

# FORTIFIED FAITH

14-Day Resource for Following Christ  
in Secular Cultures

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**Fortified Faith: 14-Day Resource for Following Christ in Secular Cultures**

**By Patricia Engler**

*Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.*

*—1 Corinthians 13:13-14, NIV.*



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## You Become Like Who You Listen To

As a youngster listening to cassette tapes in the backseat once upon a family road trip, I heard a story I would never quite forget. In this old Arabian fairy tale, three siblings endeavour to climb a mountain in search of a legendary bird. No one who had attempted the journey before ever returned, because lining the mountain pathway are thousands of talking stones that love to yell irritating things at passersby. That might not be so bad—a little weird, maybe, but not calamitous—except for one catch: anyone who turns back to look at the stones instantly becomes a talking stone themselves. After the two oldest brothers attempt the climb and disappear, their younger sister sets out after them. She, however, unlike her ill-fated brothers, stuffs her ears with cotton to muffle the stones' cacophony. When she finds the bird, all the stone-cold souls along the mountain pathway turn back into humans.

While many years have passed since I first heard this story back when cassette tapes roamed the earth, the legend of the talking stones never left me. Sure, it's a fairy tale, but its message is all-too-true: *you become like who you listen to.*

As we journey through our culture or climb the mountain of higher education, a thousand voices yell post-modern humanistic, materialistic, individualistic or otherwise unbiblical messages at us from every direction: God is a construct of human minds, human minds are constructs of chemical reactions, and chemical reactions are constructs of the Nothing that ultimately shaped Everything. That means truth is relative, morality is up to us, religion is for deluded bigots, and purpose or satisfaction in life come from wherever we can forage, buy or steal it—love, lust, good things, bad things, evolutionary success, social media likes, alternative spirituality—whatever. All around, persuasive untruths compel us to change our actions and beliefs until they match everyone else's, making us look increasingly more like our surroundings. Before long, we too are yelling the same messages as all the other stones.

So, does this mean we need to stuff our ears with some sort of spiritual cotton and avoid making eye contact with culture? Not necessarily. Certainly, we need to be biblically-founded, critically-thinking disciples of Christ who are somehow separated, set apart, and different from our surroundings. Like Romans 12:2 (NKJV) says, “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

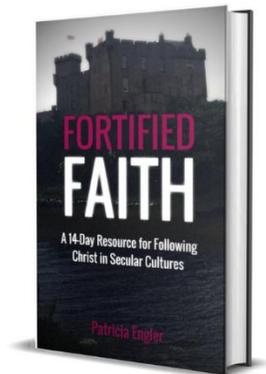
But turning away from the lies of culture doesn't just mean blocking them out—it means knowing the truth and pursuing *that* instead of looking back towards all the other voices behind us. We flee from the other voices by knowing the voice of Christ—by studying Scripture, meditating on it and hiding it in our hearts so that we know His word; by *obeying* it, by seeking Him, and by walking close to Him. “My sheep listen to My voice,” said Jesus. “I know them, and they follow Me.” (John 10:27, NIV) As we follow Him and hear His voice, something marvellous happens. Instead of looking more and more like the stones lining the mountain pathway, as we walk closely with our Saviour and turn our hearts toward His words, we grow more and more like *Him*. We become like Who we listen to.





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