

Faith

The Challenges We Face Today

The challenge that many followers of Jesus face is to know what faith is and learning to live by faith.

- We don't really know where faith comes from or how to acquire it.
- Many have faith in the wrong things and wonder why their faith is so weak.
- We may think we have faith until a crisis shows up and reveals our lack faith.
- We don't know how to grow our faith and we try many spiritual things to increase our faith with few results.

We must learn what faith is and where it comes from so we can begin a new journey into faith that is really faith.

Lesson Truth

God's Word tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore faith, the right faith, is an essential element that we must obtain, hold onto and grow into. We must learn to put our faith in Jesus and trust Him regardless of what happens to us.

Lesson Goal

The goal for this lesson is for you to learn to be more in the faith, of the faith, walking by faith and living by faith. Faith is action not feeling and you must lean this importance difference.

Lesson Discussion

What Is Faith

Faith is a hard concept to understand because it is not natural. Putting your faith in something you cannot see, touch or sense is difficult for many people. Most people do not realize that

they are putting their faith in things everyday that they may not even be aware of.

When you fly in an airplane you are putting your faith in that pilot that he really knows what he is doing and will do it well, like takeoff and landing. When you drive your car you have faith that it will steer correctly and be able to stop when you need to.

Yet when it comes to putting our faith in Jesus and looking at the way most people live, you would think they no faith in Him at all. When the disciples freaked out when the storm came and they were in the boat with Jesus, Jesus would say the same thing to us today as He said to them: "where is your faith".



Heb 1:11 ESV "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not."

We can see by Romans 4:1 above that faith is a substance – it is real. It is something that can be observed and measured. Jesus said if you have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed you could say to this mountain leave, and it would be gone.

Elements of Faith

Faith is not possible without believing and trusting. You will not put your faith in something you do not believe in and trust in. When you do believe in and trust in something, it is very easy to put your faith in that thing. If I don't truly believe in God, and do not trust God, I will not put my faith in Him or His Son.

There are a great many verses in God's Word that talk about faith. In Hebrews chapter 11, sometimes referred to as the faith hall of fame, you can see very real examples of men and women of faith. All the writers of the New Testament address faith from one perspective or another. You will learn a lot about faith by just reading God's Word.

In order to develop faith, you must first choose to believe and choose to trust God and His Son.

Then you will begin to have a measure of faith and you will begin to understand what faith is and what it isn't.

Where Faith Comes From



Romans 10:17 ESV “So then faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

This reference to Abraham goes back to the time God told Abraham to sacrifice his son. This was after God had told him that he would be the father of many nations, yet here was God asking him to sacrifice the one who would make that promise true.

This was simply a test God put on Abraham to let Abraham demonstrate whether he believed God's promise or not. From a human perspective, Abraham could have faltered and refused to obey God by thinking God doesn't know what he is doing. Abraham, by faith, chose instead to believe God's promise despite events and circumstances because he believed that what God promised could not be otherwise because he knew God.



Romans 3:22 ESV “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction”

We also receive this same righteousness that Abraham received through simply believing what God has said and putting our faith in Jesus. True believing is what gives us the possibility of receiving God's promises.

Why does it seem many believers are not experiencing the wonderful promises of God - peace, joy, contentment, and sufficiency in all things? Why is there so much worry, fear, doubt, anxiety, stress and unbelief in the church?

Faith Is Not Feeling

Faith is the action of believing God. Our feelings are just indicators of whether or not we have faith. Emotions such as fear, worry, doubt, and discouragement simply show us that our faith is wavering. We must not live by feelings but by faith in Him – we must choose to continue to believe Him in any and all circumstances.

If we are having a faith issue we need to go back and look at our beliefs. Most likely there is something we don't really believe in regards to God's Word. It is very common to experience negative emotions because we still have a lot of unbelief in our lives. It's ok, we all have pockets of unbelief and we must uncover them and find out why we won't believe God.

