I. Objectives of Phase 2, Session 5 - Faith

1. Explain that fear is not from God and that the Lord has given us the power to get rid of it
2 Timothy 1:7
Genesis 3:10
Isaiah 41:10
Isaiah 43:1,5
Psalm 34:4-5

2. Invite participants to gain a deep and broad understanding of the meaning and power of faith
Hebrews 11:1
John 3:16
Romans 1:16
Acts 16:31
Luke 7:9
Matthew 14:25-31
Galatians 2:16
Galatians 3:11

3. Confirm understanding that The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith
1 Corinthians 15:1-19
Romans 10:4-17

4. Discuss why faith is so important to the believer
Righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith Romans 1:17
The just shall live by faith Galatians 3:10-12
We are accounted as righteous by faith Romans 4:20-22
We are justified by faith Galatians 3:11
We are saved through faith Ephesians 2:8
We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith Galatians 3:14
We receive answer to our prayers Mark 11:22-24
We can overcome the world 1 John 5:4-5
We are to fight the fight of faith 1 Timothy 6:12
We are to operate in faith to please God Hebrews 11:6
We see the glory of God John 11:40
We receive guidance from the Holy Spirit Galatians 5:25

We have access to God's Grace Romans 5:1-2
Through faith Christ may dwell in our hearts Ephesians 3:17

5. Create awareness about the issues that counter our faith
Unbelief Matthew 17:20
Doubt Matthew 11:23-26

6. Review the actions that we may take to eliminate unbelief and doubt
Romans 8:5-8
2 Corinthians 10:3-6
James 1:6-8
1 John 2:15-17
2 Corinthians 5:7
Galatians 5:16

7. Discuss the actions that we may take to eliminate fear and increase our faith
2 Corinthians 10:3-6
2 Corinthians 3:17-18
Hebrews 12:2
1 Timothy 1:19
Hebrews 10:22
Romans 10:8
2 Timothy 1:6-7

8. Encourage participants to become like children, to have the faith of a child
Luke 18:15-17
Matthew 18:1-7
1 Corinthians 13:11-13
Hebrews 5:12-14
1 Timothy 4:12-16

II. Email to participants before session 5

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
The following is the content of this email:
1. Fear is not from God and the Lord has given us the power to get rid of it.
2. Understanding faith.
3. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith.
4. Why is faith so important to the believer?

5. What counters our faith?
6. Actions to eliminate unbelief and doubt.
7. Actions to eliminate fear and increase faith.
8. Exercises and Assignments.

1. Fear is not from God and the Lord has given us the power to get rid of it.

2 Timothy 1:7 "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*."

Let's get rid of fear because it isn't from God and the Lord has given us the power to do so.

What is the source of fear?

Let's look at the origin of fear according to Scripture. The first mention of fear was in Genesis 3, right after the fall of man.

Genesis 3:9-10 NKJV "*Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was **afraid** because I was naked; and I hid myself*."

So, fear came from the actions of the devil and the fall of man. God **did not** give us fear; Satan and our own sins brought fear into the world.

2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*."

Why do we fear? It happens when we focus on, place our trust in, the temporal (and temporary) things of the world rather than the spiritual things of God. Adam and Eve took their focus/trust off of God and His knowledge and wisdom and put it on the temporal tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When we rely on the temporary, soon to fade, things of this world instead of the eternal things of the spiritual realm, we open ourselves to insecurity and fear. When am I going to lose this job? My possessions? My status and importance? My family or friends? My health? When am I going to lose my life? The potential for loss causes us fear. Also, fear often leads us to anger.

The Scriptures tells us:

2 Corinthians 4:18 NKJV "*while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal*."

Hebrews 11:3 KJV "*By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible*."

So, we are to understand that the spiritual world is even more real than the physical world, since the physical world was created by the spiritual world (The Word). The spiritual world is also permanent while the physical world is temporary. In fact, the things of the spiritual world are eternal. If we rely on God and the things of the spiritual world, we will not suffer true loss, only the loss of things in this world, which are destined to pass away anyway.

These are the actions we have uncovered that lead us to get rid of fear:

A. Experience the love of God, for God is Love.

What happens when we experience the presence of God?

Meditate on Psalm 46:10 — "*Be still, and know that I am God;*
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!." NKJV

1 John 4:8,16 NKJV "*8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*
16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

How much does God love us?
John 3:16 NKJV "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*."

John 17:23 NKJV "*I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, **and have loved them as You have loved Me***."

John 15:9 NKJV "*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love*."

I John 4:18 NKJV tells us that there is no fear in love. "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not*

been made perfect in love."

ACTION 1 — Therefore, one way to get rid of fear is to realize and experience just how much God loves us and will take care of us. We have to rely on the presence and love of God to get rid of our fear. One way to walk in faith and rid ourselves of fear is to pray each morning for God to reveal his presence and His love for us. (We have attached a "Love Prayer" at the end of this email that you might want to include in your daily prayers). Only when we have received God's presence and love for us can we love Him and others as we should. The Apostle John knew he was beloved by Jesus; he was the only one able to overcome fear and stand at the cross with Him.

B. Rely on the Lord

Isaiah 41:10 NKJV **"*Fear not**, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand*.'

Isaiah 43:5-7 "*Fear not, for I am with you;*
I will bring your descendants from the east,
And gather you from the west;
I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!'
Bring My sons from afar,
And My daughters from the ends of the earth—
Everyone who is called by My name,
Whom I have created for My glory;
I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

We need to be still, rest in His presence, and ask Him to reveal to us His love and care for us.

ACTION 2 — Therefore, another way to fight fear is to focus on/rely on God, and the things of God's spiritual kingdom. Faith in God, reliance on Him is the key by which we access the spiritual world. 2 Corinthians 5:7 tells us that "*we walk by faith, not by sight.*"

C. Meditate on the Scriptures and rely on the Scriptures to defeat temptation.

This is what Jesus did when He was tempted in the desert. In Mattew 4:1-11 we see how Jesus responded to the devil's temptation with Deuteronomy 8:3 to the first temptation in verse 4, with Deuteronomy 6:16 to the second temptation in verse 7 and

with Deuteronomy 6:13 on the third in verse 11. God's words are spirit and they are life (John 6:63) and they won't return to Him void but will fulfill the purpose for which He sent them (Isaiah 55:11). In Joshua 1:8-9, we clearly see the connection between overcoming fear and meditating on/declaring The Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God, so every time that we respond with the Scriptures to temptation, we are shedding the light of Christ into the darkness that is coming towards us.

Joshua 1:8-9 NKJV "*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*."

Remember and meditate on God's truths:

- Fear doesn't come from God, *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*. 2 Timothy 1:7
- Fear (worry, etc.) is a gift from Satan. Visualize this. Will you accept it? Or cast it aside?
- Since Satan is a liar, so is fear — **F**alse**E**vent **A**ppearing **R**eal. Here's a link to a worship song you probably know, called "Fear is a Liar" https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sQTnREEtuNk (The lyrics are included at the end of this email).
- Even though you may be tempted to think that fear can help you in life, it really can not do anything good for you. "*Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. . . And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? . . .Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*." Luke 12:22-23, 25-26, 32 NKJV
- Fear only brings torment (1 John 4:18).
- It is possible to overcome fear and anxiety through the power of the Holy Spirit, who resides within us. Otherwise, Jesus would not have commanded us to not fear and to be anxious for nothing! Jesus has no fear, and 1 John 4:17 tells us that, ". . . *as He is, so are we in this world*." As long as we abide in Him and He in us, we can overcome the law of sin (including fear). When we fail to abide in Him, sin/fear can come upon us. The analogy of being inside an airplane in flight is a good reminder; as long as we remain in the plane, we can overcome the law of

- gravity by relying on the forces of lift and thrust. If we leave the plane, we become subject to the law of gravity again.

"Fear" includes anxiety, worry and concerns. God has told us we are not to have any of it in our lives; anything not of faith is a sin. "*But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin*." Romans 14:23 NKJV

Rejoice in the Lord, then be anxious for nothing:

Philippians 4:4-8 NKJV "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things*."

The scriptures repeatedly tell us, "Do not fear" and "Be anxious for nothing." "The Lord is with us."

Joshua 1:9 NKJV "*Have I not **commanded** you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*."

ACTION 3
Meditate on The Word of God (which is Jesus), Who is the light and **declare it aloud**to resist Satan and his temptation to fear (and all other sin). *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it*. John 1:4-5 "*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*." Romans 10:10 NKJV

D. Bring your fear to the light, so that it will lose power over you.

"*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light*." Ephesians 5:11-13 NKJV

This is also why James 5:16 tells us to confess to one another (shine a light on) our

sins.

