to procure more and then deepen our faith. So we go looking for a formula, a plan, a book, or a person to help us discover the magical formula or method that will solve our situation.

We attend church regularly, jump into a life group, read the Bible and pray daily, and randomly serve people in the hopes that all of those actions will impact the condition of our faith. On the surface, it might actually seem like it does. Until life crashes in on you and you find yourself facing the insurmountable - something so daunting that you realize it is impossible for you to conquer by yourself. It is in that moment that your pursuit to grow your faith crumbles from under your feet.

The challenge is for you to obliterate the question that has crept into your thinking and replace it with a faith transforming question: Who is the object of my faith? This question will lead you to discover who God truly is, and His absolute resolve to be with you whatever the circumstances and no matter what this world throws at you.





# FOUNDATION

Hebrews 10:36-11:1

Faith is one of those words that is thrown around like the words love, sorry, and great. People have faith that their team is going to win the championship or that next season will be better than last season. You place faith in the stock market with the hope that retirement accounts will grow. When you get sick, you put faith in the doctor to write you the correct prescription and that the pharmacist will give you the right medicine. After swallowing the pill, you have faith that you will feel better. You have faith that the brakes will stop the car, that the tires will stay attached, and that the hood will not fly up while driving 75 mph.

Faith is one of those words that is haphazardly tossed around. And if you are not careful, you quietly place a question mark next to faith. That is fine if you are thinking about your favorite football team. It is completely devastating if that question mark emerges when you place your faith in an all powerful, all knowing, loving God. The carefully crafted sentence in Hebrews 11:1 describes faith; it is not a definition. The word faith means belief, trust, or confidence. Faith involves confidence (being sure) and assurance (certain) of things unseen. The Greek word translated as "being sure" means "exact representation." Hebrews 1:3 (NIV) refers to Christ as the exact representation of God. So Jesus is the exact representation of God, and faith is the exact representation of things unseen.

The reality is that you can not function without faith; furthermore, faith guides every step of your spiritual journey. And when you face the insurmountable moments in life, faith will be challenged to its core. It is in those exact moments, leaning into God who promises never to leave, that you can confidently stand on the unshakeable and unbreakable foundation of faith.



Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

...FAITH GUIDES  
EVERY STEP OF  
YOUR SPIRITUAL  
JOURNEY.

”



# REVEAL

Matthew 9:27-30

Darkness enveloped them. The vibrant colors of a sunset, which consumed the horizon, was only seen in their imagination. Every day they took caution-filled steps, uncertain by what was underfoot. And then one day, Jesus' path intersected with their path. The length of time that they had heard about Jesus is not known. What is certain is that they had listened to the stories of life change, healings, and felt the love that Jesus extended to everyone. These stories enveloped their soul.

Jesus asked them a pointed question, and their response was immediate. You see, doubt was discarded and uncertainty had been appropriately disposed of over time. Their empathic response echoed through the walls of the small house. And then Jesus, embracing the multidimensional needs, reached out and touched them. I am sure that they jerked, not in an indignant response, but in a sudden shock because Jesus' hands were covering their eyes. And in that instance, Jesus said, "According to your faith . . .".

It had nothing to do with the number of laws they had kept, how good they were, how much they served, or how kind they were. It was because of their faith. Faith had healed them. I wonder if Jesus' hands were still covering their eyes when sight was restored? I wonder if light broke through the cracks in between Jesus' fingers? I wonder what that moment was like when Jesus removed his hands from their eyes, and they saw his face? Jesus, the Son of David, the Messiah, was standing right there.

These two men could not physically see, but their faith opened their eyes. These two men walked in a world consumed by the dark, but their faith illuminated their soul. These two men couldn't initially see Jesus, but their faith in Jesus revealed the presence of the almighty God.



According to your faith let  
it be done to you.

Matthew 9:29



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

...THEIR FAITH  
ILLUMINATED  
THEIR SOUL.

”





# UNEXPECTED

Romans 10:14-17

The sun started to break the crest of the horizon. A new day emerged. But the reality hadn't changed. There was an unsettling silence as the sound of feet, walking hesitantly, filled the early morning air. Deep breaths tried to soothe the soul. This small group of women were walking to the grave of their leader – their guide – their friend, Jesus.

Every step closer became more labored as if trying to restrict them from reaching their destination. Every tear released, making its way gently down their cheeks, was a reminder that this Goodbye was forever. Every labored breath, causing their chest to heave in sorrow, revealed the fractured nature of their soul.

We don't know if Mary Magdalene sprinted ahead. We don't know if she just saw it first. What we do know is it was Mary Magdalene that was first to notice – Jesus wasn't there. And over the following days, Jesus appeared to hundreds of people. This one unexpected event is what Peter preached about over and over. This one unexpected event changed everything.

My question is this: Can you imagine if we all took the same devotion to spreading the life-altering message about God's love? Seriously, think about it. What if our day to day actions modeled a heart of grace? Imagine the reaction if we share about our relationship and not our religion? What if we seized moments to embrace those around us in being a part of God's epic story?

Now that is a sight to take your breath away; a grand procession of people telling all the good things of God! Just imagine if you held on to the words of Jesus and put them into action. You would leave a lasting legacy making the world a much better place! Just imagine how your faith would expand?



Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

Romans 10:17



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

...IMAGINE IF YOU  
HELD ON TO THE  
WORDS OF JESUS  
AND PUT THEM  
INTO ACTION.

”



# ADVANCE

James 2:14-26

The couch was a place of comfort and respite. It had the mysterious ability to generate convincing excuses that sucked me in and empowered me to stay stagnant - refusing to move from my place of comfort. And then it happened: a challenge was extended and motivation suddenly surged. I pulled myself from the powerful grasp of the couch and lunged forward taking the first step. I had never, ever, run a road race. 5K? Never. 10K? Never. But that didn't matter to me. I had signed up for the Las Vegas Marathon. I now had only four months to go from the comfort of the couch to running, probably more like waddling, 26.2 miles. Over those four months, through confrontational mental battles and agonizing muscle pain, I accomplished something that I never thought possible. I crossed the finish line.

