



5



THOUGHTFUL HABITS

FOR

STRONGER

FAITH



TONYA E. LEE

# 5 THOUGHTFUL HABITS FOR STRONGER FAITH

**Simple Steps for Cultivating a Bold,  
Unshakable Christian Life**

**Tonya E. Lee**

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Cover design by: Tonya E. Lee  
Published by: The Thoughtful Christian Media  
Website: [tonyalee.com](http://tonyalee.com)

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV).

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# INTRODUCTION

Faith isn't about coasting through life, hoping for the best—it's not a participation trophy you get just for showing up. It's an intentional, daily pursuit, the kind that requires thought, discipline, and a whole lot of trust in God (and, let's be honest, some trial and error). Some days, faith feels strong and steady, like you could charge the gates of hell with a water gun. Other days, it feels like you're just hanging on by a thread, trying not to lose your mind in traffic.

The world isn't exactly making this easy, either. Distractions are everywhere. There's always something to scroll, stream, or stress about. Culture constantly redefines truth, telling us to just "follow our hearts" (which, by the way, is terrible advice—your heart is the same thing that convinces you a fourth donut is a good idea).

So how do we cultivate a faith that thrives instead of just survives? How do we build a foundation that isn't one bad day away from crumbling?

That's where these *five thoughtful habits* come in. They're not magic formulas, and they're definitely not a religious to-do list designed to make you feel guilty. They're practical, life-giving rhythms that will help you build a stronger, more resilient faith—the kind that can hold steady in uncertainty, stand strong in a storm, and still leave room for laughter and some stubborn joy.

Because here's the thing—faith isn't just about believing in God; it's about ***living like it matters***. And the good news? You don't have to figure it all out overnight. You just have to start.

# HABIT #1: THINK BEFORE YOU BELIEVE—FAITH & DISCERNMENT

## WHY IT MATTERS

The world is a loud, chaotic mess of opinions, influencers, and half-truths. Every day, we're bombarded with messages about who we should be, what we should believe, and how we should live. And if we're not careful, we'll end up believing whatever sounds good instead of what's actually *true*.

A faith that thrives requires discernment—the ability to cut through the noise and recognize what aligns with God's truth and what doesn't. But discernment doesn't just happen. It's built through practice, prayer, and a willingness to ask hard questions.

## HOW TO DO IT

- **Ask Questions:** Before accepting an idea, ask: "Does this align with Scripture?" "What's the evidence behind this belief?"
- **Compare Everything to God's Word:** Culture changes. Truth doesn't.
- **Don't Be Afraid to Challenge Your Own Thinking:** God isn't scared of your questions—He invites them.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Think of faith like buying a used car. If someone offers you a "great deal," you don't just hand over your money—you check the mileage,

ask for the history, and maybe even take it to a mechanic (or, if you're like me, someone does it for you). The bottom line, you investigate before you commit.

Faith is the same way. Don't buy into every spiritual idea just because it sounds good. The greatest gift my Dad gave me as a pastor and my father was permission to question. When it came to the Bible, he told me, "Don't ever take anyone's word for anything about the Bible. Not even mine. Study for yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to be your guide." Do the work of discernment—dig into Scripture, ask wise mentors, and seek truth over trends. This will serve you for the rest of your life.

# HABIT #2: PRAY LIKE IT ACTUALLY MATTERS—BECAUSE IT DOES

## WHY IT MATTERS

Prayer is not a last-minute Hail Mary when life goes south. It's not a spiritual vending machine where you put in requests and expect instant results. Prayer is a conversation with the God of the universe—and yet, we often treat it like a backup plan instead of our first response.

If you want a faith that's alive, not just functional, prayer has to be woven into the rhythm of your life.

## HOW TO DO IT

- **Start Your Morning with Prayer:** Even a simple "God, align my heart with Yours today" can change your perspective. Personally, I start every single day with the words from Psalms 118:24, "Today is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it" (KJV). It may be corny, but wow has it made a difference for me.
- **Be Honest with God:** He already knows your mess—talk to Him about it.
- **Pray Scripture:** When you don't know what to say, borrow the words of Psalms, Proverbs, or Jesus Himself.
- **Pray Songs:** I do this all the time. When I can't process what I am feeling or even know what to say. I turn on some worship songs in the

background and just sing along. As bad as I sound, God loves to hear it.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Imagine a friend who only calls you when they need something. No “Hey, how are you?”—just requests, demands, and then silence. And not the kind of silence that is actually waiting for a reply. Your friend is just up and gone. That friendship wouldn’t last long, would it?

Now think about how we treat God. If prayer is only an SOS signal, we’re missing the point. Talk to Him throughout your day. Not just when you’re desperate—but when you’re grateful, confused, excited, or just need to process. Real faith isn’t built on emergencies—it’s built on your relationship with God.



# HABIT #3: SURROUND YOURSELF WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE

## WHY IT MATTERS

Who you spend time with shapes you. Proverbs 13:20 says, "*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise.*" In other words, show me your friends, and I'll show you your future.

If you're surrounded by people who push you toward Christ, you'll grow in faith. If you're surrounded by people who pull you into compromise, you'll start bending your convictions in ways you never expected.

## HOW TO DO IT

- **Find a Christian Community:** A solid church (yes, church matters), small group, or mentor can change everything.
- **Cut Out Toxic Influences:** If a relationship constantly drags you into sin, it's time for some spiritual boundary-setting.
- **Be That Friend for Someone Else:** Iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17). Make sure you're sharpening, not dulling.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Think of faith like a campfire. If you keep the logs together, the fire stays strong. But if you pull a log out and leave it alone, it burns out faster and turns to ash.