In fact, something evil can be transformed into good when God shines His light upon it. One example is the evil cross, which became our symbol of salvation and freedom. Another example lies in the testimony of every believer who has overcome temptation and evil in their life. The evil has become a “good” when their testimonies shine light on it and use it to bring sinners to salvation.

ACTION 4
Bring your fear to the light; expose it, and the darkness will disappear and be replaced by light. Sin grows in darkness but can not stand in the presence of light.

2. Understanding Faith

A. Definition

So, what is faith? Scripture tells us, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*.”(Hebrews 11:1 NKJV) This means trusting God, following and obeying Him, believing what He says rather than what our own eyes tell us and acting accordingly. Faith is more than just belief. Even the demons believe that Jesus is the son of God (in fact, they know it). To believe something is to mentally agree that it is true. The early Christians combined two greek words in a way that had not normally been done before in order to describe what faith was. They used the greek words for “believe” and a proposition (“in” or “on”) to create a more active verb and to describe an action that is necessary for salvation. The best translation of these two words is “trust in”, or “rely on”. This is faith.

“*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes in**Him should not perish but have everlasting life*.”
John 3:16 NKJV

“*Let not your heart be troubled; you **believe in** God, **believe** also **in** Me*.”John 14:1 NKJV

“So they said, “***Believe***
***on** the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household*.” Acts 16:31 NKJV

So, the difference between belief and faith is the action that we take in response to our belief. A good example of this is what Peter does in Matthew 14:27-31:
"*But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt*?"

B. The nature of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 NKJV "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*."

Faith gives substance to our hope. This hope is sure and certain, not the wishy-washy hope of this world. Hope is our objective; faith is the action that realizes our hope and helps bring it into this physical world.

We can hope because God loves us.

Romans 5:5 NKJV "*Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*."

We can only have hope and faith in the things we can not see, or do not yet have, in the physical world. Otherwise, if we saw it or had it already, there would be no need for hope and faith.

Romans 8:24-25 NKJV "*For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance*."

John 20:29 NKJV "*Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*."

Why does it sometimes seem that our faith is of no effect and our hopes and prayers are not answered? In trying to understand this, we need to go deeper in our understanding about faith, fear, unbelief and doubt, and the effects of sin in our lives. We will cover this issue in more detail below.

C. How do we receive faith and how does it grow?

In order to better understand how we receive faith and how it grows (or withers) within us, we then looked into the very important parable of the four soils. It is so important that Jesus says we must first understand this parable before we can understand any other. We discussed that the seed in the parable is the Word of God (Jesus) that is planted in the "soil" of a person's heart. God's objective is that the seed grows and produces fruit, which is not just for the blessing of the person who receives the seed but for many others as well. The soils in the parable can refer to the hearts of different people when they first receive The Word; this explains why different people react to it differently. The soils can also refer to our own hearts during different stages, or in different areas, of our Christian life.

The first soil (wayside) — the heart is hardened by pride and other sin, by painful experiences, and by walking by sight rather than faith. Even Jesus' disciples experienced this, as we see in the following verses.
"*But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve*."" Mark 8:17-19 NKJV. In this hardened state, The Word can not go deep within us, become a part of us, and begin to transform us. Thus, we never really know and understand The Word. That is why Satan/the birds of the air (the air is Satan's realm) can steal it from us; it was never truly ours, never a real part of us. Thus, faith is lost.

The second soil (rocky or shallow) — the heart is soft enough to let The Word and faith begin to grow, but it's too shallow and rocky to develop deep roots. At this level, The Word and faith are viewed primarily as being a personal blessing and not as something necessary for blessing others. The believer expects The Word, faith, and the church to make his life better, easier, more pleasant. When problems, tribulation, and persecution (or even just disagreements with other believers) are experienced, The Word and faith begin to wither in this soil. This is why some people leave one church after another . . . or leave Christianity altogether. Jesus said, however, ""*If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you*."John 15:18-19 He also said, "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*."" John 16:33 NKJV People with this "soil" in their

heart walk by sight, do not forgive, and their faith withers and dies.

The third soil (with thorns) — the heart is burdened by the cares and demands of this world, and is consumed by desire/love for riches, pleasure and all things of this world. The person with this "soil" tries to please both the world and God. ""*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon*." Matthew 6:24 NKJV

The fourth soil (soft, good ground) — the "soil" of this heart is well prepared to receive the seed, The Word of God. The heart is humble and open to receiving God's Word/faith. The person meditates on The Word, perseveres through tribulation and the cares of this world, and is willing to be nourished and pruned by God. This type of soil produces a great harvest, for the benefit of many. The faith that comes from this soil serves as a " . . . *light of the world. A city that is set on a hill* . . . "Matthew 5:14 NKJV

D. Little faith or great faith

In reviewing the parable of the soils, we note that our faith can remain little (even weaken, whither and die) or it can grow and become a great faith. We cultivate, grow and strengthen our faith by meditating on the Word of God, the seed, that is planted in our hearts. In Romans 4:19-20, we see that Abraham "strengthened in faith" by placing all of his attention on "the promise (the Word) of God." We also see that praising God helps to strengthen our faith.

Romans 4:19-20 NKJV "*And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God*,"

Luke 7:1-8 The centurion's servant is healed.

Luke 7:9 NKJV "*When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!*"

Matthew 15:22-27 The gentile woman begs for her daughter to be healed.

Matthew 15:28 NKJV "*Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour*."

Matthew 14:25-31 Peter walks on water.

Matthew 14:31 NKJV
"*And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*"

So we can have "great faith" or "little faith." The following verse shows us, however, that no matter the size of our faith, the Holy Spirit has given us all the faith we need to act in the power and authority of Jesus Christ and bring about miracles. Even faith the size of a mustard seed is enough! The problem is that other things, such as sin, unbelief and doubt, can counteract our faith. We will cover these in greater detail below.

Matthew 17:19-21 NKJV "*Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" So Jesus said to them, "**Because of your unbelief**; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting*."

E. Why is faith dead without works?

James 2:26 "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"*.

The passage where Peter walks on water, helps us greatly to answer this question.

Matthew 14:27-33 "*But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."*
And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."
So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"
And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased."

Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the

Son of God."

How did Peter overcome his fear and exercise his faith to walk on water?
He saw Jesus' example.
He heard Jesus tell him not to be afraid.
He heard Jesus tell him to come to Him.
He believed it was possible to walk on water.
He hoped (sure and certain) that he could also do it.
He trusted that Jesus loved him beyond measure and would not harm him.
He relied on Jesus' power and authority over the water, not his own.
He obeyed, stepped out and walked on water!
He kept his eyes on Jesus, not the things of this world (the waves).

That was his exercise in faith.

Why did Peter start to sink?
He took his focus off of Jesus and put it on the things of this world, his circumstances.
He doubted.
He feared.
He sank.
But Jesus loved him so much that He rescued him!

Faith goes beyond belief and requires action; faith means getting out of the boat! We hear, believe, hope, trust and rely on the LORD and take action, **obey**.

How do we "walk by faith", the way Peter did, and become able to "walk on water"? We spend time in the presence of God, in prayer and meditation on The Word. We practice listening for, and hearing, His voice. We walk and talk with God continually, developing a true, loving relationship with Him and learning how to let Him lead us. Remember that even Peter was tempted to walk by sight and turn his focus to the temporal, to his circumstances, to the wind and the waves. When we don't walk by faith, we sink, we are overcome by fear; in the worst case, we don't even get out of the boat in the first place.

This is why James speaks about the necessity of action being a part of our faith.

James 2:26 NKJV "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*."

In this verse, "works" doesn't mean the works of the flesh, doing things in order to

achieve salvation. Our works of faith are done in response to our salvation and through the power of the Holy Spirit that lives within us! It means taking action on what you say you believe. It means being obedient to what God is calling you to do. In John 14:12, Jesus says that we have the power to do even greater "works" than He did, because He went to the Father and asked Him to send the Holy Spirit to us. Consider this, Peter walked on water **before** he had received the Holy Spirit at Pentacost. We have the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We just need to believe, rely on God, and act. That is faith.

F. The works of the law versus the works of faith

Paul contrasted the works of the law (done to try to achieve salvation) with the works of faith (done because we are already saved and have a new identity in Christ). See Galatians 2:16 and 3:10-12.