What did it require of me? I had to find a great training plan and learn as much as I could about running a marathon. I also had to believe that I could finish the race. But completing a marathon demanded more than just thinking about it and planning. I had to get off the couch, lace up my shoes, and crank out the miles.

The catalyst that catapults faith forward is action. Action is the component God uses to stretch, mold, and strengthen you as God navigates your path. Spiritual growth happens when you get off the couch and submit to God's directive for your life. Let me give a fair warning: Faith in action will cause discomfort, growth pains, and a lingering desire to stop. Whatever you do, keep advancing forward. God will give you the strength to keep going and the sustenance to keep pace. And one day, when you see the finish line, you will hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:23)

(Just a heads up: Week 4 is all about this.)



As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James 2:26



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

THE CATALYST  
THAT CATAPULTS  
FAITH FORWARD  
IS ACTION.

”





# OVERCOME

Matthew 17:14-20

Taking on Mount Everest requires a determination that many strive to achieve. It's an accomplishment for anyone who conquers the summit. But without the use of sight, it seems impossible. Erik Weihenmayer doesn't believe in that word, "impossible". At age 13, retinoschisis robbed him of his vision. But he chose not to use this as an excuse to sit back and allow life to pass him by. Erik mustered all his energy, surrounded himself with the right people, and made it his goal to have the honor of being the first blind man to make it to the top of Everest.

A small bell ringing in front of him set his cadence and guided every step. Ice would fall in front of Erik daily creating panic-inducing hazards. He described the pain as "running a marathon with a plastic bag over your head." Throughout his three month journey, he kept his mind focused. He held onto the devotion to succeed with no limits!

Self-doubt, insecurity, or an overwhelming fear can make you stop in your tracks. Jesus is transparent about these moments, which can feel like the world is crashing in on you. He never implies that the mountain before you will be easy to climb. What He makes clear is that when you place your faith in Him, you can do the impossible.

Take the step in accepting that God can and will make a way for you to achieve something spectacular. Just embrace the climb! In every thought. In every step. In every hill. He is with you. Don't let life pass you by.



Nothing will be impossible  
for you.

Matthew 17:20



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

... WHEN YOU  
PLACE YOUR  
FAITH IN HIM,  
YOU CAN DO THE  
IMPOSSIBLE.

”



# REFLECT

God is a constant voice in your life. He speaks through people, music, life events, and books like this. God also speaks when you intentionally carve out time to be quiet and listen to His voice. Find a space and look back through everything you read and processed this week. Use these pages as a tool to help you capture God's whispers.

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## PIVOTAL VERSE



What is one verse from this week that challenged and encouraged you? Write down the verse.

## GUIDING INSIGHTS

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As you process thoughts from this past week, capture any insights, questions or guiding thoughts that have stretched your faith.

## LIFE-CHANGING ACTION

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Write down one specific action that you are going to live out.



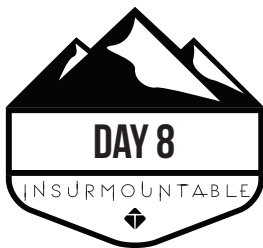


## TRAVERSE

There are life moments that have been forever etched into your memory with vivid detail and pinpoint accuracy. You can still see the hands of the clock in their exact position, and the smell of freshly brewed coffee lingers in your senses. The radiant blue sky and the shifting colors of the leaves, illuminated by the morning sun, is a carefully crafted painting in your mind. The exact location where you received that phone call - where that news was forced into your all but mundane morning - came crashing into your life.

Life is a fascinating conglomeration of twists and turns. One moment life is effortlessly moving forward, and then everything shifts and you find yourself paralyzed by the unthinkable. The darkness is too overwhelming. The pain is too overbearing. The grief is too great. The test results leave you shocked and confused. The betrayal severs you to the core. The financial loss sends your emotions spiraling.

In those moments, the very foundation of your faith is challenged. You stare intently, trying to figure out how to traverse what is in front of you. What you are facing might look entirely insurmountable for you. It is at that exact moment when you shift your eyes off of you and onto a faithful God, that faith can grow. And when you do, God whispers, "I got you. And nothing is too insurmountable for me."



# VIEWPOINT

## Job 1

One single message, bearing bad news, is enough to send anyone spiraling into a pit of despair. For Job, messenger after messenger brought horrifying news that continually sucked the air out of his lungs. Everything that Job possessed was violently snatched from his grasp. His security, wrapped around financial stability, wiped out. Years of diligent hard work, wise leadership decisions and untold sacrifice building a robust business, decimated. People that he trusted and depended on, and some that he even called friends, executed.

The first messages Job received left him reeling in the midst of what was incomprehensible. But it was the fourth message that overwhelmed and crushed Job's soul. A house collapsed killing all 10 of Job's children. All of them ripped from this world, instantaneously leaving Job childless.

And with unimaginable pain dripping from his lips, he somehow musters up the strength and whispers "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." (Job 1:21) Job had such a clear viewpoint in the midst of such incomprehensible loss and excruciating pain. Praise enabled him to shift his eyes from the unbearable circumstances of his present moment to a God who was right beside him. He grasped the faith expanding understanding that God is God. And everything he had, his possessions, wealth, family and even his own life was in God's hands.

Faith trusts God even when the pain within your soul is a deafening scream. When life events confound the logic of your mind, faith trusts God. Your perspective on who God is and how you see Him clarifies as you encounter impossible, overwhelming, and pain-inducing moments. It is in those moments that you must avoid screaming, "Why, God?!" And you must force out the words, through the agonizing pain within, the same words Job said.