Often we don't take the time to examine our beliefs because we are too busy and so when the negative emotion fades away we go on with business as usual. Things are ok now so we go on with our lives and fail to find out where the unbelief is.

When the negative feelings show up we must immediately catch ourselves and deal with the unbelief immediately. Find out where you are not believing God and reaffirm your choice to believe God just now and stand on His word. We immediately submit ourselves to God and resist the evil desire to doubt God.

Living By Faith



Romans 1:16-17 ESV “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith””.

What does it mean to “live by faith”? Is it just something we occasionally find ourselves doing? Or is it something that we can live by consistently? Living by faith means all that we do, say or think demonstrates faith in God. If

something in our life is not God honoring, it is not of faith. Faithlessness is God dishonoring and most believers don't think about that in regards to their faith.



Hebrews 11:6 ESV "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

No believer would like to think that their life is not pleasing to God, but most often that is the case. We must grow in faith because our lives become more pleasing to God. God is not pleased by all our activity, He is pleased with we are living by faith.

If you want to read about men and women of faith in God's Word, read Hebrews chapter 11 which is referred to as the faith hall of fame. Many of them endured awful persecution including torture and death, but they did not waver in their faith.

The Testing of Our Faith



James 1:2-3 ESV "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

God helps us discern if we have faith through testing. If our faith was never tested we would not know if we had faith. When you fail a test it is just an indication that you were faithless in that situation. You may have thought you had faith, but the testing will reveal if you have faith enough to stay faithful to Him.



Deuteronomy 8:2 ESV "And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your

God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

How does God test your faith? He will bring opportunities with events and people to show you if you really have faith or if your faith is situational, meaning you may feel you have faith when everything is going well, but go to pieces when your life gets turned upside down.

If you don't have faith in the little problems of life, I assure you it won't be there when the crisis comes. You must build your faith by standing with God's truth in all the little annoyances of the day so you can stand when the real trials come. Fear, doubt, worry and stress are a sure sign that faithlessness is at your door.

We know that faith is not a feeling, but a choice in every situation to trust God and act according to God's truth, no matter what is happening around you. If you don't really know God and don't really trust Him, and don't intend to live by His truth, you will be faithless.

Stand Steadfast In Your Faith



1 Corinthians 16:13 ESV "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."

Watch your actions, speech and thinking throughout the day. You will find plenty of instances where you did not act in faith. Examine your beliefs when you realize you acted out of emotions rather than faith. Repent of your actions and look behind them to find where your beliefs are faulty.

Ephesians 6:10-18 ESV "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against

the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...”

When we are distracted by all the cares and concerns of this life we are susceptible to faithless living. When we don't spend sufficient time in prayer and reading the Word of God we easily forget how we should be living and begin to excuse and justify our faithless acts. Our faith is choked and we live faithless rather than by faith.

When we are living by faith we can find peace and contentment no matter what is facing us because we know that God is bigger than any of it. From God's perspective they are simply small fleas on a large elephant. Learn to see things from God's perspective and the elephant size problem turns into a flea size problem.

Hope In God

What is the difference between faith and hope? When we hope for something we have set our expectation for some outcome that we desire for our future.



Romans 15:13 ESV “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

What is it that we should be hoping for? It should not be for the things of this world

although that does not prevent us from praying for situations when we might hope our loved ones are saved or that God helps their infirmities. The one thing we must fix our hope on is the hope of eternal life that God has promised to them that believe in Him.

By faith we hold fast our hope for what God has promised. We believe God and therefore we know that the hope that is promised in the Word will come to pass as we stand steadfastly and do not waiver from it. Keep your hope firmly planted in God above everything else because He can give us bright hope for tomorrow.



One Step for Living This Truth

Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to allow the truth taught in this lesson to be lived in your own personal life.

This step will not perfect your faith but it will help you begin to grow in your faith where you may have been stagnant before.

ACTION STEP

We know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Review this lesson whenever your faith seems to be weakening. Read God's Word regularly, especially the Gospels and the Letters. They will renew your faith daily.