Galatians 2:16 NKJV "*knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified*."

Galatians 3:11 NKJV "*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them*."

The difference between belief and faith is action. Fear first came from the actions of the devil and the fall of man; not from God. Fear comes from relying on ourselves, and any other temporary, earthly things, rather than focusing on and relying on God and the things of the spiritual realm of God.

3. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 "*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.*
For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then

by the twelve*. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*
For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed."

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 "*Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.* ***And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.*** *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.* ***And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*** *Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable*.
Your faith is empty V14
And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.
Your Faith is futile V17
And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

Romans 10:4-13 "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).* ***But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesusand believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*** *For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*."

Distinguishing the Faith in Jesus from the Faith of Jesus.

So in summary, we first exercised our human/natural faith to respond to God when we heard the Word of God, and we believed in/had **faith <u>in</u> Jesus** for our justification. This faith was ours, our free will acceptance of God's offer of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Romans <u>10:14-17</u> NKJV *"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:*
"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"
But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

At this point we were justified with God. Then, once we are justified, we can receive the Holy Spirit and be born again. Through the Holy Spirit we received the amazing and powerful**faith <u>of</u> Jesus.** This is the measure of supernatural faith that everyone is given when they are born again. This is the moment in which we can declare that Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3).

We all begin our lives as believers with the same amount of faith.

Romans 12:3 NKJV *"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."*

Observe the sequence of events on these verses:

Ephesians 1:13-14 NKJV "*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*, *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory"*.

This is the sequence: we heard the word of truth, then we trusted in Him, or believed in Him; then, we were justified. Once we believed in Him, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit, then we were born again, because by the Holy Spirit, we were able to declare that Jesus is Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:3 NKJV "*Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the*

Holy Spirit."

For more details about the difference between justification and being born again, please see John Wesley's sermon 19 "The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God".

God has already done His part in giving us faith; now it is up to us to grow and increase that faith, which is, in fact, the release of the faith of Christ that is already within us. This measure of faith can be increased, but we are the ones who increase it, not God. He furnishes the means whereby faith can be increased, but we increase our faith by doing two things: feeding it on the Word of God and exercising it. We then need to work it out, reveal Jesus' faith in our lives as we conform more and more to his image. Our faith grows, is increasingly revealed, according to what we do with it. Some people don't use it at all; they bury it, like the servant buried his talent in Matthew 25:25, so it never increases. We know that faith can grow, because 2 Thessalonians 1:3 NKJV says: *"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,"*

Once we have the Faith of Christ, we are predestined to become like Him. God has put His Spirit in us and His Spirit will lead us to follow His commands.

Ezekiel 36:27 "*I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them*."

The process of sanctification takes a lifetime until the Lord completes His work in us (Philippians 1:6). Two variables are helpful in measuring our progress: intensity and frequency.

Intensity

It is important to remember, however, that Sanctification takes a lifetime. Not every moment of our lives will we act truly dead to self. Not every moment will we be the perfect image of Jesus. Yet we will have our moments when the glory of God is clearly revealed in us. These are the moments when we act truly (100%) dead to self and it is not we who live but Christ who lives in us (Galatians 2:20). It is important to remember that death is a matter of all or nothing; you can't be 99% dead and 1% alive. When you are dead, you're 100% dead! This refers to the intensity of Sanctification;. We are truly sanctified when we realize that we are already 100% dead — and we act like it! Some Christians misinterpret John the Baptist's statement, ""*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" (John 3:30 NKJV) to mean that We gradually grow from being 10% Jesus and 90% old man/self to being 50/50% and finally 99% Jesus and only 1% old man/self.

No, as believers, we're 100% dead to self, period. The question is, "Are we acting dead to self and reflecting Christ's image, or are we acting as if the old man/self were still alive, as if we were still wearing our old corrupt "clothes". Do we rely on the mind of Christ, which we receive when we put on Christ, or do we rely on our old man's natural, carnal mind. Do we judge and doubt the things of the Spirit of God with our carnal minds. If so, James says we are being double minded.

James 1:6-8 NKJV *"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."*
1 Corinthians 2:14-16 NKJV
"But the natural (carnally minded) man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But ***we have the mind of Christ****."*

Romans 8:5-8 NKJV *"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

Ephesians 4:17-18 NKJV *"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;"*

Romans 12:2 NKJV *"And 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."*

Frequency
Another aspect of Sanctification is the frequency with which we see it manifested. As new believers, we usually act 100% dead to self and are the perfect image of Jesus only on rare occasions — maybe 10% of the time, maybe only 1% of the time! As we grow in our faith and in Sanctification, however, we see these moments of death to self and the glorious revelation of Christ within us more and more often. This is the frequency aspect of Sanctification. By God's Grace, we keep growing towards a

revelation of 100% death to self 100% of the time (Philippians 1:6). Remember that it is God who completes this work in you. You don't do it through your own effort; you just need to let God do His work in you (Philippians 2:13).

Philippians 1:6 NKJV *"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;"*

4. Why is faith so important to the believer?

A. We learn about the righteousness of God which is revealed from faith to faith.

Romans 1:17 "*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith*."

B. We should Live by faith

The just, the righteous shall live by faith. We need to learn how to live by faith and learn how it works.

Galatians 3:10-12 "*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "**the just shall live by faith**."* Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

C. We are accounted as righteous.

Genesis 15:6 "*And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."*

Romans 4:20-22 *"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

D. We are justified by faith.

Galatians 3:11 "*But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith.*"

E. We are Saved through faith.

We are saved through faith. Our salvation is predicated on faith. It is very important for us to know about faith and how it works.

Ephesians 2:8 "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*,"

We are saved through faith and salvation, not faith, is the gift from God that is mentioned in Ephesians 2:8-9.NKJV
"*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*."

Some Christians believe, due to their view of God's absolute sovereignty . . . and man's total depravity, that even our faith in God is not a free will choice but must be a gift from God. They site Ephesians 2:8 as the proof text. A closer examination of the original Greek text, however, shows that the "gift" can not be faith, because the gender rules of Greek grammar prohibit such an understanding. "Faith" in Greek is feminine, while "you have been saved" is neutral as is "that" in "*and that not of yourselves".* The gift is that we "have been saved". Salvation is also feminine but the construction in Greek is "have been saved" not salvation. At the end of this email, we have attached two online articles that explain in more detail the grammar rules and the true meaning of this verse. Probably, and most importantly, the word "works" in verse 9 is usually used in reference to salvation (which can't be obtained through works), not in reference to faith. Our saving faith in Jesus is our decision; it is not imposed on us by God.

F. We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith
Galatians 3:14 "*that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*."

G. We receive answer to our prayers.

Mark 11:22-24 "*So Jesus answered and said to them, "**Have faith in God**. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*."

H. We have victory; we can overcome the world.

The victory that overcomes the world is our faith, not prayer or anything else; it is faith.

1 John 5:4-5 "***For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—<u>our faith</u>****. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God*?"

I. We are to fight the fight of faith.

We are to fight the good fight of faith. This is the only fight we are to fight. Demons try to steal our faith. James 4:7 says to resist. The fight of faith is to maintain the victory that Jesus has already won for us.

Mark 4:13-15 "*And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown.* ***When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts***."

1 Timothy 6:12 "***Fight the good fight of faith,*** *lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses*."

J. We have to operate in faith to please God.

Hebrews 11:6 "*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God* **must** *believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*"

K. We see the glory of God

John 11:40 "*Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God*?"

L. We receive guidance from the Holy Spirit
Galatians 5:25 "*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*."
M. We have access to God's grace by faith"

Romans 5:1-2 "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."*

It is only by faith, through Jesus, that we have access to God's grace. As we saw above, in Ephesians 2:8, it is through faith that we access the grace of God and obtain salvation and everlasting life. God's grace also brings us everything that we need to overcome this world and to work for His Kingdom. His grace, accessed by faith, gives us His power and authority, the gifts of The Holy Spirit, and the fruit of The Holy Spirit.

More specifically, by faith we bring to fruition what the Lord has already given to us. By faith we make manifest in the physical realm what the Lord has already given to us in the spiritual realm.

Philemon 1:6 "*that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus*.

2 Kings 6:14-17 "*Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"*
So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

N. Through faith Christ may dwell in our hearts

Ephesians 3:17 "*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love*,"

5. What counters our faith

Meditate on Mark 11:23-24 and 1 John 4:17

Mark 11:23-24 NKJV "*For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*."

1 John 4:17 NKJV "*Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have*

boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world."

It's difficult to see the connection between the two verses. This is one of the greatest struggles that we believers have, to see the connection between the amazing faith, power and authority of Jesus and our own faith, power and authority . . . in His name, of course! Jesus is in us, and "*as He is, so are we **in this world***." We already have the amazing mountain-moving faith of Jesus within us; we just need to fully rely on it and use it to help bring the will and the Kingdom of God to earth. In scripture, we see the apostles and other believers in the early church doing this. They healed, drove out demons, and even raised the dead. We too should have the great faith of Jesus operating within us!

So why does our faith sometimes seem so little?
Why do our hopes and prayers seem to go unanswered?

These are very important questions because faith and prayer are intertwined. Our faith affects our whole spiritual life, including our prayers. In turn, the results of our prayers, whether or not they seem to be effective, affect our faith; when we feel that God is ignoring our requests, our faith begins to shrink. At the heart of the problem lies our understanding of the spiritual realm and how it operates. So let's look at a few reasons why our prayers seem to fail and what we can do about them.

A. Not knowing the spiritual laws

We have already discussed a little bit about the first reason; we have talked about the effect that fear, unbelief, doubt, and a sin-hardened heart can have on faith. They effectively counter our faith! This is because they go against the laws that God has set up for the operation of the spiritual realm. Just like our physical realm has natural laws, such as gravity, so the spiritual realm has its own laws. If you operate outside of these laws, things will not go well for you. At the very least, you won't be very effective in your spiritual/prayer life. Many of us are ignorant about these laws and don't know anything about how faith and prayer work. Others have been taught a doctrine that does not accurately reflect scripture on this subject. Some Christians believe that God has kept to Himself the power and authority to work miracles here on earth; all we as believers can do is pray and hope that God answers our prayers. Other Christians do believe that Jesus gave his followers the power and authority of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles in His name. They believe, however, that this power and authority stopped working in believers after the early church and that we are, therefore, powerless to be of any effect

in the spiritual battle that is being waged around us. Our prayers are just begging God to do something, because we lack the power and authority, in Jesus' name, to do anything. If we look at scripture, however, we see that this is simply not so:

Luke 9:1-2 NKJV "*Then He called His twelve disciples together and **gave them power and authority** over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*"

1 Corinthians 3:9,16 9 "*For we are **God's fellow workers**. . .*16 *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*"

Ephesians 3:20-21 NKJV "*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,**according to the power that works in us**, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*"

Jesus asked the Apostles to heal the sick, not simply pray for God to heal them. We must use the power and authority that God has already given us and speak to the problem (the mountain) about God, not the other way around. The following verses tell us that we, as believers, still have Jesus' power within us to do the same mighty works that He did:

John 14:12 NKJV "*Most assuredly, I say to you, **he who believes in Me**, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*"

Mark 16:17-18 NKJV "*And these signs will follow **those who believe**: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover*."

Other Christians believe that everything that happens in the world is God's will; He causes it or allows it because it suits His purpose. What is the point of asking God to take something away or change it, when it is His will that it be there in the first place? Scripture tells us that sin, death and all the troubles of this life come from the actions of the devil and the fall of man, not from God (Genesis 3). We know that God's will is not always accomplished here on earth. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus tells us to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Unfortunately, our free will means that God's will is not always done here on earth. His will for us is to overcome the world and to have abundant life!

1 Timothy 2:3-4 NKJV "*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of **God** our Savior, who **desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth*."

2 Peter 3:9 "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*."

John 3:16 "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*."

John 10:10 NKJV "*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*"

Luke 13:23-24 NKJV "*Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for **many**, I say to you, **will seek to enter and will not be able***."

John 16:33 NKJV "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*"

We may ask if it is God's will that all be healed. Let's see what scripture says:

Matthew 12:15 NKJV "*But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and**He healed them all***."

In fact, there is not a single case in scripture where Jesus refused to heal someone who came to Him in faith. He even healed the son of the man who was struggling with his faith.

Mark 9:22-24 NKJV "*And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!*"

Scripture does tell us, however, that in Nazareth "*He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief*." Matthew 13:58 NKJV. God wants us to have abundant life, and that means being whole and healthy. It is His will that all should be healed, just as it is His will that all should be saved! That does not mean that all will be healed or

saved . . . because of our own unbelief.

All this is important to help us understand how far we are from appropriating what the Lord has given to us and how much we need to learn about our faith. It is our responsibility to educate ourselves with correct doctrine and to learn how the spiritual realm really functions. This is one of the most important reasons why God gave us scripture. Praying rightly and having our prayers be effective requires us to be obedient to God and to follow His spiritual laws regarding prayer.

Another spiritual law/reality is that words have power. In Genesis we see God create the entire universe by merely speaking it into existence. Since we are made in the image of God, our words also have power. Of course we know that our words have the power to hurt or to help someone in the natural world. Have you ever really thought, however, about how the power and authority of the Holy Spirit within us gives power to our words in the spiritual realm. This is the principal behind prayer. Yes, we are talking to God. We are asking for His help and blessing, but our prayers/words are also much more than that. The Holy Spirit can act through our words to bless us and others. Of course, other spirits can also act through our words to attack and curse us and others. Scripture speaks of this
:
Proverbs 18:21 NKJV "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit*."

Ephesians 4:29 NKJV "*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers*."

Romans 12:14 NKJV "*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse*."

We are to bless and not curse our enemies, but if we constantly speak curses, corrupt and negative words, over ourselves. Then we wonder why we are not being blessed. This is especially true when we are under attack by fear, anxiety, worry, doubt, depression, etc. We say things like:

- I'm going to lose my job. / I will never find another job.
- I know I am going to mess this up.
- I will never find love, or get married. / My marriage isn't going to last.
- My friends don't really like me.
- I will never have kids.
- I will never be able to afford XYZ.

- My life will never get any better!

Then we turn around and pray for the exact opposite of what we just declared over ourselves. We need to learn to be impeccable with our words, for they have power, according to God's spiritual laws. We must bless and not curse!

Declaring our prayers out loud, in faith, is also part of God's spiritual laws. The importance of declaring what we believe is seen in the verses below:

Romans 10:10 "*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and **with the mouth**confession is made unto salvation*."

Woman with flow of blood.
Mark 5:27-28 NKJV "*For **she said**, 'If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.'*

Matthew 17:20-21 NKJV "*So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will **say** to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.*"

Another spiritual law is that we need to believe that we receive our answers **at the time we are praying**, not in the future, or we are not truly praying in faith.

Mark 11:24 NKJV "*Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask **when you pray (the present), believe that you receive (the present) them**, and you will have them.*"

We see in the above verses that both the person who is praying/healing and the person in need of prayer/healing must act in full faith and must eliminate fear, unbelief, doubt, etc. from their lives. These things counteract our faith and make our prayers ineffective; they are a force in the spiritual realm that is pulling in the opposite direction from our faith.

B. Praying amiss

Another reason our prayers are not answered is that we are praying "amiss"; we are not praying in the perfect will of God, which is to serve others. We should be praying to be like the fourth soil in the parable, producing abundant fruit for others. When we are praying selfishly for our own pleasure or to have power and be "above" others, God will not grant such prayers, . . . and that is a good thing!

James 4:3 NKJV "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures*."

Mark 10:35-45 NKJV "*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."*
*And He said to them, "**What do you want Me to do for you?**"*
They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."
But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"
They said to Him, "We are able."
So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared."
And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.
But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Compare this with the next passage in Mark 10:46-52, where Bartimaeus asked to receive sight and was healed. He didn't ask to be made better than anyone else, only to receive sight so that he could be like everyone else. Jesus asked the same question to him as he did to the apostles in verses 36 and 51: *"What do you want Me to do for you?"* (Mark 10:36 and 51)

Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"
So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.
Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."
And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.
*So Jesus answered and said to him, "**What do you want Me to do for you?**"*

The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."
Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

Luke 9:54-56 NKJV "*And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them. " And they went to another village*."

1 John 5:14 NKJV "*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything* ***according to His will****, He hears us*."

Praying the right way —
Daniel gives us an example of praying the right way. First, he went to the Scriptures, searched out the mind of God and asked for meaning/understanding. Having gotten clear direction, and being sure of God's will, he comes before God's throne with a mighty assurance and prays in faith for others, his people, and for God's city of Jerusalem.

Daniel 8:15-16 NKJV "*Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was* ***seeking the meaning****, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.*"

Daniel 9:2 NKJV "*in the first year of his reign I, Daniel,****understood by the books*** *the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem*."