The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.

Job 1:21



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

FAITH TRUSTS  
GOD EVEN WHEN  
THE PAIN WITHIN  
YOUR SOUL IS A  
DEAFENING SCREAM.

”



# REPLENISH

Matthew 11:28-30

Are you tired? I am not talking about the tired after you stayed up all night because you procrastinated on that project. It is not the type of tired that you feel when you have a newborn and sleep suddenly becomes a precious commodity. And it is not that type of tired when you decide, after not working out for years, to lace up your shoes and go to the gym. I am referring to that deep exhaustion we don't think about often and at times it is hard to pinpoint. Until it pounces, sending you stumbling onto the ground.

Jesus was explicitly highlighting this state of exhaustion found at the soul level, which leaves you empty. Jesus uses two verbs to describe the condition of a person. The verb weary has an image of someone going through a long, arduous struggle, exerting everything within just to keep going without an end in sight. And the verb burden is the idea that you are overloaded, carrying something that is leaving you thoroughly exhausted.

And with one word, Jesus extends a no-strings-attached invitation for you to come and be in His presence. Come and experience His soothing soul touch. Come and lean into His gentle whisper. Come.

And don't miss what Jesus promises if you come to Him. This is critical. The promise is not for everything that you are facing to disappear magically. Jesus doesn't promise to heal, restore, fix, conquer, or remove what you are facing. (And it certainly doesn't mean that he can't.) The gift Jesus offers you is rest. But this is not a rest you can experience by going to bed early. His rest replenishes your soul so you can face another day.



Come to me, all you who  
are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28





# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

HIS REST  
REPLENISHES YOUR  
SOUL SO YOU  
CAN FACE  
ANOTHER DAY.

”



# PEACE

John 14:25-27

The numbers are staggering and the bloodshed unthinkable. The Roman desire for complete domination created a culture of terror and ruthless killing. The Punic Wars, a 33-year war between Rome and Carthage, left 1,300,000 people dead. From 135 BC to 71 BC, Roman soldiers killed over 1,000,000 slaves in three different slave revolts. Spartacus, the famous warrior, was killed during the last revolt. After the slaves were finally defeated, The great Roman General Crassus, crucified over 6,000 slaves on their march back to Rome as a warning to others. Julius Caesar led a nine-year campaign against Gallic tribes, which amassed a death toll topping 700,000.

Finally, in 27 BC, Augustus came to power issuing in a 200 year period of time called the Pax Romana. Or in more unambiguous terms, the Roman Peace. And let me be completely clear, the Romans leveraged armies, power, and terror to achieve this peace.

And with all that as the backdrop, Jesus simply states that there is a peace that the world doesn't give. His peace is different than anything else you have experienced. It is a peace that isn't rooted in fear, anxiety or manipulation. And this peace is a gift that Jesus is extending to you as a selfless act of unrelenting love. This peace will supersede any understanding (Philippians 4:7). And this peace, if you accept it, will settle right into the most chaotic portion of your heart (Colossians 4:15).

The peace that Jesus offers will descend upon you in the most tumultuous times, infusing your soul with a calmness that is not of this world.



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.

John 14:27



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

JESUS SIMPLY  
STATES THAT  
THERE IS A PEACE  
THAT THE WORLD  
DOESN'T GIVE.

”



# REFUGE

Psalm 46:1-3

The park was nearing max capacity as families flocked in for a day of magical entertainment. My wife and I carefully discussed our plan of attack. We had to maximize the use of the fast passes and nail the show times all while making sure we hit our favorite food places. Season passes had given us veteran status, increasing our chances to experience every ride, show, and parade that Disney World would offer us. As we made our way off one ride, heading to the next, Kim looked at me with absolute fear in her eyes. Claire, our youngest, vanished. Panic suddenly pulsed through our veins, leaving us paralyzed. Desperately trying to locate our daughter in a sea of colored t-shirts, we looked for an employee to help. Suddenly, without us taking a step, Claire appeared. Her eyes were wide, and horror enveloped her face. Rushing toward us with tears flooding into her eyes, she wrapped her arms around our legs. In a burst of relief, we said, "You're safe. We got you."

That is a powerful image reflecting God's relationship with us. He fully grasps that this world is fractured and broken. Around every corner is trouble that produces intense feelings of fear, trepidation and despair. Dreadful news fills the headlines, family stress seems to increase in intensity, and interpersonal insecurities seem to pounce at every opportunity.

No matter how difficult life gets, hold on to the truth that God is present. He is your shelter, protector and refuge. It doesn't matter what you are facing or even if you caused the trouble. God is standing with outstretched arms waiting for you to run into the safety of His embrace.



God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

NO MATTER HOW  
DIFFICULT LIFE GETS,  
HOLD ON TO THE  
TRUTH THAT  
GOD IS PRESENT.

”



# OBJECT

Romans 8:31-38

Who is the object of your faith? It is easy to answer that question with "God." So let me ask a second question: "How big is your God? S. M. Lockridge, preaching at a Detroit church, shared a 6.5 minute description of Jesus, the Son of God. Here is a portion of what he shared.

As you read, think through Paul's words: "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

"Do you know Him? Well, my King is a King of knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom. He's the doorway of deliverance. He's the pathway of peace. He's the roadway of righteousness. He's the highway of holiness. He's the gateway of glory. He's the master of the mighty. He's the captain of the conquerors. He's the head of the heroes. He's the leader of the legislatures. He's the overseer of the overcomers. He's the governor of governors. He's the prince of princes. He's the King of kings, and He's the Lord of lords. That's my King."

"His office is manifold. His promise is sure. His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His Word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. I wish I could describe Him to you. But He's indescribable. That's my King. He's incomprehensible, He's invincible, and He is irresistible."

