

A Fresh Look at Faith

Suppose I were to ask you to write down your definition of the word, faith. Obviously faith is extremely important to God; but the question is, why? Why is your exercise of the faith He gave you so important to Him?

Your answers to these two questions will give some huge clues as to how well your soul is doing.

I am suggesting that your relationship with God is greatly affected by your understanding of faith. In fact, some misunderstanding seems to be widespread.

A frequently heard definition of faith is drawn from Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." However, this description of faith occurs in the context of 13 chapters about the person of Jesus Christ. When this definition is lifted from its context, it fits nicely into any religious system to include the New Age approach. In other words, this understanding of faith is not linked to God Himself, and therein lays its inadequacy.

This inadequate definition cannot answer the question, "Why does it make God angry when we do not move in faith?"

A far better understanding of faith is: Faith is the ability to recognize who God is, so as to trust in Him. The opposite of faith is unbelief, which is the inability or unwillingness to recognize whom God is; thus there is no trusting of Him.

This definition is God-centered, and it answers the question of why it is so important to God. Faith believes what God says about Himself, whereas unbelief refuses to honor Him.

In heaven everyone sees God as He is. To see Him is to become like Him. But on earth, it is faith that perceives God and what He is like in the face of fears and suggestions that God is not good or not interested or not able! No wonder it is so important to God.

When God gave you saving faith, what exactly did He give you? He gave you the ability to perceive His nature, what He is like. Therefore you were drawn to Him, whereas before you were not interested.

Now that you have received the same precious faith as the Apostle Peter (2 Peter 1:1), you have been given the most valuable thing of all: the ability to look past hurts or fears and discern the truth about God! This is the faith that delivers, for it "sees" God! It is also worship.

Lesson 1

Obviously there is much conflict in humans both within and without. What is the source of these battles?

There is an epic war being fought, and it is far bigger than the welfare of man. The battle concerns the honor of God! Satan is a liar, and his lies focus on the nature of God.

Faith recognizes who God is and what He is like. Faith sees the truth and honors God by trusting Him. Unbelief, on the other hand, does not recognize and honor God but instead trusts something else.

Scripture Study: Read Romans 1:18-26, for here Paul is explaining what caused mankind to become so unlike the Creator. (*10 minutes*)

Follow Paul's argument. He says that people knew enough about God to treat Him accordingly; but they refused. Instead of honoring Him as the all-trustworthy One, the all-truthful One, the all-powerful One, the all-wise One, they trusted in all sorts of other things, and the rest is history.

Examine Romans 1:21, and from this verse derive the definition for (1) unbelief and (2) faith.

Unbelief is _____

_____.

Faith is _____

_____.

Scripture Memory: Commit the last part of Romans 14:23 to memory by saying it over and over to yourself. (*5 minutes*)

Given the definition of faith and unbelief above, why do you think Paul says that anything done apart from faith is sin? _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Call to mind how much your Father loves you.

Recognize His kindness, His gentleness, and His patience.

Now come to Him and ask for forgiveness for not honoring Him with your trust in the places where unbelief has plagued you.

Trust Him in the very places where your needs are the most intimidating.

Lesson 2

Faith is about giving God the honor He deserves.

When you trust Him, you bring glory to Him. No wonder Satan attempts to stop you by raising fears, suggesting doubts, or inciting anger.

Fear is your enemy. Choosing to trust the character of God while your mind is being troubled with doubts is powerful worship.

Scripture Study: Read Romans 1:16-17, but as you do keep the definition of faith/trust/belief in mind. Perhaps you may see more in these verses than before.

(15 minutes)

In Romans 1:16, what exactly is a person to believe in order to experience the power of God? _____

You probably answered, “the gospel”; but “the gospel” is an abbreviated expression for “the gospel of Christ.” It isn’t the news that is saving you; it is Who Jesus Christ is and what He did that saves you.

Now, using the definition of faith that was in the introduction, explain how faith causes the gospel to release God’s power in your life. Finish this sentence: “When I trust who Jesus Christ is, I _____

_____.”

In Romans 1:17, why do you think Paul says that, “the righteous man shall live by faith”? What does this mean to you? _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Thank God for giving you the ability to recognize Him and what He is like.