Daniel 9:3-4 NKJV "*Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments*,"

C. Unrepented sin and a hardened heart.

The above verse leads us to a third reason why our prayers might not be answered as we wish. We might have sin in our lives, of which we have not repented or from which

our hearts have not been healed. We might not even be aware of our sin! Things like pride, anger, envy, unforgiveness, being unkind to others, etc. Hardens and wounds our hearts, counters our faith, and blocks our prayers. We need to repent, let God heal and soften our hearts, reestablish our relationship with others and return to the will of God, so our prayers won't be hindered. The following verses show this:

James 4:4-6 NKJV "*Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "**God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble***."

Mark 11:25-26 NKJV "*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, **forgive him**, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses*."

(As believers in Jesus, our sins are already forgiven, but if we fail to repent and let God heal and soften our hearts, our prayers will be seriously hindered.)

1 Peter 3:7 NKJV "*Husbands, likewise, **dwell with them with understanding**, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*"

Matthew 5:23-24 NKJV "*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that **your brother has something against you**, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*"

D. Unwillingness to cooperate and work with God.

Our prayers can be denied when we are unwilling to cooperate with God and to work with Him to bring about the thing for which we pray. He expects us to do our part. We can not pray for a person to be saved, yet be unwilling to speak The Gospel to them. It is good to pray for laborers in the field (evangelists), but we must be willing to be one! We can not pray for provision, yet be unwilling to work in whatever way we can. As believers who have the power and authority of the Holy Spirit within, we must know that, in many cases, God has already done His part and is waiting on us to act in faith. Hernando gave the analogy last week of sitting in a dark room and calling GA Power to ask for light; their response would be, "You already have electrical power in your house; go flip the switch." This is basically what God told Moses in response to his prayer.

Exodus 14:15-16 NKJV "*And **the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me?** Tell the children of Israel to go forward. But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*"

1 Corinthians 3:9-10 NKJV "*For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.*"

Matthew 9:37-38 NKJV "*Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*."

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 NKJV "*For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.*"

E. Relying on man, not on God.

Meditate on John 5:43-44 NKJV *"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?"*

Jesus is pointing out how they focus on people and seek their approval and honor rather than focusing on God and seeking His approval and honor.

Matthew 6:33 NKJV *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

This can lead to the fear of man, always being afraid of what others think of you. You act in a way to please man, not God. This can trap you and lead you off of God's path for your life.

Proverbs 29:25 NKJV *"The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe."*

If we trust man to give us everything we need, including approval, we are not trusting in God. We are not living in faith, and we do not truly believe in God. Jesus makes this point in the meditation verse when He asks, *"**How can you believe,** who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?"* Trusting in man more than God and succumbing to the fear of man will pull in the opposite direction from your faith.

F. Not trusting on God's timing.

Read, pray and meditate on Genesis 15:3-4; 16:1-2

Sometimes God's answer to our prayers seems to be, "Not yet; The timing is not right." We should realize, however, that this "delay" is only in the natural, physical realm. Within the spiritual realm, God has already answered our prayer. Sometimes it just takes a while to work it's way into the natural. One example of a "delay" is the coming of the Messiah. God acted and answered mankind's prayers for a savior even before mankind existed. Jesus was promised as the Savior of mankind in Genesis 3:15, and Israel prayed for the coming of the Messiah for century upon century. Even though mankind didn't understand the "delay," God's answer to our need and prayer for the promised Savior broke through into our world at just the right time. So it is with all of our prayers.

1 Peter 1:20 NKJV "*He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*"

Galatians 4:3-5 NKJV "*Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. **But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son**, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons*.

Habakkuk 2:3,4 NKJV "*For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. . . But the just shall live by his faith.*"

Psalms 27:14 NKJV "*Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!*"

Isaiah 40:31 NKJV "*But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk*

and not faint."

Satan resists God and causes delay —
Sometimes the "delay" happens because Satan is resisting God. We know, however, that God will prevail in the end. We see this when Daniel is praying for God to act on behalf of his people and Jerusalem and praying for understanding regarding the seventy-weeks prophesy by Jeremiah. Even though God immediately sends the angel Gabriel to speak with Daniel, Gabriel is delayed by the attack of demonic forces. God then sends the angel Michael to help Gabriel. Finally, after twenty-one days, Daniel sees that his prayer has been answered and Gabriel appears before him. Throughout the twenty-one days, Daniel never loses faith and hope, and he is persistent in his prayer.

Daniel 10:12-14 NKJV "*Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come*. "

Romans 5:3-5 NKJV "*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*."

Even though God has already answered our prayer in the spiritual realm (as with the Messiah and Gabriel, as mentioned above), we usually don't have the spiritual eyes to see it yet. In this case, we need to pray for God to open our spiritual eyes, as Elisha prayed that his servant might see into the spiritual realm. Only then will we be able to see and understand what He is doing/has done for us. We must understand that our prayers are part of our spiritual warfare on behalf of God's kingdom. Our faith, and our prayers, are part of the spiritual armor and weapons of God.

2 Kings 6:15-17 NKJV
"*And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are*

more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, " LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

Ephesians 6:10-13 NKJV
"*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness 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*."

G. Do not know what to pray for.

Sometimes or prayers are not answered because we don't really know for what we should be praying; we are confused or lacking necessary information. It's difficult to get an answer to a nebulous, wishy-washy prayer. We can ask God for direction in our lives and for help in knowing how to pray. We can also turn to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to pray **for**us. We pray "in The Holy Spirit." Praying in the Spirit is especially helpful in such times, because it not only asks God for what we really need, according to the Spirit's wisdom, but it also helps to edify us (see 1 Corinthians 14:2,4,18,39) — to clarify for us what the issues and facts and our needs are.

Romans 8:26-27 NKJV "*Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*"

Jude 1:20-21 NKJV "*But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*"

1 Corinthians 14:2,4 NKJV "*For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. . . . He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.*"

H. Other issues that pull against and weaken our faith (some of which we have covered above):

1. Failing to forgive — Mark 11:25-26
2. Loving money (worshiping the spirit of Mammon) — Matthew 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10; Prov 30:8-9. (We will discuss the spirit of Mammon in detail on session 11)
3. Being selfish/wanting power over others — Phil 2:1-4; Gen 3:4-6
4. Hardening our hearts through walking by sight, not faith — Mark 8:17-19
5. Being ignorant of God's Truth — Hosea 4:6; Col 2:8
6. Being prideful — Luke 18:10-14
7. Trusting our carnal minds, our own understanding/intellect — Prov 3:5 (We will discuss the carnal mind in detail on session 9)

In Matthew 11:20-24, we see how the pride of intellect affects the faith of the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaem.

Matthew 11:20-24 NKJV *"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."*

In Jesus' time, the synagogue schools in the Galilee were considered among the best in the world. Excavation of the school in Capernaem shows that it was also one of the largest. The people of the Galilee were very proud of their education in, and understanding of, scripture. Below, is an excerpt from an article that explains the reason for their pride.

"Study Shows Jesus as Rabbi"
By Roy B. Blizzard and David Bivin

The level of learning and education in Galilee exceeded that of Judea in Jesus' day. Galilee surpassed even Judea in its schools of learning, and most of the famous rabbis of Jesus' day were from Galilee (Johnanan ben Zakkai, Hanina ben Doda, AbbaYose Holikufri, Zadok, Halaphta, Hananian ben Teradyon.) According to Professor Shmuel Safrai, Hebrew University Professor of Jewish History of the period of the *Mishnah* and *Talmud*, not only did the number of 1st century Galilean rabbis known from rabbinic literature exceed the number of Judean rabbis, but even the moral and ethical quality of their teaching excelled that of their Judean counterparts.

http://www.biblescholars.org/2013/05/study-shows-jesus-as-rabbi.html

The people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaem chose to rely on their own understanding of scripture and God rather than relying on God, in humility, for understanding. Romans 10:17 tells us, *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* The people of these towns were listening to the words of men, rather than to the word of God, and their faith suffered. They believed the teachings of famous and greatly honored rabbis over their own experience of Jesus' mighty works! We tend to think of the sins of the heathen nations as being the "worst" types of sin. Jesus, however, says that it is worse to pridefully rely on our intellect and the religious traditions of man. We are to humble ourselves and rely on God for understanding. We are to have a relationship/friendship with God, not with the world system. We are called to be God's coworkers in the world, but we are not to be of the world.