"I'm coming to tell you this, that the heavens of heavens can't contain Him, let alone some man explain Him. You can't get Him out of your mind. You can't get Him off of your hands. You can't outlive Him, and you can't live without Him. The Pharisees couldn't stand Him, but they found out they couldn't stop Him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. The witnesses couldn't get their testimonies to agree about Him. Herod couldn't kill Him. Death couldn't handle Him, and the grave couldn't hold Him. That's my King."



If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31

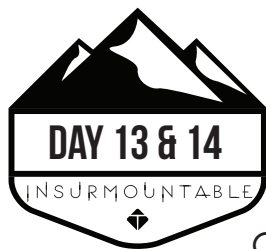


# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

WHO IS THE  
OBJECT OF YOUR  
FAITH?

”



# REFLECT

God is a constant voice in your life. He speaks through people, music, life events, and books like this. God also speaks when you intentionally carve out time to be quiet and listen to His voice. Find a space and look back through everything you read and processed this week. Use these pages as a tool to help you capture God's whispers.

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## PIVOTAL VERSE



What is one verse from this week that challenged and encouraged you? Write down the verse.



## GUIDING INSIGHTS

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As you process thoughts from this past week, capture any insights, questions or guiding thoughts that have stretched your faith.

## LIFE-CHANGING ACTION

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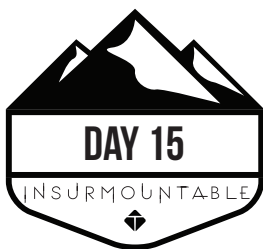


## COMMIT

There was just something about how He talked. It had nothing to do with the cadence of his words or voice inflection in which he spoke. His name was as common as the names Jennifer, Michael and Rachel are now. His hometown was "that town" that "those" people come from. You know exactly what I am talking about. Every city across the country has that local city, town, or area where a particular type of people come from. It is the town that you say with a sarcastic inflection and a smirk. Jokes are written primarily for those people. Jesus embraced the life-altering reality that not only did He come from the other side of the tracks, but He also came for everyone.

The reputation of Jesus' hometown, His socioeconomic upbringing, or the accent that wrapped around His words didn't diminish how people connected with Jesus. People from all different walks of life, varying spiritual perspectives and those with sordid reputations, leaned into the teachings of Jesus. He had the extraordinary ability to dismantle cultural lines that separated people into groups. Religion, which had masterfully severed people's relationship with God, He dismantled with precision and authority. The over 600 Jewish laws that were used as a club, he flipped and succinctly stated one law that would guide every action: Love God. Love People.

And one day, Jesus seized the opportunity to pour Himself into the massive crowds that had gathered on that Galilean hillside. This teaching, referred to as "The Sermon on the Mount," covers chapters 5-7 in the book of Matthew. And I am sure that the crowds didn't fully realize what He was doing, but Jesus was going to lay a foundation that would expand faith for millennium to come.



# FOCUS

Matthew 6:25-34

Headlines, no matter if they are newspapers, blogs, or social media blurbs, are carefully crafted statements positioned to captivate your imagination, heighten your emotions, and generate unfathomable amounts of intrigue and fear. One headline can make your mind spin and your heart race. You start thinking about what “might” happen and what “could” occur. At that moment, anxiety soars as the unknown consumes your mind.

The fact is that you are a master at generating headlines for your own life. Headlines like, “Financial future in an epic downturn”; or “Unknown test results reveals worse case scenario.”; or “Dreams are soaring, but failure is imminent.” We all are experts at generating fear-inducing headlines for own lives. This happens at the precise moment when you start fixating about all the dire possibilities in your life.

Worry about the future always constricts faith and takes your eyes off of a faithful God. Worry shifts your focus from trusting that God will guide you and be your strength to relying on your own wisdom and power. Jesus’ clear teaching on worry encourages you to stay focused on this day. Don’t focus on all the future unknowns filled with unanswerable questions and frightening scenarios. Focus on this exact moment - today. Rely on Jesus’ strength that is enough to get you through this day. Experience Jesus’ peace that will shove worry into its rightful place. Quiet your raging soul so that you can hear Jesus whisper to you, “What you think is impossible, with me, it’s not. We’ve got this!”



Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:34



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

EXPERIENCE JESUS’  
PEACE THAT WILL  
SHOVE WORRY INTO  
ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE.

”



# PRIZED

Matthew 6:19-21

What is your most prized possession? What is that item, containing a timeless sentimental value, that you can not replace? What object envelops your memories, magnifying the sentimental value?

My most prized possession is my Dad's study Bible that he gave me several years ago. He had purchased a new one; and he decided to leverage countless hours meticulously transferring every note, insight, arrow, highlight, and question from one to the other. Since my dad passed away, this prized possession constantly reminds me of his thriving relationship with God. I find myself grabbing it off the shelf and slowly turning each page. Insights from his spiritual journey, learnings and "ah ha's," plus little side quips, which still make me laugh, fill every page.

Your prized possession is what you treasure. And for most of us, we don't just have one. Multiple hobbies take up valued time and unrealized resources. Desires swirl deep as we think about a position in the company, recognition with peers, and prominence within a local community. Financial aspirations, wrapped with a false sense of security, end up being an exhausting pursuit that is elusive and unattainable.

Jesus expects for you to treasure Him above all other things. When you value your relationship with Jesus more than any other person or object, then giving generously is not even a question. When you treasure Jesus above everything, then your time is sacrificially given. Your treasure causes your entire life to revolve around that one object. The question you have to wrestle with is this: Is Jesus really your treasure?



For where your treasure is,  
there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21



WHEN YOU VALUE YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP WITH  
JESUS MORE THAN  
ANY OTHER PERSON OR  
OBJECT, THEN GIVING  
GENEROUSLY IS NOT  
EVEN A QUESTION.