Take time to remember some of the wonderful things Scriptures reveal about God.

Meditate upon His character.

Declare His goodness and faithfulness over the places where you are struggling.

Lesson 3

Your life involves passing tests. Every problem, every obstacle presents you with an opportunity to see the greatness of God and draw His resources into your need. Of course, these same troubles can easily lead you to fixate on the problem at hand while leaving God out of the picture.

Paul counseled young Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. (1 Timothy 6:12) The person who “gets it,” who understands what Paul is saying, will pass the tests and have a lot more fun. Your fight isn’t just about health, finances, or relationships; it’s about trusting the amazing God who declares Himself to be your Father!

Scripture Study: Read, memorize, and mull over 1 Timothy 6:12, especially the first part: “Fight the good fight of faith, take hold of eternal life to which you were called...” (15 minutes)

What do you think would be the “not good” fight? _____

What are some of the “not good fights” which you have experienced lately?

Using your new definition of faith, how can you switch from “not good fights” to fighting the good fight of faith? _____

What do you think is the connection between fighting for faith by faith and the exhortation to “take hold of eternal life”? _____

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Bring your problems to your Father.

Now confess His adequacy and nature over every problem.

Worship Him as the Lord over your difficulties.

Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind with new habits of trusting God.

Lesson 4

Rick Warren says in *The Purpose Driven Life*: “You will be tested with (1) major changes, (2) delayed promises, (3) impossible problems, (4) unanswered prayers, (5) undeserved criticism, and (6) senseless tragedies.”

Every challenge is a test of what you think of God. You pass with flying colors even when you feel like the worst failure if you count on God’s character by trusting Him. He will do the rest.

Scripture Study: Read afresh James 1:2-8, for with this perspective God is setting you up to be a winner! (15 minutes)

Look at James 1:3 and answer this question: What do trials test? _____

How do you think this will help you to respond to God when tests come? _____

If you experience a problem and fail to embrace it as a joy, what happens to you? _____

How hard is it to actually obey James 1:2? _____

Do you think that God is working to bring change to how you respond to problems? _____

Examine James 1:5. Since you know that the test is always about what you think of God, try rewriting this verse using your own words. _____

Why does James say that when you ask without faith, you will receive nothing from God? _____

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Name your current problems and then make them a sacrifice to God by carefully considering each one a joy, since you will have an opportunity to honor God with your trust!

Worship God by calling to mind some of the wonders of who God is!

Lesson 5

Problems have a way of swooping down upon us. We are frequently surprised by their sudden appearance, and we tend to resent their intrusion into our lives.

Inside every problem is the real enemy, fear. A classic picture of what you experience is found in the story of Goliath as he towered above every soldier in Saul's army. What a frightening experience! There seemed to be no way out, and that is so often what we feel as we look at our checkbook, or a cancer, or a broken relationship.

Only one man focused on God during this crisis.

Scripture Study: Read the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, but let the lessons about fear versus faith sink into your thinking. God sees you as a David! It's time to see yourself the way He does. *(15 minutes)*

What obstacles did David have to face? _____

Do you see any lessons for your life here? _____

What are the tactics of fear? _____

Since fear is part of our fallen experience, we will face it throughout life. How might you change some of your thinking in order to win in spite of fear?

What did David do that others did not? _____

What are the lessons here for you? _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Take time to thank God for giving you your faith.

Read David's confession over your fears.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh this morning.

Wait upon God and enjoy Him.

Lesson 6

Fear is your enemy, for it says, "Look at me! You are hopeless. You aren't in a place to deserve God's help. Besides, there is no way out. You are trapped."

Hopelessness is a terrible feeling. It sucks the life out of you and leaves you vulnerable to foolish choices.

The courage to hope in God when you feel like you are suffocating under a blanket of hopelessness breaks the power of Satan.

Scripture Study: Read Romans 4:16-21. (*15 minutes*)

What do you think Paul meant when he said that Abraham was the father of your faith?

Study this passage and list the things that are said about God Himself.

What tests did Abraham have to pass? _____

Do you think Abraham had any failures along the way? _____

How did he manage to press through the obstacles to his faith? _____

If Abraham were to be coaching you in your faith, what do you think he would say?