John 17:15-18 NKJV *"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.* ***They are not of the world****, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."*

James tells us the same:

James 4:4-6 NKJV *"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?* ***Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God****. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

If we want our faith to grow, we need to examine our lives and look for the things that are pulling in the opposite direction from our faith. A good way to do this is through meditation on the scriptures mentioned above and through the Prayer of Examen.

Lamentations 3:40 NKJV *"Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD;"*

The reason that these things are so powerful against our faith is that they go against our identity in Christ. As those being conformed to the identity of Christ, we are not to have unforgiveness, the love of Mammon, selfishness, etc. as part of our image. Our identity and image is the righteousness of Christ; that is what others should see when they look

at us. Even Satan should see the image of Jesus when he looks at us. Otherwise, when we try to act in faith against him, our faith and our prayers will have little effect. The following verse shows this to be true.

Acts 19:15 NKJV *"And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"*

The importance of having the right image, one that matches our identity in Christ, is stressed throughout Scripture, beginning in the Garden of Eden and running all the way to Revelation. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were naked but they were not ashamed because they were clothed in the righteous image of God (Genesis 2:25). When they disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they lost their "clothing", which was the righteousness of God, and their image no longer matched His. Then they were truly naked, and they were ashamed (Genesis 3:10). God then provided them with clothing through the sacrifice of an animal (Genesis 3:21). But this was an imperfect covering, the blood of an animal, and the sacrifice had to be made over and over to cover the sins of God's people and restore them to temporary righteousness. It wasn't until the perfect, one-time sacrifice of Jesus, however, that believers could be covered in Jesus, in his blood, and be clothed in the righteousness of God for eternity (2 Corinthians 5:21: Revelation 7:14).

Galatians 3:27 NKJV *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*

Our identity is in Christ, and every day we are called to conform more and more to His image, to wear His garment of righteousness.

Matthew 22:11-13 NKJV *"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Revelation 7:13-14 NKJV *"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

Since we are clothed in Jesus, He is our true image and our identity. Our actions and

the conditions of our souls should match His image and Identity. We need to renounce and ask God to cleanse and heal us from anything that goes against our image and identity in Christ, for these things fight against our faith.

I. **Unbelief.**

Mark 9:23-24 *Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief*!"

Matthew 17:20-21 *So Jesus said to them, "**Because of your unbelief;**for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting*."

There are 4 ways in which unbelief shows up in our lives:

1. Ignorance, that is, unbelief that comes through what we don't know.
2. Disbelief, this is unbelief arising from wrong teaching. You heard the wrong instructions which prevents you from believing what is true. This is very hard to get rid of.
3. Natural unbelief. Comes through what you can hear and what you can see, your emotions and your mind.
4. A hardened heart. It is the result of what you won't consider anymore. The hardened heart towards the promises of the Lord, allows unbelief to come into you.

Avoid a hardened heart by meditating on His promise; this is what delivers us (Joshua 1:8). Consider, contemplate and meditate on God's promise as Abraham did (Romans 4:18). When you do this, your heart becomes more flexible and willing to receive His promise. If, instead, you don't consider the promise but concentrate on the problem, your heart hardens towards His promise.

This passage explains this issue:
Mark 8:14-17
*Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "**Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor***

understand? Is your heart still hardened?

J. Doubt.

This is one of the most difficult issues with which we deal because of the great problem that we have in recognizing doubt.

The end of the Matthew 14:25-33 passage, specifically Matthew 14:31, (NKJV) *And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith,* ***why did you doubt****?*" helps us to begin our exploration of doubt, its causes and its effect in our Christian walk. Jesus points out to Peter that doubt was the cause of his sinking -- that doubt negates, obscures or impairs faith (doubt is a sin, see Romans14:23). This event happened when Peter took his eyes away from Jesus and placed them on the circumstances surrounding him. We could say, then, that he began to sink when he switched from walking by faith (with his attention placed on Jesus) to walking by sight (when he began to observe and depend on his circumstances, not on Jesus).

A walk in the flesh is not enough for us to succumb to our circumstances, but it opens the door to temptation. In this world we walk in the flesh.

Doubt arose when the walk in the flesh turned into a walk according to the flesh (opposite to a walk by faith or according to the Spirit). A walk by sight is a walk according to the flesh, and a walk by faith is a walk according to the Spirit. A walk according to the flesh is a a walk in doubt.

When we walk by faith or according to the Spirit, we don't sin; in this particular case it means that we don't doubt. That doesn't mean that we aren't tempted with doubt. It means that we are able to overcome the temptation. Walking according to the Spirit doesn't eliminate temptation, it just unable us not to sin. Jesus walked in the flesh (in human flesh) but according to the Spirit, so He was tempted but never sinned. As long as we are in this world, we are going to be tempted. We are in this world but we are not of this world. That is, that even though we walk in the flesh, we don't walk according to the flesh (Romans 8:5-8, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

There is a difference between walking in the flesh, which in this world we all do, and walking according to the flesh which we don't have to do because Jesus freed us from the slavery of sin.

Is walking by sight doubt, or is walking by sight what creates doubt?

Walking by sight is doubt. It means that we are not only seeing our circumstances (our normal walk in the flesh in this world) but relying on them (walking according to the flesh).

What may lead us to doubt?
"...--*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*". (1 John 2:16)

Doubt (sin) appears at the moment that follows a temptation in which one "*is dragged away, enticed and baited to commit sin by his own worldly desire lust, passion. Then when the illicit desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin has run its course, it gives birth to death* (James 1:14-15 AMP). It is the moment in which we take our eyes off Jesus (our reliance on Him) to place them on our circumstances (walk by sight or a walk according to the flesh).

This is who we become when we doubt:
..."*he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*" (James 1:6).

Doubt definitely doesn't belong in the believer in Christ; it impedes our walk by faith "*For we walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Questions:
1). How difficult is it to differentiate doubt from "sound" reasoning?
2). What does James say about the man who doubts?
3). Have you searched for the areas in which you have doubt? (healing, prayer, righteousness, indwelling of the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, power over sin, the world and the devil, sonship, inheritance, etc.).

More about Doubt.

Let’s take a closer look at the effect that doubt has on our faith. Doubt is similar to unbelief but is often more insidious because it is more difficult to recognize; doubt comes before unbelief and is usually not as obvious. Doubt occurs anytime that you hear the Word of the Lord telling you that something is true or that you need to do something, yet you stop and think about it rather than immediately agreeing or obeying. In that moment, you are doubting God. You are making a mental checklist of the pros and cons of the Word of God. You are deciding in your own mind if He’s right or not!

God calls us to hear and obey, hear and agree, not hear and think about it. This is clearly stated by Moses in the verses right before the Shema Yisrael in Deuteronomy 6:4.

Deuteronomy 6:3-5 NKJV
*"Therefore hear, O Israel, **and be careful to observe it,** that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey.'*
*"**Hear**, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."*

Deuteronomy 5:32-33 NKJV *"Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall **walk in <u>all</u> the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you**, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess."*

Jesus tells us the same thing:

Luke 6:46-49 NKJV *"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."*

Jesus tells us that we must die to self — pick up our cross and be crucified with Him. This is the only way that we can take off our unrighteous "clothing" (the old man/self) and put on (be clothed in) our new man/self, which is Christ Himself.

Galatians 2:19-20 NKJV
"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Ephesians 4:22-24 NKJV
"that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt

according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

Although we put on the new man (Christ) when we are born again, we don't automatically reveal this new image to the world. In the beginning of our walk with Christ, we usually appear, and act, as the same old man/self that we were before we were born again. We must go through a life-long process called Sanctification, in which we acknowledge that we have truly died to self and, thus, reveal more and more the image of Jesus. The old man is 100% dead; he has been crucified with Christ. The problem is that we are so accustomed to acting like the old man did that we continue to do so without even thinking about it. Our actions and image don't match our new identity in Christ. This is what Paul is talking about when he says we are to put off our "former conduct." Although we are 100% dead to self, we often act like the old man is still alive and running the show. Our goal in Sanctification is to realize that we have already died to self and to act like it! When we do that, we allow the image and identity of Christ to be revealed in us.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV
"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

6. Actions to eliminate unbelief and doubt.

A. Eliminating Unbelief.

1). Begin to recognize unbelief in your life.

2). Read, pray and meditate on Matthew 17:20 (NKJV) *So Jesus said to them, "**Because of your unbelief**; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you*.

