

GROWING IN FAITH

Main Scriptures: “Now faith is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality – faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses].” Hebrews 11:1AMP

“But without faith it is impossible to [walk with God and] please Him, for whoever comes [near] to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He rewards those who [earnestly and diligently] seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6AMP

Divine Persuasion

The root word for faith (pistis) is peitho which means to persuade, or, persuasion. Faith is a gift from God not something that human ability can muster up. We must have the seed of Divine Persuasion planted in our hearts, to make faith a substance beyond simple belief. Jesus told the disciples to **have faith in God**, a great way to say it is **have the Divine Persuasion of God**. Proof of this persuasion is found in Romans 10:14-17 which paraphrased says, “how can they call on Him if they have not believed and how shall they believe if they have not heard, for **faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God!** God’s word is ALIVE and active and sharper than a two edged sword, it goes down to the thoughts and intent of the heart. The heart of a man is divinely persuaded when God speaks. God speaks through His Word (the Bible). In line with that, He also speaks through his indwelling presence, through people, and in dreams or visions.

Mark 11:22, Rom 10:14-17, Heb. 4:12, 1John 5:4, 2Tim 3:16

Discussion: How does God divinely persuade Humanity to have faith in Him and His faithfulness? Expound how the word of God persuades us to have greater faith.

Discuss faith as a gift from God and what it means to you!

Notes: _____

Walking with God

One of the main focuses of faith is knowing **in whom** we believe – not just merely **what** we believe. Faith is more than just understanding a particular promise. Faith is knowing Jesus, the one who authored and will finish our faith. It is the outflow of a continual walk with Him – rooted in whom we have trusted, and living a life that is pleasing to Him. Enoch walked so close with God, that he was raptured into heaven with Him! As a believer, what begins as a single *step* of faith **towards** God progresses into a *walk* of faith **with** God. Before the Fall, God would walk with Adam & Eve every day. It was a time of sweet fellowship together. This fellowship was broken through man’s disobedience, but is now restored to believers through the precious blood of Jesus.

1) John 17:3, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Daniel 11:32, Hebrews 11:5

Discussion: How has your relationship with God grown from a step towards Him, to a walk of faith with Him? What was it that brought about your desire to know God? Discuss the adventurous life of walking with God.

Notes: _____

GROWING IN FAITH

Living by Faith

Faith that is not acted upon will grow dormant. EM Bounds quotes, "When faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live." When a tree is planted it will grow and eventually bear fruit, or it will wither and die. Our faith does not rest in our own ability, it rests SOLELY on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross! He overcame for our victory in life. He won the victory and shares the spoils with us! Our portion is to now enter into the faith of God, and live there.

Habakkuk 2:4 says that the soul of the man which is lifted up (thinks more highly of itself than it ought) is not right within him, but the just (the one God justifies – the righteous one) shall live by his faith (in God). If we have truly been justified by Jesus Christ, we will live by faith, and we will not draw back.

Scriptures: Habakkuk 2:4, Hebrews 10:38-39, Romans 12:3

Discussion: Can you give a personal example of what living by faith looks like? Discuss the correlation of faith and prayer. Discuss how you will not draw back.

Notes: _____

Endure to the End

Never look back! (Remember Lot's wife!) For our faith to increase, we must be ever looking FORWARD. God has determined a day in history in which he will judge the world. Until that day comes, however, we must hold fast to all of the promises of God by faith. Jesus said that he who endures to the end will be saved. It behooves us to have the end in view in this life. This world is not our permanent dwelling place – HEAVEN is! We are pilgrims passing through! There will be hardness in this life. Paul instructed Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Paul also said that the glory that will be revealed in us is not worthy to be compared to our present sufferings in this world. Jesus himself said, "In this world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer – I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD!" How does that help us? He lives in us. By faith in our union with Christ, we are now...overcomers!

Scriptures: Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:14, 2 Timothy 1:12

Discussion: What have you overcome since becoming a Christian? How did you do it?

Notes: _____

Conclusion: Your best days are always in front of you. How can you be sure of this? Jesus is coming back! And His rewards are with Him! Glory awaits those who have been faithful. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us so that we can obtain the prize! Faith comes by hearing, but it is perfected through testing. Our faith has been likened to gold refined in the fire, and it is this treasure Jesus will be looking for when He returns (Luke 18:8)

Prayer: Father, we have put our hand to the plow and we are not looking back! We know in whom we have believed, and we look forward to walking with you for the rest of eternity! Help us to never think more highly of ourselves than we ought, but teach us to prefer others before ourselves. Cultivate our hearts into good soil so that we can expect the 100-fold return on your Word that has been sown in our hearts. Fill us to overflowing with your precious Holy Spirit so we have strength of your joy to walk through the difficult patches of this life. We love you more every day. Open our eyes and hearts, and cause us to know and understand this amazing love of yours that casts out all fear. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN