

Lesson 11 – Faith

What is biblical faith? So many times, we look to the world to get our definition of faith. The word "faith" is used today in many *unbiblical* ways and because of that, there is much confusion about true biblical faith. The world views faith as a blind "leap into the dark" - an obedience to something for which they have no evidence or logical proof. Faith is a gift from God and He can increase our faith through our spending time in His Word. We must allow the Holy Spirit to move in our lives, so our faith might grow in the Lord.

Faith is trusting God's Word and His promises and ordering our lives according to that trust. Faith is more than just a feeling or an impulse, but that which is done in accordance with a "thus saith the Lord."

In this lesson, we will explore what faith is and learn how we can allow our faith to be increased.

WHAT IS FAITH?

When we ask this question, many people cannot give a clear definition as to what faith is. Some think it is spiritual force that is only available to a few special people. Others think that it is a religious exercise that must be performed to get God to respond to them. Still others think that it is a kind of religion or a denomination.

The Bible has so much to say about the subject of faith:

Live by faith: *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. Heb 10:38*

Please God by faith: *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. Heb 11:6*

Walk by faith: *For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Cor 5:7*

Others have accomplished great things by faith and we are to follow their example: *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Heb 11:7*

Take up the shield of faith for protection: *above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Eph 6:16*

Obtain the precious promises of God through faith: *who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Heb 11:33*

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We are called to fight the good fight of faith: *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. 1 Tim 6:12*

We see scripture after scripture regarding the subject of faith. But, for some, it still seems a little vague or unknown. It is extremely important for you to have a clear understanding of what faith is. If you do not know what it is, it will be difficult for you to function in it. If you don't know what it is, how will you know if you have it?

The Bible offers a definition of faith that is commonly used:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11:1

Even here it is difficult to find application for faith with this definition. This really describes what it does rather than what it is.

The Greek word for faith is “pishi”, and it means “a firm persuasion, a conviction upon hearing”, not just mental agreement but an inside knowing of truth.

The clearest definition I know of faith is this: faith is a belief. Faith is a belief in your heart formed by something you have heard.

I find that most people have more faith than they realize. As you study the Word of God you will discover that the words “faith” and “belief” are often used interchangeably. Let's look at an example:

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

The Bible says that we are saved by faith

that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Rom 10:9

It says that when you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart then you are saved. Faith and believing are the same thing. Let's look at one more example:

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Matt 9:27-29

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Sometimes when you are having a lack of faith you could say that you need to check up on what you believe. Faith is a belief.

Again, when you have the wrong definition of faith it can leave you in confusion.

Another favorite scripture that is often taught regarding the subject of faith is:

“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” Mark 11:23-24

While this is a wonderful promise from God and a tremendous scripture to stand on to receive from God, we must be careful that this is not how we define faith. Some will say that faith is “I believe I have received” or “I am pulling things from the unseen into the seen realm.” When you perceive faith this way it can leave you with the wrong impression. It also centers on your doing something to get something, which is a form of works.

If believing you have received is your definition of faith, then what about Hebrews 11?

...who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to fight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth and all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, Heb 11:33-39

If faith is believing that you have received, then all these people in Hebrews had faith failures. Yet we see that the Bible commends them for their faith. Something doesn't add up here.

Faith is not believing that you received, although that is partly how you operate in faith, but faith itself is a belief. Living by faith is not about getting stuff from God. It is about allowing yourself to be governed by what you believe. It is in this process that you can put yourself in a place to receive the blessings of the Lord.

WHO HAS FAITH?

Many people think that you must be spiritual to have faith or to be in ministry. The Bible says that each one of us has been given a measure of faith.

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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. Rom 12:3 We all start with the same basic measure of faith.

WHERE DOES FAITH COME FROM?

It is good for you to know where faith comes from. How do we get more faith? Should we pray for it? Should we fast for it, do good works for it? No, the Bible tells us clearly how faith comes to us:

So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom 10:17

Faith comes from reading, studying, meditating, confessing, and acting on God's Word. Think about it. If faith is a belief, how are beliefs formed in you? By being taught - just as when you went to school someone taught you. You heard and believed. The same is true when it comes to your faith. When you hear the Word of God, it will form beliefs in your heart and when these beliefs are strong enough in you, they will govern your life. So, if you are having a hard time believing something that God has said, you need to go to the Word and study it out and become convinced that God is speaking truth. Your faith level is equal to your Word level. If you need more faith, you need more Word. Faith comes to your heart from hearing the Word. It is the faith that is in your heart that prompts you to action.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH?

There are many applications to your faith; it virtually affects every aspect of your Christian walk.

Heb. 11:6 – Without faith it's impossible to please God.

Rom. 14:23 – For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Heb. 6:1 – Faith is considered a basic foundational doctrine.

Matt. 21:22 – We receive from God by faith.

Rom. 1:17 – The just shall live by faith.

Rom. 10:8 – We preach the word of faith.

Matt. 9:29 – God works with you in accordance to your faith.

DOES THE BIBLE SPEAK OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAITH?

No, faith is all the same; it comes from the Word. However, there are different levels of effectiveness and these are often described in the Word of God by the people who used it:

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No faith- *Mark 4:40*

Little faith- *Matt 8:26*

Little faith- *Matt 17:20*

Weak faith- *Rom 14:1-3*

The Thomas kind of faith– faith based on what you see- *Jn. 20:24-29*

Strong faith- *Rom 4:20*

Great faith- *Matt 8:10*

The Abraham kind of faith: faith based on the Word of God-

Rom. 4:17-21

Being full of faith- *Acts 6:5*

Fully persuaded faith – *Rom. 4:20-21*

HOW DO I USE MY FAITH?