And

Matthew 14:25-33 to more clearly understand the meaning of faith and what is required for belief to truly become faith. From the reading of the passage mentioned, we could uncover the sequence that starts Peter's reliance on the Lord when he asks and confirms that it is indeed Jesus out there on the water and He tells Peter "**come**". This

causes Peter to believe that if he does what Jesus asked him to do, he would be fine and there is hope that he won't sink; otherwise, he wouldn't have attempted to get out of the boat. Then, comes a crucial component of faith which is sometimes forgotten or misunderstood, action. Peter walks out of the boat. This whole sequence illustrates what faith is: reliance on the Lord, belief, hope and action.

3). Remember that *Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God* (Romans 10:17) and that Jesus is the word of God. In other words, study the Scriptures to eliminate ignorance and disbelief. Meditate on the Scriptures to eliminate natural unbelief.

B. Eliminating Doubt.

1). Learn to recognize the sin of doubt.

We saw that once we doubt, we are "done"! Once we doubt we are already walking by sight (according to the flesh). At this point, we need to repent, give thanks to the Lord for He has already forgiven us, and accept and receive His forgiveness. Learning to recognize the sin of doubt is very important as we know that we are not slaves of sin and as believers are able to get rid of it (Romans 6:6,11,14) but we have to learn to recognize doubt for what it is (sin) and the damage that it causes on the one who doubts (unstable in all his ways).

2). Learn to detect the temptation to doubt.

The ideal, however, is to be able to spot the temptation to doubt before it becomes doubt.

The question is: How do we learn to discover the temptation to doubt?

3). Read, pray and meditate on the following Scriptures:

Romans 8:5-8
2 Corinthians 10:3-6
James 1:6-8
1 John 2:15-17
2 Corinthians 5:7
Galatians 5:16

Romans 8:5-8 NKJV "*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God*."

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 NKJV "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled*."

James 1:6-8 NKJV "*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, **for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind**. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways*."

1 John 2:15-17 NKJV "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever*."

2 Corinthians 5:7 NKJV "*For we walk by faith, not by sight*."

While in doubt one is oneself, 2 Corinthians 5:13 NIV *If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you*."

I am trying to differentiate between the triggers (T), those events that prompt us towards doubt (temptation to doubt) and the conditions (C) of doubt (sin).

The following is a list of triggers (T) or conditions (C) of doubt:

-Seeing is believing (C)
-Being reasonable (C)
-Be reasonable (T)
-This is too good to be true (C)
-Be logical-use your logic (T)
-Do a pro and con analysis (T)

-Trust and rely on your experience (T)
-This is what I see; this is what I am experiencing now (C)
-It worked this way before (C)
-Be mature; behave like an adult (T)
-Don't be a fanatic (T)
-Be self reliant; depend on yourself and no one else (T)
-Walking by sight or walking according to the flesh ©

Please review and send your comments and additions to this list.

As discussed above, the ideal is to be able to recognize the temptation of doubt. If we are able to recognize the temptation of doubt, we will be able to rebuke it. Unlike many other temptations to sin, however, the temptation to doubt seems to be very difficult for us to detect; we usually find ourselves in doubt without realizing that we were approaching it. Once we doubt, we become double minded and unstable like a wave being tossed back and forth (James 1:6-8). Until we can learn to recognize the temptation to doubt, our best chance is to begin by recognizing when we are already in a state (sin) of doubt. Since we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and, thus, all sin is repellent to us, He will reveal our doubts to us (Ephesians 1:13). Through the recognition of the sin of doubt, we bring it to the light (Ephesians 5:13-14). Repenting from doubt and bringing it to the Lord for healing may be the first step in letting Him free us from its grip (1 Peter 5:7). It is through sanctification that we become increasingly aware of and disgusted with sin and able to repel it.

Let's ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and make doubt apparent and obvious so that, like any other sin, we may feel disgusted and repel it.

Finally, we know that His words are Spirit and they are life (John 6:63) and that His words were sent to us with a purpose; they won't return to Him void but will comply with the purpose for which He sent them (Isaiah 55:11). Let His words heal us *He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave*. (Psalm 107:20).

7. Actions to eliminate fear and increase faith.

We have reviewed 4 ACTIONS we should be taking every time we are tempted to fear:
1. Abide in the presence and love of God.
2. Meditate on The Word of God.
3. Bring your fear to the light.
4. Meditate on God’s truths

We noted that we should set “alarms” and always be alert to the temptation to fear. We must be obedient to God and His Word in order to come to an understanding of His truth and wisdom. If we merely study scripture, but do not meditate on it, and do not practice what we believe, in obedience, we will never truly “know” (have a relationship with) God and His Word. We will be, “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*.” II Timothy 3:7 NKJV. The good fight of faith, against all forms of fear, unbelief and doubt, is a spiritual battle. We must pull down the strongholds that Satan is constantly trying to set up within us.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 NKJV “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled*.”

To defeat fear, we must also keep our eyes on Jesus, who had no fear. Our goal is to gaze on His image, as we are transformed into His image, and to realize the truth that, “. . . *as He is, so are we in this world.*” I John 4:17b NKJV

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NKJV “*Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord*.”

So, what do we do to reveal more and more of the faith of Jesus that is already in us? How to reveal and grow our faith?

A. Soften and guard our hearts

Get rid of unbelief, doubt and the hardness of heart that comes from sin, such as unforgiveness, pride, etc. Failing to repent for sin can open the door for an evil conscience, which causes us to withdraw from God and weakens our faith. Let us guard our hearts!

1 Timothy 1:19 NKJV *“having faith and **a good conscience**, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,”*

Hebrews 10:22 NKJV *“let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience** and our bodies washed with*

pure water."

B. Feed our faith.

Feed our faith by meditating on the Word of God, both Jesus and scripture. Focus especially on God's love and faithfulness. What did He do for His people in scripture. Paul called the message he preached the word of faith, because the Word will cause faith to come into your heart.

Romans 10:8 NKJV *"But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):"*

2 Timothy 1:6-7 NKJV "*Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."*

C. Keep your eyes on Jesus

Keep your eyes on Jesus not the waves. Take every thought captive, and abide in Him and He in us (2 Corinthians 3:17-18, Hebrews 12:2, 2 Corinthians 10:5, John 6:56 and 15:4-5).

D. Remember God's goodness

Remember God's goodness and our memories (journaling, photos, etc.) like the Israelites did by building altars of stones at the places where God performed a miracle for them (Exodus 33:18-19; Joshua 4:4-7; 1 John 4:8,16; James 1:17).

E. Stay in fellowship with other believers

Stay in fellowship with other believers and listen to their testimonies of faith, what God has done for them. Our brothers and sisters can also give us encouragement and edification if we feel our faith under attack. Remember that the Gospel that we preach to others is our story of what the power of God has done for us!

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NKJV *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my*

preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

F. Persevere through trails

Persevere through trails, just keep believing in Jesus. If that becomes difficult, ask Jesus for help.

Mark 9:24 NKJV *"Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"*

Romans 5:3-5 NKJV *"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*

James 1:2-4 NKJV *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."*

G. Ask God for spiritual discernment, wisdom and understanding

Ask/pray for our spiritual eyes to be opened (like Elisha and his servant in II Kings 6:17) and for wisdom and understanding.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." James 1:5 NKJV

H. Be obedient to God

Be obedient to God, and see what happens. Faith is action and needs to be exercised to be alive (James 1:22 and 2:26). When we practice what we believe, we see the results and finally know/experience the wisdom of the scriptures and the faithfulness of God. We will be blessed, including having a stronger faith.

Luke 11:28 NKJV *"But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"*

Matthew 7:24-27 NKJV "*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*
"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

I John 5:4-5 NKJV *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"*

Romans 16:25-27 NKJV *"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."*

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we must be diligent to defend, exercise, feed and grow our faith, because it is our faith that will allow us to be victorious and to overcome this world.

I John 5:4-5 NKJV *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"*

I pray that this session have made a difference in your faith and in the way you live. We only acquire the wisdom of God when we do what He says.

I. Do as Jesus said and be like a child, have the faith of a child

Luke 18:15-17 "*Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*"

Mark 10:13-15 "*Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but*

the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them."

Matthew 19:13-15 "*Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And He laid His hands on them and departed from there*."

Matthew 18:1-7 "*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes*!

These are some of the characteristics of a child that we should pursue and adopt:

Innocence
Living in the present
Forgiving
Humble
Trusting
Fully reliant on their parents
Joyful
Loving unconditionally
Willing to receive
Righteous
Optimistic everything is possible
Expect the best Matthew 6:22-23
Read Scripture and believe it
Heart is soft, not mauled

It is puzzling to think that while Jesus asked us to be like children we are always trying to make them look like us!