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Come to your Father this morning and pour out your heart concerning all that you are facing.

Now become still in His presence.

Give Him room to minister to you.

Consider the greatness of God and honor Him with your trust!

Lesson 7

Unbelief is a serious matter, for it is a direct assault upon God's honor!

Unbelief assigns a lesser role and a lesser value to God. It is always a form of idolatry.

Therefore, unbelief ultimately meets the just display of God's wrath, which Jesus addressed in a number of stories as He approached the time of the cross.

Scripture Study: Read Matthew 21:33-44. (*10 minutes*)

In the story, what do you think Jesus meant in verse 34 when He spoke of sending slaves "to receive his produce"? What is "the produce" that God wishes to receive from us?

What was the fate of those who refused to honor God with His due? _____

Comment on the rightness of God's response to man's refusal to treat Him as the Creator, Owner, Lord, Benefactor, and patient Ruler. _____

Scripture Study: Read Matthew 22:1-7. (*5 minutes*)

Both of these stories were told as Jesus' time on earth was running out.

Why do you think it was important for Him to include these parables along with His many teachings about the love of the Father and the vast extent of His grace?

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Bring your unbelief to God and lay it at His loving feet.

This is worship, for it ascribes to God the right to be trusted.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with fresh revelation of God!

Pray for your friends who are struggling with their faith.

Lesson 9

In the Gospels the miracles occurred when someone perceived the nature of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

When this happened, Jesus would be surprised and delighted and say things like, “Your faith has saved you.”

Faith is the ability to recognize God’s goodness and power and readiness to help us. Faith counts on God to be God for you, now, in this situation.

Scripture Study: Read Luke 7:36-50. (15 minutes)

How did her faith save her? _____

Obviously Jesus was holding her up as an example. What did she perceive in Jesus that changed her life, bringing tears of joy? _____

What does this tell you about your own ability to receive forgiveness from the Lord?

Are you seeing more of God’s greatness, thereby growing in your own faith?

What seems to help you trust God more? _____

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Eagerly come to your Savior for fresh forgiveness for your sins of unbelief.

Minister to Him your fresh love.

Thank Him for His tenderness toward you.

Express your affection back to Him!

Lesson 10

Facing sickness, debt, disappointment...these things draw you toward doubt.

Great thoughts of God seem so remote, while the problems seem so huge.

This is why it is so important to cultivate and feed your mind with a continual study of the greatest thing in the world: God Himself! Theology (the study of God) used to be deemed the queen of all sciences, because God is greater than any other topic of study.

Scripture Study: Read Luke 7:1-10. *(15 minutes)*

Notice what the Jewish elders said about this Roman captain in v.4-5. What might be the story behind these unusual acts? _____

What did this centurion recognize in Jesus that others did not? _____

Use your own imagination to speculate how he might have been able to recognize this level of authority in Jesus when most of the Jews did not.

If this were your only text that said something about the nature of faith, how would you define it? "Faith is _____."

What lessons do you see in this story for yourself? _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Recognize all authority in God.

Bow before Him and acknowledge Him as your authority.

By faith refuse Satan's false claims.

Honor the Lord with your faith today.

Lesson 11

“Without faith it is impossible to please God” - Hebrews 11:6. Why is it impossible to please God when we do not have faith?

Notice it does not say that you have to produce something with your faith. That’s God’s job. Your part is to trust Him. Your part is to say of the Lord what is true about the Almighty God!

He is worthy to be trusted. It pleases Him when you see in Him someone worthy of trust.

Scripture Study: Read this moving story in Luke 18:1-8. *(15 minutes)*

What is God saying about Himself in this unusual story? _____

Why do you think Jesus used this back door approach to tell us something about God the Father? _____

What is Jesus’ main point in this parable? (It is the nature of parables to have one main point.) _____

The last thing Jesus said in this passage almost appears to be an afterthought, but it reveals the heart of our Savior. What will He be looking for when He returns?

Why do you think this is so important to Jesus? _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Use your view of God to cry out for justice on the earth!

Surrender to Him your feelings of being unjustly treated.

Commit yourself into His sovereign care.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and He will direct your paths.

Lesson 12

Life has a way of beating us down and causing us to focus upon survival. During these times we tend to forget the goodness of God and His desire to be completely available to us.