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# EXTEND

Matthew 5:43-44

Navigating the path of betrayal is a twisted journey that leaves you wounded and reeling in pain. It's the moment when someone, who you never imagined would cast the Judas kiss, hurts you. If you are not careful, you can find yourself being drawn to the wrong place. Your heart crumbles. The pain is unbearable. You know precisely what you want to do, but what are we called to do?

Love your enemies? You mean the one who just stabbed me in the back? Spread rumors? Gossiped? Love the person, the one who had an affair, decimating trust? It is in these moments where you read and reread Matthew 5:44 to make sure you see the words correctly! Jesus teaches us that we need to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. This type of love isn't just a warm and fuzzy feeling. Instead, it is a love that reflects Jesus' heart. It is the love that caused Him to crawl onto the cross. It means when we face betrayal, we extend love. It means if we have the choice between being kind or unkind, we will extend love and pick kindness. It means if they show up at our front door hungry, we will extend love by feeding them. (It also doesn't mean you give them a key to the door.)

Praying for those who persecute us allows us the freedom to know that God changes the heart. He alone can be the one to heal, save and repair. When you find yourself praying for those who have hurt you, it becomes evident that God is restoring what is broken. You begin to heal and move forward. When you encounter these moments, extend love. React with prayer and see how God shows up!



But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Matthew 5:44



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

PRAYING FOR THOSE  
WHO PERSECUTE YOU  
ALLOWS YOU THE  
FREEDOM TO KNOW  
THAT GOD CHANGES  
THE HEART.

”





# GOLDEN

## Matthew 7:9-12

R.J. Palicio, the NYT bestselling author of the book "Wonder," takes her audience through an emotional roller coaster of the life of Auggie Pullman, a 5th grader, born with facial deformities and a spunky attitude. As you read the story or watch the movie, you quickly realize the life lesson of the golden rule: "Do to others what you would have them do to you".

The Sermon on the Mount is the longest recorded message from Jesus and has the feeling of his manifesto to all people. Although words throughout this message may seem hard to swallow at times, Jesus is making it clear that this is part of living a life centered around God.

There is something within us that desires and even enjoys retaliation. When someone attacks, we strike back. Even though two wrongs don't make it right, we enjoy the last jab. Jesus fully grasped how difficult this would be for us to live out. He knows how people have treated Him so why wouldn't they treat others the same or even worse? It's hard to think "what would Jesus do". It's more like, what do I want to do? So before you react, reflect.

In the famous words of R.J. Palicio, "If every person in this room made it a rule that wherever you are, whenever you can, you will try to act a little kinder than is necessary - the world really would be a better place. And if you do this, if you act just a little kinder than is necessary, someone else, somewhere, someday, may recognize in you, in every single one of you, the face of God."



So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:12



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

DO TO OTHERS  
WHAT YOU WOULD  
HAVE THEM DO  
TO YOU.

”



# ILLUMINATE

Matthew 5:14-16

The sudden squeal of terror. The crocodile tears flowing from their big blue eyes. The persistent yanking on your arm to look one more time under the bed. There has to be a monster under the bed. There just has to be! After you reassure them that there is no monster you agree to leave the hall light on till they fall asleep.

There is something about a room engulfed by the darkness that creates overwhelming and unnerving feelings that radiate through a child's body. The reality is this: fear thrives in the dark. The only remedy to defuse this fear is light.

As adults, we sometimes get stuck in our own darkness. We find ourselves wishing someone would just help us turn on the hall light! No matter what darkness someone is feeling, as Christians, we are to be the light. Simply stated, our actions should reflect that of Jesus. Our hearts should be meek. Our words should be encouraging. Random acts of kindness must reflect a spirit of generosity. Our actions should be to inspire others.

No matter where you are in life, live out a radiating faith. Tear down what the world says you need to do and hold on to the promises of the One who has entrusted you with the honor of being the light of the world. You have a story of great rescue that must not be kept hidden. Celebrate being loved and share God's love with others. Rest in the confidence that God has you in your darkest moments and He provides you with moments to share with others the same hope.



You are the light of the world.  
A town built on a hill cannot  
be hidden.

Matthew 5:14



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

OUR ACTIONS  
SHOULD BE TO  
INSPIRE OTHERS.

”



# REFLECT

God is a constant voice in your life. He speaks through people, music, life events, and books like this. God also speaks when you intentionally carve out time to be quiet and listen to His voice. Find a space and look back through everything you read and processed this week. Use these pages as a tool to help you capture God's whispers.

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## PIVOTAL VERSE



What is one verse from this week that challenged and encouraged you? Write down the verse.

## GUIDING INSIGHTS

---



As you process thoughts from this past week, capture any insights, questions or guiding thoughts that have stretched your faith.

## LIFE-CHANGING ACTION

---



Write down one specific action that you are going to live out.



## STEP

Dave Kunst had a life-changing moment. After watching the 1st man walk on the moon, he decided to do something never done before. On June 20, 1970, Dave and his brother John set out from Waseca, Minnesota, with a mule named Willie Makeit (Get it?). Their goal was simple; be the 1st humans to walk the earth's landmass. Their journey was life-altering.

They walked to New York City and touched the Atlantic Ocean. Flying to Lisbon, Portugal, they touched the Atlantic on the other side and continued walking through Europe. Walking across Asia and India, Dave finally reached the Indian Ocean. From there, he went to Perth, walked Australia to the Pacific Ocean and flew to California. On October 5, 1974, Dave walked back into Waseca, Minnesota, after four years, three months, and 16 days.

Dave's journey was not without highs and lows. As he walked through the Desert of Death in Afghanistan, temperatures soared to 128 degrees. A group of Afghans fired weapons at them, thinking Dave and John had money. Dave suffered injuries, and John lost his life. Dave lay in a hospital room recuperating for four months. After recovering, he returned to the place where John died. There, with the American Embassy's help, he continued his journey with his other brother, Pete.

Throughout the trip, Dave retired four mules and two dogs. When one mule died in Australia, no mules could be found for thousands of miles. Fortunately, a schoolteacher named Jenni Samuel drove by and, after striking up a conversation with him, towed his cart for 1000 miles. Dave later married Jenni, and they remain together to this day. His walk earned him the name "Earth Walker" and a listing in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Dave felt a nudge to "go." He left the safe boundaries of Waseca, Minnesota and entered a world unknown. His entire adventure covered 14,450 miles, crossed four continents and 13 countries, and he wore out 21 pairs of shoes. In total, he had taken more than 20 million steps. But this experience would not have ever happened if he hadn't taken the first step.



# UNKNOWN

Hebrews 11:8-10

One question that every parent despises is "Are we almost there yet?" Growing up, my parents solved that issue by purchasing gigantic, full-color maps for my sister and me. The first 15 minutes of a road trip my mom would deliberately walk us through our entire trip. She would point out the starting location, our destination and every key point in between. Once we had all of our questions answered and the exact route in focus, she would kindly say, "Now you know our exact route." Translated - "Don't ask me if we are almost there yet!".

There is something within us that has to know where we are going. This internal desire is probably made up of a healthy concoction of curiosity and our unhealthy need to be in control.

Control, a daunting barrier in our relationship with God, has significant capacity to stunt the growth of faith. One of the intriguing components of control is that it is an illusion. We convince ourselves that we are in control. But we never really are.

God went to Abraham and told him that He had unthinkable plans for his life; his descendants were going to outnumber the stars. The first step though had nothing to do with his wife being pregnant or even a detailed strategy for world domination. God's first step was to help Abraham release his grasp on control. And that faith stretching step forced him to move into the unknown. There was no map or GPS coordinates. There wasn't even a destination city mentioned. Go was the directive. God was the only one to know the route.

It is in the unnerving journey of the unknown that God pushes you past your comfort, calls you to trust Him, and helps you to release control.



By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Hebrews 11:8





# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

IT IS IN THE  
UNNERVING JOURNEY  
OF THE UNKNOWN  
THAT GOD PUSHES  
YOU PAST  
YOUR COMFORT...

”



# TARNISHED

Hebrews 11:31

Prostitution was her drug and living that lifestyle is what she reluctantly chose. Jericho, the tumultuous home for Rahab, was a city that always received stories of world events. The stories flooded the city. Stories of a God who had parted the Red Sea and celebrations of heroic victories among the Israelites. Rahab was living among the walls of Jericho, a place that was going to face complete destruction. When the two spies, who were sent by Joshua, entered the city, it was Rahab who kept them safe. It was Rahab who misdirected the King of Jericho. It was Rahab, a prostitute, whose life was tarnished and stained, that God chose to use.

Rahab risked everything and placed her trust in God. She had faith that the same God who had spared the Israelites would do the same for her. As the city walls fell, Rahab and her family were kept safe in the only remaining standing spot.

Are you tarnished? I realize that is an unnerving question, so let me reword the question. Do you think about all the wrong things you have said and done in life and wonder, "Am I good enough? Will God use me?" God isn't looking for perfect people to make a difference in this world. He is looking for people who are willing to jeopardize everything and follow Him. Just like Rahab, God knows our hearts. Take the risk of breaking down the walls of not being good enough and enjoy the reward of being all you need to be by living out your faith!



By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

Hebrews 11:31



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

GOD IS LOOKING  
FOR PEOPLE WHO  
ARE WILLING  
TO JEOPARDIZE  
EVERYTHING AND  
FOLLOW HIM.

”



# DISCOMFORT

Hebrews 11:24-27

Comfort is a dangerous and deceptive place to find yourself living. On the surface, it looks promising as it draws you in, promising untold tales of relaxation, enjoyment and happiness. In reality, it suffocates faith by keeping you stagnant. In no uncertain terms does comfort want you to experience discomfort. It is a master at repelling any suggestion that even tips its attention towards a possibility of discomfort. In fact, comfort imposes its will trying to ensure that discomfort is carefully placed in a box and locked away.

Moses found himself living in a state of comfort that very few of us will ever experience. He consumed the best food the known world could provide. The posh living arrangements created a space that left him not needing anything. The problem was that God had plans for his life. The details of that plan included a task so insurmountable that any rational human being would quickly say, "No!" But when God is involved, nothing is impossible.

Moses left Egypt, his realm of comfort, and God led him through a faith expanding journey. For Moses, part of that journey included seasons persevering through moments of the unknown, feelings of insignificance and facing his shortcomings. Moses' journey led him to face the unseen God and make demands of Pharaoh. Discomfort challenged and grew his faith, preparing him to lead God's people out of Egypt and to the edge of the promised land.

Faith will lead you out of your realm of comfort and will push you to your limits. You will face things you don't want to do and think you can't do. God just might dismantle your carefully constructed life to position you to accomplish something significant for Him. Embrace the discomfort and follow God's lead.



By faith he (Moses) left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

Hebrews 11:27



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

FAITH WILL LEAD YOU  
OUT OF YOUR REALM  
OF COMFORT AND  
WILL PUSH YOU TO  
YOUR LIMITS.

”



# PATIENCE

Hebrews 11:11-12

I often wonder how many times Sarah, in her wisdom and age, would have looked around at the young ladies who were all experiencing the joys of being pregnant? Did she join in on placing her hand on someone's stomach to feel the baby move? Or did she shy away to hide her broken heart? Was she the resident helper when it came time for labor? Would anyone notice her tears were a mix of joy and sorrow?