In 1 Corinthians 13 and in Hebrews 5 we can observe two exceptions; these are, childish behavior and ignorance.

1 Corinthians 13:11-13 "*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love*."

Hebrews 5:12-14 "*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*.

1 Timothy 4:12-16 "***Let no one despise your youth**, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. **Meditate** on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you"*

8. Exercises and Assignments

The exercises for this week are to:
- Set "alarms" and be alert to the temptation of fear when it comes to you.
- Use the ACTIONS to fight against fear.
- Meditate on Mark 11:23-24

Mark 11:23-24 NKJV "*For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*."

Count/notice the number of times that unbelief and doubt show up during the day.

Use the spiritual laws we have learned about during our prayer time.
Notice anything different?

Assignments

1). Meditate on the scriptures listed above. Also, read and meditate on the parable of the four soils, Mark 4:1-21. How does this parable relate to faith? Ask God to reveal to you what faith and "walking by faith" really are and how you can manifest them more and more in your life.

Ask Him to reveal if there is any "soil" in your life that is hampering your faith.

2). Ask God to bring to your mind any fears you might have and bring **a list** of them to share with the group. We will then practice using our faith over the remaining weeks to get rid of those fears!

3). Meditate on 2 Cor. 5:7 — "*For we walk by faith, not by sight*."
II Corinthians 5:7 NKJV

Meditation on this verse brings to mind all of the many saints of scripture who lived and acted by faith:
Noah building the ark, though he couldn't see any rain
Abraham leaving his home to follow God, even though he had no idea where he was going
Moses and the Israelites putting aside their fear and walking through the Red Sea
Daniel stepping into the lion's den
And many more
Faith without deeds is, indeed, dead. We have to walk by, through and in our faith.

If we have enough "faith" to get in our cars at night and go hurtling down the road at 70 mph, even though we can't see beyond our high beams, then we should have faith enough in the God who loves us to walk on the path He sets before us, even if we can't see all that lies ahead.

4). This week, practice meditating on the appropriate scriptures and using your faith to get rid of your fears. Also, pray daily to receive the presence and love of God.

5). Observe children and practice becoming like them. Jesus has a childlike faith, He heard the Father and did what the Father said (John 5:19,30; 12:49-50; 14:10). Delight in Jesus' faith and He will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4) — a childlike faith.

Blessings,

Hernando
Receiving His Life Ministries

A Love Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, blessed be Your Name. Abba, Father, You are Love. I praise and worship You for who You are, and I am in awe for what You do, and have done, for me. (Silence)

Oh Lord reveal Your love for me. **(Silence).**

I receive Your love, Lord, the love that has been poured out in my heart by the Holy Spirit, who was given to me. **(Silence)**.
I receive Your love so that I can love You the way you love me, **(Silence)** and I can love myself the way You love me, **(Silence)** and I can love others the way You love me.**(Silence)**.
Let Your love, Oh Lord, pour out of me towards others so they can see You in me and follow You. **(Silence)**.
I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior, my Lord and my Advocate in heaven.**(Silence).**
Hallelujah, Glory be to God, Thank you Lord.

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FEAR IS A LIAR
LYRICS by Zach Williams

When he told you you're not good enough
When he told you you're not right
When he told you you're not strong enough
To put up a good fight
When he told you you're not worthy
When he told you you're not loved

When he told you you're not beautiful
That you'll never be enough

Fear he is a liar
He will take your breath
Stop you in your steps
Fear he is a liar
He will rob your rest
Steal your happiness
Cast your fear in the fire
Cause fear he is a liar

When he told you were troubled
You'll forever be alone
When he told you you should run away
You'll never find a home
When he told you you were dirty
And you should be ashamed
When he told you you could be the one
That grace could never change

Fear he is a liar
He will take your breath
Stop you in your steps
Fear he is a liar
He will rob your rest
Steal your happiness
Cast your fear in the fire
Cause fear he is a liar

Let Your fire fall and cast out all my fears
Let Your fire fall Your love is all I feel

Fear he is a liar
He will take your breath
Stop you in your steps
Fear he is a liar
He will rob your rest
Steal your happiness

Cast your fear in the fire
Cause fear he is a liar
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The following is an excerpt from an online article, in “Christian Courrier,” that explains why faith is not the gift mentioned in Ephesians 2:8.

Grammatically speaking, there is no agreement between “faith” and “gift.” Faith (pisteos) in the Greek Testament is a feminine form, while “gift” (doron) is neuter gender. The “gift” is not “faith.”
Some have objected to this argument, contending that the Greek noun for “salvation” is also feminine, thus it cannot be the antecedent of “gift.” While it is true that the Greek noun, “salvation,” is a feminine form,**the verbal construction found here used in connection with a neuter pronoun (“this”) requires that the antecedent must also be neuter, thus, “salvation” [understood], not “faith”** (see: Lockhart, 86; Cottrell, 200).
Professor Arthur Patzia of Fuller Theological Seminary, who believes, “theologically” speaking, that faith is a gift, acknowledges that “the Greek sentence [Eph. 2:8] does not permit such an identification, because the two words differ grammatically” (185).
Even John Calvin interpreted the “gift” of this passage as “salvation,” and not faith (144).
This, of course, is in perfect harmony with Paul’s declaration elsewhere that the “gift of God is eternal life” (Rom. 6:23).
https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/716-is-faith-the-gift-of-ephesians-2-8

Below, is an online article from “Apologetics Press.”
For centuries, Bible commentators have differed on the precise reference of the pronoun “this” ("that" in KJV, ASV) in Ephesians 2:8. Does “this” (*touto*) refer to faith, as many have stated (e.g., Augustine, Chrysostom, Westcott, Lenski, etc.), or, does “this” refer to salvation from sin? Is **faith** “the gift of God,” or is this gift **salvation** by grace through faith?
Admittedly, from a cursory reading of Ephesians 2:8, it may appear that the demonstrative pronoun **this** has **faith** as its grammatical antecedent. Those who believe that faith is a gift (i.e., miraculous imposition) from God, often point out that in this verse “faith” is the nearest antecedent of “this” (“For by grace you have been saved through **faith**. And **this** is not your own doing; **it** is the gift of God”). However, when one examines Ephesians 2:8 in the language in which it was written originally (Greek), he finds that the pronoun **this** (*touto*) is neuter in gender, while the word **faith** (*pistis*) is feminine. Since the general rule in Greek grammar is for the gender and number of a pronoun to be the same as its antecedent (Mounce, 1993, p. 102,109,), then some extenuating linguistic circumstance, special idiomatic use, or other mitigating factor

would need to be demonstrated to justify linking “this” to “faith.” If such reasonable justification cannot be made, then one is compelled to continue studying the passage in order to know assuredly what “this” gift of God is.

When no clear antecedent is found within a text, Greek scholar William Mounce wisely recommends that the Bible student study the context of the passage in question in order to help determine what a pronoun is referring to (1993, p. 111). The overall context of the first three chapters of Ephesians is man’s**salvation**found in Christ.

- “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (1:7).
- The heavenly “inheritance” is found in Christ (1:11).
- After believing in the good news of salvation through Christ, the Ephesians were “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13).
- Sinners are made “alive with Christ” and saved “by grace” (2:5).
- Sinners are brought near to God “by the blood of Christ” (2:13).
- Paul became a servant of Christ “according to the gift of the grace of God…by the effective working of His power” (3:7).

Not only is the theme of salvation the overall context of the first three chapters of Ephesians, but the immediate context of Ephesians 2:8-9 is of salvation, not of faith. These two verses thoroughly document how a person is **saved**, not how a person **believes**.

- Salvation is by grace.
- Salvation is through faith.
- Salvation is not of yourselves.
- Salvation is the gift of God.
- Salvation is not of works.

Paul was not giving an exposition on **faith** in his letter to the Ephesians. **Salvation** was his focus. Faith is mentioned as the mode by which salvation is accepted. Salvation is through faith. Just as water is received into a house in twenty-first-century America through a pipeline, a sinner receives salvation through obedient faith. The main focus of Paul’s message in Ephesians 2:8-9 was salvation (the living “water that springs up into everlasting life”—cf. John 4:14), not the mode of salvation.

Faith is not a direct gift from God given to some but not others. Rather, as Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Faith in Christ as the Son of God is only found in those who have first heard the Word of God, and then believed (cf. John 20:31).

http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=6&article=1246