In such a season, destiny is the last thing on our minds. No, coping mechanisms kick in; and we find ourselves overwhelmed with recent events.

Actually, this is a set-up from the Lord. He has a purpose in it. He intends to give you a fresh revelation of Himself. He intends to give you the opportunity to choose to trust Him, for this is how He forms in you the character of Christ. He has put you in an arena in which you can bring Him great honor by looking beyond the pain in order to see who He is!

Scripture Study: Read the fascinating story of Gideon in Judges 6:1-16. (*10 minutes*)

Can you picture Gideon in the winepress trying to eke out a living? _____

If he had been living in victory, where would he have been threshing the wheat?

What circumstances were overwhelming Gideon? _____

What was his view of God during this time? _____

Can you identify with Gideon? _____

What was Gideon's view of himself? _____

Can you identify with Gideon at this point? _____

How was God changing Gideon? _____

Do you think God has a different view of you from the one you have of yourself?

Journal: (*5 minutes*)

Your view of yourself may well reflect what you really think of God. As you trust your Father God, you will begin to see yourself more through His eyes.

Journal your thoughts about this dynamic. Learn from Gideon. _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Through Christ, come to your Father and bow before Him.

Surrender yourself into His hands.

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to see the greatness of God.

Confess His call and His desires over your own life!

Lesson 13

Temptation always involves some hidden bait: will you believe a lie about the goodness of God?

Satan has the ability to suggest thoughts about God that are not true.

“Does God really love you? Does He care? Perhaps He will do for others, but not for you.” These are the types of thoughts that plague us, and you have the opportunity to glorify God by trusting Him in an assertive way. Such faith breaks the temptation.

Scripture Study: Peer into the familiar model contained in Genesis 3:1-7 of how Satan works to discredit God. (*15 minutes*)

What thoughts did the serpent put into Eve’s mind? _____

What was Eve’s temptation? _____

How should Eve have responded to the thoughts that accused God?

Can you see that the temptation was not ultimately about Eve? _____ What was the temptation about? _____

What lessons can you draw from this original, classic picture of temptation?

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Speak directly to your Father about your temptations.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Satan’s lies about God.

Confess the goodness of God into the areas in which Satan has tempted you.

Worship God for all that He is!

Lesson 14

The essence of sin is a wrong view of God. Sin is what we do when we do not recognize God's goodness, power, wisdom, patience, love, and fatherly heart.

All evil flows from a wrong view of God, and when Jesus saw men attribute bad motives to God, He was, shall we say, not happy!

Jesus' mission was to reveal the beautiful truths about God in all that He said and did.

Scripture Study: Perhaps Jesus' story about the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 will mean more to you now than ever before! (*15 minutes*)

The man with the one talent: what was his view of God? _____

Describe Jesus' response to this view of God. _____

What advice would you give to someone who is struggling with wrong views of God?

Why is your opinion of God so critical to everything that happens in your life?

What is God teaching you about faith? _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Be still before the Lord.

Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind.

Think about God. Ponder Him.

Worship Him in His beauty and perfection!

Lesson 15

There are times when you feel a strong desire to know God better, to experience more of Him, to know more about Him. The exciting thing is that God put these desires in you so that He could answer them!

The more you know God as your Father, the more you will want to know. He causes a growing inner hunger for Himself to develop in you, and He utterly delights to bring you into fresh times of tasting and seeing that He is good!

Scripture Study: God has been building Moses' life (as He does yours), one step at a time, and in Exodus 33 he reaches the apex. Read this chapter. (*10 minutes*)

What heart cry of Moses is the high point of his life? _____

Why would you pick this point? _____

Where did this desire originate? _____

What does the desire to see God's glory entail? _____

What do you desire to know about God? _____

Do you think He wants to meet you in this desire? _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Come to God this morning.

Ask Him to show you more about Himself.

Wait quietly upon Him. Give Him some space.

Raise your hands to Him and quietly adore Him.

Lesson 16

Every problem you face is presenting you with the same issue - fear: “When I feel afraid, will I trust God?”

This is a lifetime issue. Becoming accustomed to stepping through the intimidation of fear in order to trust the Faithful One is the lifetime call upon every Christian.