Sarah deeply desired to have a child. The title of mom swirled in her mind. Wrestling with the waiting and growing impatient, Sarah asked her servant to sleep with Abraham, her husband. Hagar became pregnant with Ishmael, and Abraham was given a son. But this is not what God had in mind for them. The events that followed could look like a Hollywood romance blockbuster. Feelings were hurt. Emotions skyrocketed. Faith had been tested. Trust had been broken. Life got really messy. Yet, through it all, God remained faithful.

At a time when most women would have been rocking great, great grandchildren, Sarah heard from God that it was her turn. At the age of 90, God kept his promise to make Sarah a mom. She laughed. I am sure this was not a chuckle, but a deep belly laugh. Now? At her age? But she knew what God had promised Abraham, a son. A son that would give her the title of "a mother of nations." Her family would be part of the one true King's genealogy.

Faith requires patience! So trust that God's timing is perfect. In the seasons of waiting, hold onto God's promise to be faithful. In your doubt, remain faithful. In your longing, remain faithful. It is through being faithful you are able to see God's outstretched hand display his faithfulness for generations to come!



And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.

Hebrews 11:11



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

FAITH REQUIRES  
PATIENCE! SO  
TRUST THAT GOD'S  
TIMING IS PERFECT.

”



# EPIC

## Hebrews 11:32-40

Every person has a story that is being written. There is a beginning and an end. It has twists, turns, and mountaintop and valley experiences. There are chapters that we desperately desire to rip out and burn. And other chapters that we would like to carefully edit, changing small details and rewriting entire events. There are parts of our story that we have influenced and guided. And other parts that we had no control over. Like an epic novel, our stories are intricately woven together. We are constantly crossing each other's paths, adding dramatic tension and comic relief, and gleaned learnings from the experiences of others.

If you pause long enough, you fully understand that you have one life. That is all. And your life will tell a story for generations. The question is this: What details are going to fill your story?

The author of Hebrews carefully highlights compelling stories of people like you and me. These stories contain epic failure and victory. And these stories have lasted thousands of years because of one staggering truth: God was the hero of each of their stories.

If you are not careful, it is easy for you to become the center of your own story. It takes heroic faith to shift your eyes off of yourself and say to God, "My life is completely in your hands! I'll go where you tell me to go and do what you tell me to do." At that moment, faith connects you with God's story. And when your story intersects with God's story, epic things occur!



And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets...

Hebrews 11:32





# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

WHEN YOUR STORY  
INTERSECTS WITH  
GOD'S STORY, EPIC  
THINGS OCCUR!

”



# REFLECT

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## GUIDING INSIGHTS

---



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## LIFE-CHANGING ACTION

---



Write down one specific action that you are going to live out.



## PINNACLE

Have you ever had a hard phone call to make that you put off for days? You stared at the name and phone number haphazardly written on a post-it-note and just couldn't bring yourself to dial the number. Maybe it was a personnel decision that you kept making excuses about in desperate hopes to avoid making the final decision? Or perhaps it was an exercise goal that you knew you had to put into motion. But the sacrifice was significant and a litany of excuses continuously surfaced.

Avoidance is something that creeps into every person, trapping them in an endless loop of procrastination. You know what you have to do, but you just do not want to do it. The fear of failure paralyzes. Thinking about all the possible worst-case scenarios permanently occupies your mind, leaving you stunned and refusing to make a decision.

The same avoidance ensnares faith. God points you in a direction, but all the unknown scenarios that creep into your mind leaves you motionless. God whispers, leaving you grasping that He is going to be present and give you the strength, but you start to second guess.

God knows you better than you know yourself because He created you. He sees your heart and can tell that if you are left to yourself, you will avoid everything that He desires for you to do. Because of this, perseverance is a tool that God uses to help your faith grow. There is something faith-expanding when you embrace the challenges, struggles, and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that life places in front of you. When you grasp that God desires to grow and expand your faith, you will embrace the insurmountable obstacles in your life.

Whatever you do, keep moving, climbing, and overcoming. The view from the pinnacle is breathtaking. And once you get there, look around in anticipation. God has another journey mapped out for you.





# SUBJECT

Hebrews 12:1-3

## RUN

Saunter, stroll, meander or traipse is not the word written. Run is the word, and it contains a clear image of pace, speed, and rhythm. You will have to apply concerted effort and fatigue will be a factor. Don't be concerned, because Jesus promises to be your source of strength.

## PERSEVERANCE

There are times when you want to slow down, change pace, and even quit. Whatever you do, do not throw in the towel. Trust that Jesus will give you exactly what you need to endure any hardship, situation, or obstacle that surfaces in your life.

## RACE

Billy Graham once said, "My home is heaven. I'm just traveling through this world." He fully grasped that his race was here on earth and the finish line was heaven. You have one life. That's all. So run with purpose! Give your best and put forth 110% effort. And when you cross the finish line, Jesus will be there to give you a high-five!

## FIXING

Distractions will encircle you and try to dominate your time and attention. Other priorities will creep in and demand you to shift focus. Personal desires will try to consume you and steer you off track. Insecurities will sneak in and whisper partial truths causing you to be apprehensive. These distractions will lead you off course and cause you to stumble. Block out all distractions and commit to looking intently on . . .

## JESUS

Fix your eyes on Jesus. He has already gone before you and knows the race you are running. He had friends betray Him and people turned away from Him. The gift of unconditional love and unrelenting grace, which He extended to everyone, was rejected by some. He has endured shame, pain, humiliation, and disgrace culminating on the cross.

Jesus is the Subject.



And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Hebrews 12:1-2



# DAILY THOUGHTS

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“ JESUS IS THE  
SUBJECT. ”

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# MYTH

## 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

If you could be a superhero, which one would you choose? I realize that I'm not asking the most thought-provoking or spiritually engaging question. But do me a favor and just appease me for a moment.