The disciple journey is a life journey into the life that is truly life. No hurry, no rush. Take your time and work to build your faith and keep your hope in God.

As you spend time with God in the morning, just ask Him to show you what He wants you to know about where your faith and hope really are. Watch your life daily and examine yourself to see if you are walking by faith. Review the scriptures at the end of the lesson whenever you are struggling with faithlessness.

Bumper Sticker Summary

Faith is my belief in action – I believe and act, trusting God, even in the face of impossible situations, standing firm, steadfastly, believing without a doubt that God is bigger than anything life throws at me.

Illustration

Mary had been a believer for many years and she attended church when she could, but was not consistent. She spent very little time in the bible and prayer because she was so busy all the time. She had a kind heart and enjoyed helping others when she could, but the cares and concerns of this life had her trapped into a life of isolation from God.

Mary was experiencing very little of the life that is truly life that Christianity can avail us. She knew she needed more in her life and that God somehow was the answer. She was a habitual worrier and was always concerned how she would make ends meet for her and her two small children. At times felt trapped with no way out.

Janet, who was a member of her church called on her one day to see if she could be of help in anyway. Janet took her to lunch so they could have some time alone and she asked her what she thought she needed the most. She responded that she really didn't know what she really need as her life seemed upside down most of the time. She stated that if she could just somehow overcome all the worry in her life, that her life would be a lot better just from that.

Janet asked her if she believed it was possible for a person to not worry. She responded that she believed worry was just part of life and that everyone worries. Janet asked Mary if she believed God's Word. Mary responded that she did not read her bible very much but she does believe the bible is God's Word.

Janet shared that she believed God's Word also and that it was important to add faith to what we believe which means we act and speak as if God's Word is true. She said that must put our faith in Him and His Word and stand against everything that tries to convince us that He is not true and His Word is not true. Then Janet told Mary that God commands us not to worry. Jesus says in Matthew "Do not worry about your life". We are told not to worry, and therefore it must be possible not to worry if God's commands us not to do it. If you will not believe this you will be trapped in worry the rest of your life. Will you choose to believe God's Word now?

Mary responded, I believe God's Word but I don't know how not to worry. Janet responded that she could help with that if she was interested. Mary responded, by all means. That would help so much if I didn't worry all the time. Janet responded that the bible says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. So Janet and Mary agreed to meet once a week to study God's Word so Mary could learn God's way of not to worry. After a few months Mary's worry level was reduced significantly and that overflowed into other areas of her life so that she had more peace and contentment than she had ever had.



Scriptures on Faith

.Matthew 6:30 ESV "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Matthew 8:25 ESV "And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he

rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.”

Matthew 17:20 ESV “He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

Matthew 21:21 ESV “And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.”

Mark 11:22 ESV “And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God.”

Acts 15:9 ESV “and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.”

Acts 20:21 ESV “testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”

Acts 26:18 ESV “to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Romans 1:17 ESV “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Romans 3:28 ESV “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

1 Corinthians 2:5 ESV “so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

1 Corinthians 16:13 ESV “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

2 Corinthians 5:7 ESV “for we walk by faith, not by sight.”

2 Corinthians 13:5 ESV “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

Galatians 2:20 ESV “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Colossians 1:23 ESV “if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Colossians 2:7 ESV “rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

1 Timothy 1:5 ESV: The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

1 Timothy 1:19 ESV “holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith,”

1 Timothy 4:1 ESV “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,”

2 Timothy 2:22 ESV “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

2 Timothy 4:7 ESV “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Hebrews 4:2 ESV “For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened”

Hebrews 10:22 ESV “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our

hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Hebrews 10:38-39 ESV “but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”

Hebrews 11:6 ESV “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

James 1:2-3 ESV “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”

James 1:6 ESV “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.”

1 Peter 1:5 ESV “who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

1 Peter 1:7 ESV “so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 1:9 ESV “obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

2 Peter 1:5-6 ESV “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,”

1 John 5:4 ESV “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

Jude 1:3 ESV “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing

to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Jude 1:20 ESV “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,”