Faith is believing in your heart. Remember that faith is a belief. Beliefs can be in you in varying measures as we have just seen in the Word of God. After you have established these beliefs in your heart from the Word, it is time to use them. Again, we look to the Word of God to see the application part of faith. How do we use faith or beliefs? The purpose of faith is for it to govern our lives. Our beliefs are to govern the way we live, which means our beliefs or faith should guide what we say, what we do, what we see, and what we hear. Faith is put into action with the confession of our mouths.

We release our faith or use faith by speaking words: *And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak. 2 Cor 4:13*

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. Rom 10:8

"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." Mark 11:23

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. Heb 11:3

Faith is also released in actions: *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22*

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Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So, when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." Mark 2:3-5.

Faith, then, can be seen in our actions. What we believe in our hearts causes us to act or speak in line with that belief.

CAN FAITH BE INCREASED?

People often struggle with the subject of faith because they ask the wrong questions: Do I have faith? Do I have enough faith? Is my faith big enough to handle all my problems? The Bible gives us many illustrations of faith being used at different levels. Even though we all have been given a measure of faith, some have taken that measure and fed it and used it and their faith has grown. So, we could say that there are different degrees of faith. Faith can be increased, and it can grow, much as the muscles in your physical body can. If you use them and train them and eat right, your body will become stronger. You can increase your faith by increasing the source of faith in your life, the Word. Read, study, meditate, and confess the Word of God and your faith will grow.

WHAT ABOUT HOPE?

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Heb 10:23

Hope is confident expectation; hope expects good things in the future. Hebrews 6:19 says that hope is the anchor of the soul. Hope is not the same thing as faith. Hope is only an image, a thought that motivates you to believe. An image is not firm and has no substance, but hope is the foundation that faith is built on. Faith is always present tense, now. Hope is always future, but faith brings it into the present.

Faith always has action to it. No action = no faith.

Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. James 2:17

I want to address the process of faith. Many times, people know just enough about the mechanics of faith but lack understanding of the process of faith.

We have already established that faith is a belief and that belief needs to be in our hearts strong enough to control our thoughts, actions, and words. We have also seen that faith is made active through our words.

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... as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed — God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did. Rom 4:17

But what about after you have prayed and have spoken the Word and believed in your heart? What do you do from the time you pray until the time you receive? What are you supposed to do while you wait to receive?

This is the area where most people get into trouble. It is good for you to know how to stand in faith.

Stand on the Word: *Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Eph 6:13*

The word “stand” here means to: abide, continue, establish, hold up, to be present, to be still up.

That is what you need to be doing. Stand on the Word that you prayed; the same Word that you have in your heart. When circumstances come and try to tell you something else, remain loyal to the Word by standing with it.

Fight the good fight: *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. 1 Tim 6:12*

Fight the fight of faith; notice it is a fight of faith - sometimes you must fight to keep your heart believing in the right direction.

Don't be weary: *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Gal 6:9*

Notice it says, “weary in doing good.” Doing good, keep speaking the Word, believing in your heart. Don't become weary or tired of doing these things because you will reap a harvest if you do not give up.

Remember, it is the words of your mouth that releases spiritual authority, so continue to speak the promises of God over your situations.

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Tim 2:3

It is not always easy or comfortable to go against circumstances but continue to stand in faith. God is faithful.

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Be persistent: *eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; Rom 2:7*

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. Heb 11:6

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor 15:58

The Bible says that God will reward those who diligently seek Him.

Don't be discouraged: *"Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go 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." Josh 1:7-9*

Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: Heb 10:35-36

Resist the devil: *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7*

See yourself with the answer: *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Matt 7:7-11*

Believe that God is a giver. Keep an attitude of praise and worship. Praise and worship are the language of faith. Let your mouth be full of thanksgiving for what God has done, what He is doing and what He will do.

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess 5:18

Notice it says to give thanks in all circumstances not for all circumstances. No matter what is happening in your life, there is always something you can thank God for. Giving thanks to God will hold your place in faith. Thank Him for giving whatever it is you ask for.

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Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. 1 John 5:14-15

The Bible says that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. (Heb 12:2) In your spiritual journey, if you will allow God to adjust your faith and you remain teachable, He will always see you through. Walk in faith and please God.

THOUGHTS

Faith and skepticism are like sunglasses: they color the way a person looks at all things, particularly revelation and the supernatural. All that I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. ***Ralph Waldo Emerson***

The beautiful thing about this adventure called faith is that we can count on Him never to lead us astray. ***Charles. Swindoll***

The acid test of our faith in the promises of God is never found in the easy-going, comfortable ways of life, but in the great emergencies, the times of storm and of stress, the days of adversity, when all human aid fails. ***Ethel Bell***

God is God. Because He is God, He is worthy of my trust and obedience. I will find rest nowhere but in His holy will, a will that is unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what He is up to. ***Elisabeth Elliot***

He who loses money loses much; he who loses a friend, loses much more; he who loses faith, loses all. ***Eleanor Roosevelt***

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MEMORY VERSES

As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. 2 Sam 22:31

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Prov 3:5-6

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

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. Rom 5:1-2

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. Eph 2:8-9

Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Eph 6:16

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb 11:1

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. Heb 11:6

