

“FAITH 2”

We live in a fallen world, but practically speaking, what does this mean? In what way is it “fallen”? Or to put it another way, we live in a world that groans under a curse. But what is the nature of this curse?

The world is “fallen” in that humans are unable to trust God. The curse is the inability to trust Him who is the very definition of goodness. In the wake of this unbelief, every other evil is unleashed.

Adam chose to not trust God. He chose to accept the suggestions of Satan that God could not be trusted; and thus he blazed the trail of unbelief that immediately led to his disobedience.

The very root of the curse is unbelief; thus the operating principle used to build every culture is a determined refusal to trust God. For this reason, unbelief surrounds us at all times. It wars against faith!

Jesus, however, never moved in unbelief. He delighted in God the Father at all times and put His faith in Him during every test. His victory over sin, Satan, and death was a victory of faith in His Father God! Not to trust such a God was unthinkable to Him, and He constantly hammered away on this theme: God is to be believed and trusted in all situations!

Jesus came to offer salvation to those who would trust Him. However, this ability to trust God was the one thing they did not possess! All men have been born into the awful curse of unbelief. If there was to be faith on the earth, God had to be the provider of that faith. Jesus broke the curse of unbelief and purchased for His people the faith so necessary to trust God!

The first gift God gives to one He is rescuing is the gift of saving faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9) This gift carries with it both the desire and the ability to trust God; thus it leads directly to salvation. After receiving this gift-of-all-gifts, a man’s faith is called, “his faith.” From this point on, a man’s faith is something that he is to nourish, protect, and use so that God may be glorified!

The purpose of this month’s devotional is that you might grow in faith! Not only will your life be powerfully benefited as you invest in your faith, but God will be honored! And such honoring of God fulfills the deepest desires of your heart!

Lesson 1

While the word, “faith,” is often used in Christian circles, there is rarely a helpful clarification of what it means or why God considers it so important.

Never have I heard it defined as worship; but it is! Faith is the very essence of worship!

Faith in God says, “You are good, faithful, wise, powerful, and thus worthy of complete trust!” It recognizes the Godness of God, which is the passion of worship!

No wonder Satan hates faith!

Unbelief dishonors God, for it says, “God is not worthy of our trust”; and we were born into a world steeped in the evil of unbelief!

Scripture Study: Read Romans 1:18-23. (*15 minutes*)

The wrath of God is being expressed toward men who suppress the truth (about God) in unrighteousness. The question is: what is it that men are doing that actively suppresses the truth about God? What is this “unrighteousness”? If you can anticipate the answer, go ahead: “Men suppress the truth by their _____.”

Examine Romans 1:21. When men “did not honor (glorify) Him as God or give Him thanks,” what do we call this act?

When men honor God as God, they are moving in _____. Can you see why this act of honoring or glorifying God as God is also worship?

Still looking at Romans 1:21, can you see how your own unbelief affects your ability to reason as well as affecting your heart (your inner man)?

In Romans 1:22-23, by refusing to recognize the worthiness of God and trust Him, men lost their own _____.

Read Romans 1:25 and notice how man’s unbelief resulted in his worshipping something other than God. This is further evidence that faith is also _____.

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Ask your heavenly Father to forgive you for your unbelief, which dishonors Him.

Thank Jesus for delivering you from a life of unbelief.

Ask Him to open your heart-eyes to a life of faith!

Pray for your leaders to grow in faith so that everyone in your church will increase in faith.

Trust the Holy Spirit to make you aware throughout this day when you are facing battles with unbelief.

See yourself as going forth today to encourage others in their faith!

Lesson 2

You have many God-given needs that must be met; and you will instinctively move to have them met either by trusting God specifically or by trusting another source.

Faith says, “God is worthy to be trusted in all situations, regardless of timing issues or the threats of consequences,” while the alternative to faith is unbelief, which says, “God cannot be counted upon.”

Satan uses his many “suggestions” or whispers that, in your case, God might not be reliable. This is the voice of unbelief that must be recognized and resisted by feeding your faith in the glorious One!

Scripture Study: Read through “the temptation” of Jesus in Matthew 4:3-11. *(5 minutes)*
What is “the tempter” tempting Jesus to do?

In Matthew 4:8-9, Satan comes down to the bottom line of what he wants. What is it?

How does Jesus’ faith in His Father affect the issues Satan raises in respect to glory and worship?

Scripture Study: Read Romans 1:25. *(5 minutes)*

In 1:25, can you see the connection between faith and worship? Comment on this relationship.