Of all the sins Jesus might have addressed in The Sermon on the Mount, He targeted worry, and worry is simply fear in the most familiar form.

Scripture Study: Read Matthew 6:19-34. (*5 minutes*)

Jesus sets you up to understand how unbelief (the inability to recognize and treasure the nature of God) is connected to the sin of worry in Matthew 6:19-24.

In Matthew 6:19-24, can you see that Jesus is speaking about your ability to perceive the beauty of God and treasure Him? _____

If you understand Jesus’ introduction, then you can further understand His thought progression in Matthew 6:25 where He says, “For this reason ...” Why does it make sense for Him to say, “For this reason...do not be worried...”?

Examine Matthew 6:26-32 in order to answer this question: What is Jesus’ underlying purpose in these verses? _____

Why does He challenge them with having little faith? What does He mean by saying they have little faith? _____

If you obey Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 6:33, why will you not give in to the temptation to worry? _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Be still before your God. Consider Him.

Treasure Him.

Count Him as able and faithful in regard to every problem you face.

Raise your hands to Him and give Him thanks!

Lesson 17

God has a purpose in every problem you encounter. He wants to be what you need in the midst of this trial.

Wisdom asks the right question, which in this case is: "What does God want to be for me in this situation?"

Spiritual growth results from knowing God at a deeper level.

Scripture Study: Reread Matthew 6:19-34. (*15 minutes*)

In Matthew 6:21, Jesus explains what happens when we treasure something or someone. When you are able to recognize the goodness of God, you will automatically trust Him; and your heart will go out to Him.

In Matthew 6:22, Jesus speaks about your eye, but what He means is that when you see God's nature, your whole being is filled with His illumination, thus causing you to see other things clearly.

Examine Matthew 6:25-34 to see how each problem is a set-up from the Lord to enable you to further know Him. List the areas that are tested and name a few of your own. Apply this teaching to your problems.

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Bring your problems to God.

Ask Him what He wants to show you about Himself.

Trust Him to be all that He says He is.

Worship Him for all His love for you.

Lesson 18

God frequently upgrades you to a higher level of service. Sometimes you may not realize that this is what He is doing, for it may be difficult, or unnoticed by others. Upgrades come in many forms.

With every upgrade, you need to upgrade your experiential knowledge of God Himself or you will burn out.

God's objective is for you to know Him better.

Scripture Study: Read the events surrounding one of Peter's most challenging upgrades in Luke 22:31-61. (*15 minutes*)

Even though Jesus warned Peter about what was about to happen, do you think Peter "got" it? _____ Try guessing why Peter may not have grasped what was going on.

It is my opinion that Peter was experiencing a demonic oppression. See if you can see any evidences of this in the account and apply it to your own life experiences.

Assuming my assessment is correct, what broke the oppression? _____

What do you think God's purpose was in causing Peter to go through this very difficult experience? _____

What do you think God is saying to you through this glimpse into Peter's life?

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you God's view of your circumstances.

Think of some of God's attributes.

Honor Him in your present circumstances.

Confess His faithfulness over every test.

Lesson 19

Jesus said that if you continue in “My word” the truth will set you free. Frequently this means interpreting your problems through the grid of God causing all things to work together for your good. I am assuming that you love Him and are called according to His purpose.

God’s purpose is twofold: (1) to enable you to honor Him by trusting His character, and (2) to thereby change you into becoming more like Himself!

When you are in trouble, it is so easy to lose perspective.

Scripture Memory: If you haven’t memorized 1 Corinthians 10:13, this is the time to do it. If it’s been a while since you reviewed this memory verse, freshly implant it in your mind by saying it over and over. Relish this verse. *(5 minutes)*

Journal: Write some of your thoughts to the Lord as a result of meditating on 1 Corinthians 10:13. *(5 minutes)*

Scripture Study: Read James 1:12. *(5 minutes)*

What do you think James means by, “the crown of life”? _____

Why does James equate loving God with enduring under trials? _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Confess God’s control over your circumstances.

Express your faith toward the Lord!

By faith take the way of escape which God promises.

Bless those who may be causing a problem.