Community is the same way. If you try to do faith alone, you'll struggle. But when you surround yourself with people who push you toward Christ, your fire stays lit. When the hard times come – and they will come – your faith family will be there to support you, guide you, and keep you grounded in Jesus.

No community of believers is perfect. You're not perfect. I'm not perfect. Alone we are just imperfect beings flopping around like fish on a hook. But a community of believers together – that can change the world.

# HABIT #4: TRAIN YOUR MIND WITH SCRIPTURE

## WHY IT MATTERS

Your mind is a battleground, and the enemy wins when you don't know truth. If we're filling our minds with social media hot takes, cultural confusion, and spiritual junk food, we can't expect to stand firm when life gets hard.

Scripture isn't optional—it's fuel. It gives us wisdom, clarity, and the ability to recognize lies when they come.

## HOW TO DO IT

- **Read a Chapter of Scripture Every Day:** No excuses. Just start.
- **Memorize Key Verses:** When life throws curveballs, you'll have truth to stand on.
- **Journal Your Thoughts:** Writing helps cement what you're learning. I use the notes app on my phone for this a lot. It just allows me to brain-dump my thoughts and then go back and determine what is valuable to remember and what is rubbish ('cause there's always rubbish).

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Ever tried playing a sport without knowing the rules? Or taking a test without studying? It's frustrating, confusing, and a guaranteed loss.

That's what life is like without Scripture. You're going into battle unarmed. The more you train your mind with God's Word, the stronger and wiser you'll be. Besides, there's some crazy, fascinating stuff in

there! Donkey's talking... a woman driving a tent spike in a king's head... battles, intrigue, and lots of people making lots of stupid mistakes. It's a fantastic read!

# HABIT #5: TAKE ACTION—LIVE OUT WHAT YOU BELIEVE

## WHY IT MATTERS

Faith isn't just about what you know—it's about how you live. If your beliefs don't change your behavior, they're just opinions.

James 2:17 reminds us that "*faith without works is dead.*" Ouch. That means if we claim to follow Jesus but don't actually live differently, something's off.

## HOW TO DO IT

- **Serve Others:** Help a friend, volunteer, or simply be kind (*yes, even to that annoying coworker*).
- **Stand Firm in Your Convictions:** Truth isn't popular—but it's worth defending.
- **Live With Purpose:** Stop coasting through life. Ask God where He wants you and go there.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A lot of people claim to believe in Jesus, but belief alone doesn't change much. Even demons believe in God (James 2:19), and I don't think anyone's looking to them for spiritual inspiration. *Faith that doesn't move you to action is just a hobby.*

Living out your faith means making decisions that don't always feel good in the moment—because let's be honest, some of Jesus' teachings are tough. "Love your enemies" sounds great in theory until you're dealing with a rude coworker, a passive-aggressive family

member, or that person who always ‘forgets’ to Venmo you back. Suddenly, forgiveness isn’t as easy as it sounded in Sunday school.

Faith in action means praying for people who annoy you instead of roasting them in a group chat, speaking truth even when it’s unpopular, serving others even when you’re tired, and choosing integrity when cutting corners would be easier. It’s not about getting everything right all the time—it’s about *being intentional*. It’s about choosing to live in a way that actually reflects what you claim to believe.

Here’s the reality: If someone had zero idea what you believed and could only judge based on your actions, would they see Christ in you? Or would they just think you’re a slightly nicer-than-average person?

Faith in action isn’t about being perfect—it’s about being consistent. It’s choosing growth over comfort, obedience over convenience, and purpose over passivity. And the best part? The more you do it, the more natural it becomes.

# CONCLUSION

A stronger faith doesn't happen by accident. It's not something you drift into like a lazy river at a water park. It's something you build—intentionally, daily, and sometimes, stubbornly.

The good news? You don't have to figure it all out at once. Faith isn't a sprint—it's a lifetime of small, intentional choices that shape you into someone who actually looks like Christ instead of just wearing the title. And you don't have to do it alone.

If there's one thing I've learned, it's that having the right voices in your life makes all the difference. There's wisdom in surrounding yourself with people who have been there, done that, and lived to tell the story. Whether it's learning from someone a few steps ahead in the faith, plugging into a strong Christian community, or simply knowing you have a place to ask the tough questions—having support matters.

That's exactly why I wrote ***The Thoughtful Christian***—to help believers think deeply, live boldly, and build a faith that can withstand the chaos of the world. If you're ready to dive deeper, grab a copy and start learning how to engage your faith with wisdom, clarity, and confidence.

I also created ***The Thoughtful Christian Podcast***, where we wrestle with the big questions, navigate faith in real life, and—let's be honest—laugh a little along the way. Join me there (wherever you listen to podcasts) and check out new blogs every week on *The Art of Adulthood* and *Practical Faith* at [tonyalee.com](http://tonyalee.com).

So, what's your next step? Maybe it's making prayer an actual habit instead of an emergency hotline. Maybe it's cutting out toxic influences or getting serious about Scripture. Maybe it's finally living like your faith matters—outside of Sunday mornings.

Whatever it is, start today. Start small. Start messy if you have to.  
Just **start**.

Because at the end of the day, thoughtful Christianity isn't about sitting on the sidelines—it's about living with wisdom, purpose, and boldness.