Growing up, my sister and I would play Wonder Twins. Zan and Jayna are siblings from the planet Exxor. They have shape-shifting superpowers that activate when they touch hands together. Zan can morph into any form of water, and Jayna can morph into any animal. For hours on end, my sister and I shape-shifted into every combination possible.

I don't think much has changed since childhood. There is something within all of us that desires power, strength, and invincibility. We work tirelessly to perfect the outward appearance so that other people do not see the cracks, holes, or our vulnerabilities. And never show weakness. Weakness is a scarlet letter only reserved for everyone else.

The thought process that screams, "Shun weakness!" is a complete myth. Every single person you know has a weakness or two, or 32. You aren't the only one. Weaknesses show up in how you handle criticism, a substance addiction, or a financial mess that you didn't create. It doesn't matter if it's anxiety that is paralyzing your thoughts or stress that has you staring at the ceiling. Don't believe the weakness myth! Trust that Jesus' power is enough for you.

What is your weakness? Identify it. Call it out. And when it overwhelms you, and it will, just say, "For when I am weak, then I am strong."



For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:10b



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

TRUST THAT JESUS’  
POWER IS ENOUGH  
FOR YOU.

”





# HURL

1 Peter 5:6-10

The clock ticks and time slows to a crawl. Sleep is elusive as you fixate on the shadows dancing on the wall. Your heart beats, rapidly, as you try to take long deep breaths in hopes to experience some sense of calmness. The day was an average day; nothing too exciting or dramatic occurred. There is ever-increasing stress rising in your life, and you are trying to be strong and just suck it up. You look around, and you start to compare your circumstances with other people's circumstances. What is in front of you is difficult, but not as bad as some people's circumstances you know. All this mental rollercoaster does is increase some level of guilt, which in turn intensifies the level of anxiety already dominating your life.

Recognize that what you are facing right now is significant. Something is freeing when you just admit, out loud, that the burden you are carrying is too heavy for you to carry by yourself. And whatever you do, don't compare your situation with other people's. What you are facing looks and feels completely different because it is yours.

Release it into the hands of Jesus. Hurl is the literal translation of the word cast. You are to take your anxieties, those things that are overwhelming you, and with great force and vigor hurl them on to Jesus. Get that picture in your mind. Better yet, grab a marker and go find a rock. Write your anxieties on the rock and then hurl it with all the force and intensity that you can muster. (Please make sure you hurl it in a direction that avoids people and anything fragile.)

Jesus cares for you deeply, and He can handle anything you throw at him.



Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

JESUS CARES FOR YOU  
DEEPLY, AND HE CAN  
HANDLE ANYTHING  
YOU THROW AT HIM.

”



# PERMANENT

Ephesians 3:16-19

Something is unsettling about things that are temporary. A temporary job will not alleviate your uneasiness about your financial stability. An engagement proposal with a commitment leading to a temporary marriage is ludicrous. Your friend calls and begs you to drive across town to see her new tattoo at 1:00 in the morning. After minutes of begging, you get dressed and make the drive. Only to walk into her house and discover that it's a henna tattoo and it's temporary.

There is nothing temporary about the promise Jesus gives you. In fact, when you name Jesus as Lord and Savior, you are given a no-strings-attached gift that is beyond comprehension. Paul, writing to the church located in the city of Ephesus, writes these reassuring words, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

And then later in this letter, Paul comes back to this unbelievable truth. He chooses to use the word dwell, a strong verb that has everything to do with the permanent presence of Jesus in your heart. This word is translated "to house permanently." What a vivid image to grab onto when you think about Jesus' place in your life. Jesus is permanently living inside you! This is why His peace rests in the middle of your chaos. When there are moments where you feel completely overwhelmed, Jesus is there to reassure you. Do you feel beaten down? Jesus will lift you up. Are you tired and on the verge of giving up? Jesus will give you the strength to help you push through the day.



So that Christ may dwell in  
your hearts through faith.

Ephesians 3:17



# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

WHEN THERE ARE  
MOMENTS WHERE  
YOU FEEL COMPLETELY  
OVERWHELMED, JESUS  
IS THERE TO  
REASSURE YOU.

”



# UNIMAGINABLE

Ephesians 3:20-21

Life was positioned in such a comfortable place for my wife, Kim, and me. The fictitious foundation under our feet felt secure as we stepped into a new adventure. That season of life was easy to walk by faith as dreams circled, relationships surged, and the future appeared limitless. And then we had a plot twist moment. The foundation we were standing on crumbled and sent us spiraling.

Certain friendships that we thought would always be with us, simply walked away leaving us isolated and alone. The lights that had once illuminated our future dimmed until a flicker was barely seen.

The assault on faith was on all fronts. Doubt surged as I wrestled with God, my calling, and the path that I had been sacrificially walking down. Trust, which is the foundation of all healthy relationships, was limited and only extended sparingly.

And then, in the quiet of my home office, God whispered and His words shattered the walls that were closing around us. He reminded me that He desired to do immeasurably more, but it was according to His power and not my power. It had nothing to do with the current situation or viewpoint. God was at work, and He had us in this messed up moment. It was about keeping our eyes focused on Him and relying on His strength. He desired for us to walk through the valley so that our faith would be strengthened and expanded in preparation for an upcoming season.

God is on the move and He genuinely desires to do immeasurably more through your life. Embrace the faith-expanding season you are going through now. Expect God to do the unimaginable in your life. And no matter how insurmountable the object is in front of you, God's power is at work within you.



Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us . . .

Ephesians 3:20

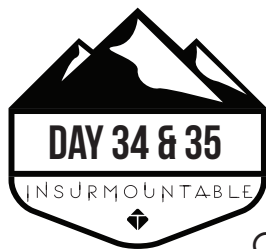


# DAILY THOUGHTS

“

EXPECT GOD  
TO DO THE  
UNIMAGINABLE IN  
YOUR LIFE.

”



# REFLECT

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