Lesson 20

Every time you trust God, you have worshipped. Your highest worship does not occur on Sunday morning but rather in the dark moments when you feel the least spiritual. Then you choose to honor Him with your trust!

Many emotions can overwhelm your soul. Sometimes it is just excitement. At other times it is the seeming hopelessness of the situation.

Your mind is the storehouse of truth about God; but you must be courageous and choose to confess the goodness of God. Breakthroughs are made of this.

Scripture memory: Invest in your mind's storehouse by saying 1 Timothy 6:12 over and over until it is fixed in your mind. Try writing it on a card and reviewing it during the day. *(5 minutes)*

Thought question: What are some practical ways I can honor God today by trusting Him? *(10 minutes)* _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Pray over some of the ideas you had about trusting God.

Pray through your day's activities.

Wait quietly before the Lord.

Worship Him for His attributes!

Lesson 21

Satan is a liar. What does he lie about? Chiefly he lies about God. Your mind becomes the battlefield where Satan introduces thoughts about God that demean His loving care for you.

Satan is a murderer; but he accomplishes his purposes through spreading lies about God. This is the root of all evil, and biblically it is called unbelief.

In this battle, it is important that you constantly refresh your mind with the truths about God that come from the word of God.

Scripture Study: Read John 8:31-47. (15 minutes)

What was Jesus' instruction for these Jews? _____

What caused these Jews, who were initially beginning to trust Jesus, to stumble? _____

What should these Jews have said? _____

Did Jesus consider them to be true Believers? _____ Why do you say this? _____

Why is it so important to make room for Jesus' words in your own heart and mind? _____

What are some ways you can make more room for His words in your own mind and heart? _____

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Pray through James 4:7, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Worship God in Spirit and Truth!

Declare Who God is in the face of things that perplex you.

Delight your soul in the goodness of God your Father!

Lesson 22

Jesus said to the man whose daughter had just died, “Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be well.”

The question is, believe what? What did Jesus mean by, “only believe”?

At the very least, Jesus meant, “Believe that God has sent Me as the healer.” He may have meant more, e.g. “Recognize in Me God’s healing presence.” In any case, He was directing this man’s faith to His person.

Scripture Study: Read Luke 8:49-56. (*5 minutes*)

Why do you think Jesus did not allow anyone other than this inner core to come with Him into the room with the dead child? _____

What effect do you think Jesus’ exhortation had upon Jairus? _____

Scripture Study: Read Luke 8:40-48. (*10 minutes*)

Jesus said, “Daughter, your faith has made you well.”

Obviously God made her well, so what did Jesus mean when He made this statement about her faith making her well? _____

As you go to school on this woman, what are you learning? _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

What do you need today from God?

Glorify Him by seeing Him as the Adequate One!

Pray His blessings into those around you.

Ask Him to open the spiritual eyes of those around you.

Lesson 23

Faith will not be necessary in heaven. Why not? Because faith is the ability to discern who God is and what He is like even when you cannot see Him.

In heaven, everyone will see God as He is; and to see Him is to trust Him!

He is so compelling that in heaven it is impossible to sin, because human nature is changed through seeing God as He is!

Scripture Study: I believe Jesus knew that you would get insight as you frequently prayed Matthew 6:9-11. Study these verses. (5 minutes)

How does Jesus teach you to start your prayer? _____

When Jesus instructed you to pray, "Your will on earth as it is in heaven," He implies that you know how God's will is accomplished in heaven. What do you think He means?

Scripture Study: Read 1 John 3:2b. (5 minutes)

What will cause us to become like Jesus? _____

Finish this sentence: To the degree that we "see," "behold," "discern," or experience the Lord now, our ability to trust Him _____

_____.

Scripture Study: Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. (5 minutes)

Finish this sentence: The more you perceive who God is, the more _____

_____.

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to further open your heart eyes to know God.

Trust Him with all your heart.

Delight yourself in Him who loves you!

Lesson 24

God the Father sent His Son for the purpose of revealing His nature to men.

Thus, when you “see” Jesus in Scripture, you are seeing God.

Faith is the ability to recognize God in Jesus Christ and to thus honor Him with the trust or reliance that is appropriate. “Render unto God what is God’s.”

Scripture Study: Perhaps you will be able to read some of the opening verses in John with fresh appreciation. Read John 1:1, 12, 14, and 18. *(15 minutes)*

In John 1:1, what do you think is meant by “the Word”? As you wrestle with this, I think you will gain insight. _____

Read John 1:12 and answer this question: How does this verse support my definition of faith? _____

In John 1:14, “dwelt” can be translated as “tabernacled” or “tented” among us. “Only begotten” is much better understood as, “only one of its kind, unique.” What is this verse saying about Christ’s purpose in coming? _____

What does John 1:18 say was Jesus’ purpose? _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

“See” Jesus as God in the flesh.

Receive Him as Immanuel, God with us.

Honor Him this morning with your trust.

Adore Him as God come to rescue you!

Lesson 25

To receive Jesus Christ as God in the flesh means that you perceive who He is, and that you are treating Him accordingly. For this reason, to receive Him is a synonym for faith.

Faith is relational. Faith believes the facts about God and trusts His Person.

God is always the One who takes the initiative. He chooses to reveal things about His character. He chooses to send revelation by His Spirit. He gives His children their ability to recognize who He is, and then He generously calls it, “their faith”!

Scripture Study: Read the familiar story about the shepherds in Luke 2:8-20.
(15 minutes)

Is there any indication that these shepherds were doing anything to merit God’s revelation?
_____ Use your imagination to describe what might have been the spiritual condition of these men. _____

If to see God is to become changed into His likeness (1 John 3:2b), what do you think was the effect of this encounter with angels upon these men?

Did they merely have information or did they have revelation? _____
_____ Why did you answer the way you did? _____

What was the effect upon these shepherds when they went home?

What do you imagine was the effect of all this upon these men if they were still alive some 30 years later when Jesus was in His ministry?

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Behold Christ coming to reveal God to you.

Thank Him for your faith.

Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to also show forth what God is like.

Pray for the eyes of your family and friends to be opened to recognize Jesus Christ.

Lesson 26

Perhaps you will become more conscious of Jesus revealing God the Father as healer, deliverer, provider, and comforter as you read the Gospel accounts.

Over and over you will observe Him attributing the miracles to someone's faith.

He is not advocating faith in faith or faith as some nebulous entity; rather He is commending those who perceived Him as the One they needed and trusted!

Scripture Study: Read Luke 5:17-26. (*15 minutes*)

In Luke 5:20, Luke observed that Jesus was seeing their faith. What was He seeing?

Why did Jesus call this faith? _____

Why do you think Jesus first spoke to the issue of forgiving sins?

Whose faith was Jesus honoring? _____

Does this help you understand how God uses you to be His co-worker?

_____ How? _____

If you see any connection between faith and authority, comment on it.

If you see any connection between faith and the fear of God, comment on it.

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Draw near to God this morning.

There is power in Him. Trust Him.

Use your voice to extol His virtues!

Soak up His love for you.

Lesson 27

Unbelief is the source of evil. Unbelief refuses to honor God for who He is; and where there is unbelief, there is something else taking God's place.

Shall we trust God? This is our daily battle as we wrestle against our own inclination to rely upon ourselves.

Ultimate unbelief not only refuses to honor God, it becomes angry with God and works to actively discredit Him. This makes Jesus angry, for it dishonors the glorious One!

Scripture Study: Read Luke 6:1-5. (*5 minutes*)

What was God's original purpose in establishing the Sabbath? _____

How did the Pharisees misunderstand the Sabbath? _____

What do you think this conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was really about? _____

These Pharisees were experiencing ultimate unbelief, because _____

Thus their unbelief resulted in what evil? _____

Scripture Study: Notice the next account in Luke 6:6-11, but instead read Mark's account in Mark 3:1-6. (*10 minutes*)

Whose faith was the instrument of this work of God's power? _____

What lesson might you draw from this? _____

What made Jesus angry? _____

Why did their response make Him angry? _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Ask the Holy Spirit to constantly fill your heart with fresh realization of God.

Use your memory to recall a verse that helps you trust God today.

Ask forgiveness for your sins of unbelief.

Bask in His love that delights to forgive you.

Lesson 28

Clearly God is poised to do more acts of power for us if we discern His abilities and trust Him accordingly. We can all grow in the area of faith.

However, there are the times when God delays His answers or causes us to endure difficult things that do not make sense to us.

Trusting Him at all times is our most fundamental service, for it honors Him powerfully! And He uses these times of testing to shape our character.

Scripture Study: Read Luke 7:18-28. (*10 minutes*)

John the Baptist was experiencing broken expectations. Have you experienced something like this that has troubled you with doubts? _____ If so, describe your most recent broken expectation. _____

In Luke 7:23, Jesus spoke this important message to John and to you. What does this verse mean to you? _____

Looking at Luke 7:24-28, can you see that the Lord was seeing something very precious in John' life which John was not able to see at that moment? _____ Do you think God's evaluation of you might be far more favorable, even when you are down, than you think? Comment on this.

Scripture Reflection: Slowly read James 1:3-4. (*5 minutes*)

"...knowing that the testing of your _____ produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Fill in the above blank.

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Examine your heart to see if you are offended with God.

Bring your hurts directly to Him. (Notice that God did not reject John for his doubts.)

Express your confidence in God's faithfulness to you.

Let Him minister to you.

Lesson 29

Jesus is the author and finisher of your faith. He prays for you that your faith fail not!

He uses your limitations and the limitations others impose upon you to sovereignly position you for His purposes.

He puts desires in your heart that only He can satisfy.

Scripture Study: Read this great story about Zaccheus in Luke 19:1-10.

(15 minutes)

What are some of the limitations you see in Zaccheus? _____

Name some of the limitations in your life that God has used or is using for positioning you for His purposes. _____

What desire came into Zaccheus' mind? _____

Have you recognized a desire in your heart that was placed there by the Lord? It is probably something that only God can satisfy.

Something in Luke 19:5 must have transformed Zaccheus' life. What was it?

If you were to apply Jesus' words to Zaccheus to yourself, what would you "hear" Jesus say? _____

Looking at Luke 19:8, what do you think brought this level of change in Zaccheus?

What do you think brings change in your life? _____

Faith is not mentioned in this account, but you can see Zaccheus move in faith as...

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Bring your heart desires to God this morning.

Surrender your desires to Him who alone can fulfill.

Listen to Him call your name.

Find in Him the love and understanding you need.

Lesson 30

Recapping the month, faith is the channel through which God releases His power.

Your faith (His gift to you) enables you to honor Him as God and to give Him the thanks He deserves.

The curse is man's inborn unbelief. You are fighting the good fight of faith, for faith, by faith.

Scripture Study: Read Romans 1:16-17, 18, and 21. (*15 minutes*)

In Romans 1:16, God's power for your freedom is released as you _____.

In Romans 1:17, you are called to live by _____. What does this mean to you?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing this ongoing revelation into your life?

Reread Romans 1:18 in the light of Jesus being angry at the unbelief that suppresses the truth about God. Comment on what this means to you.

Rewrite Romans 1:21 in your own words. _____

How has your faith grown during this month? _____

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Thank God for giving you faith.

Accept His call upon your life to live every day by faith in Him.

Call upon His name to help you in the places you have needs.

Declare His faithfulness over every situation that is a test to you.

Lesson 31

You cannot grow in faith by yourself. God places His people together in local churches where they learn to live in interdependent relationships.

You need the encouragements that come from your brothers and sisters, and they need you to contribute to their lives.

Satan targets your faith, and he uses offenses to separate you from the vital fellowship that honors God and so helps you grow from one level of faith to the next.

Scripture Study: Read Hebrews 3:12-14. *(15 minutes)*

What does Hebrews 3:12 identify as evil? _____

What does such a heart lead to? _____

Can you see why Satan would target your faith? _____

In Hebrews 3:13, what is the remedy for our tendencies toward unbelief?

Are you committed to the brothers and sisters in your local church? _____ If you sense that God wants you to increase your involvement with your brothers in order for more of this encouragement to take place, what action should you take?

In Hebrews 3:14, what is the significance of the “we”? What does this mean to you?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Before the Lord commit yourself to your church family.

Ask the Holy Spirit to use you to encourage your brothers.

If you are offended with any in your church, determine to forgive and reconcile.

Praise God for putting you in the body of Christ!