Examine Romans 1:24, and you will see the results of men determining to live in unbelief. When men dishonor God by their unbelief, they bring _____ to themselves!

Journal: Write to your heavenly Father about your efforts to live for His glory, and your own struggles with faith. *(5 minutes)*

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Spend some time honoring God for who He truly is!

Read one of His promises, and then pray it into your situations.

Come to your Savior this morning and receive His faith in His Father for your life today.

If you are discovering things in your soul that resist trusting God, renounce them before the Lord and draw near to Him for His grace.

Pray the promises of God over your church family.

Ask the Lord Who is harvesting to send your church family into His harvest today.
Thank Him for loving you.

Lesson 3

Unbelief shuts down your ability to reason or judge between things the way God does; thus it affects how you interpret all that is happening to you. Faith in God, on the other hand, has the powerful effect of renewing your mind so that you can freely receive God's thoughts and emotions.

Your daily choices to operate by deliberate faith in God hugely affect your attitudes and health, whereas the temptation to wander into the unbelief area puts a cloud over every aspect of life.

Unbelief is your enemy!

Scripture Study: Read Romans 1:21 carefully, in several translations if they are available. *(5 minutes)*

The NASV uses the word, "speculations," whereas several other versions use a much better word, "thinking," to express the same Greek word. This word means "reasoning" or "judgment."

Armed with this information, how does unbelief affect the human ability to think, reason, and evaluate (at least in moral, ethical, and spiritual matters)?

Scripture Study: Romans 11:33-12:2. *(10 minutes)*

Read Romans 11:33-36. What one word would you use to describe what is going on in these verses? _____

Read Romans 12:1. Both the NAS and the NIV use the word, "spiritual," to express what the KJV rightly calls, "reasonable." There is a harking back to Romans 1:21 where the unbelief led to their worship of the wrong things. Now Paul describes the worship of one who has been experiencing the mercies of God; and therefore his sense of "reason" is being restored! With this in mind, comment on how your faith-which-is-worship affects your mental life which is described in Romans 12:2.

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Lift your hands this morning to the Lord and adore Him!

Tell Him how truly wonderful He is! Extol Him!

Now see your various situations the way He sees them; and you will find your confidence in Him growing!

Commit your various areas of need into His hands based upon how powerful He is!

Ask Him to use you to share this marvelous faith with someone today!

Trust Him to actively guide you throughout this day.

Lesson 4

Many are confused about the source of saving faith. Do all people have the ability to trust Jesus Christ, or is it a special gift? Of course, the answer must be found in Scripture.

The answer is important, for if all men have faith, and they only choose whether or not to believe in Jesus, then their salvation ultimately depends upon their decision rather than God's, leaving man in control.

If, however, God gives a man saving faith, then the entire credit goes to God! Then salvation is truly all of grace, not earned.

Scripture Study: Read Ephesians 2:8-9. *(15 minutes for the total section)*

In 2:8, what is the "it"? In other words, what is Paul considering as "the gift of God"?

In 2:9, what is the reason faith is a gift from God?

Scripture Study: Read 2 Peter 1:1.

How does Peter say we got our faith?

The KJV and the NIV describe the faith we (Christians) have received as both like Peter's and just as precious. The NAS emphasizes that the faith that God has given us is "of the same kind as ours," i.e. (Peter's). Amazing!

Scripture Study: Read 2 Thessalonians 3:2.

What does Paul say about all men having faith?

Scripture Study: Read Galatians 3:23.

What do you learn about your faith in this verse?

Scripture Study: Read Romans 12:3.

This verse is often said to teach that all men have faith; but Paul is speaking to what kind of people in his letter to the Romans?

Read this verse in context, and you will notice that Paul is saying that each Christian has a slightly different type of grace and a slightly different type of faith in regard to how he functions in the Body of Christ. He is not referring to saving faith.

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Give God the credit for giving you the ability to believe!

Honor Him as the source of your salvation from start to finish!

Read Hebrews 12:2 before the Lord: "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith..." Give Him thanks!

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you grace to treasure and use “your faith” now so that God may be worshipped all during your day.

Pray for your lost friends by asking God to give them the gift of saving faith!

Renounce unbelief from your own life!

Pray for the leaders in your Church that their faith may be strengthened!

Lesson 6

The power of true obedience is not well understood today. By “true” obedience is meant the obedience of faith, which has traditionally been known as “evangelical obedience.” It is obedience that brings breakthroughs. When you trust your heavenly Father so as to obey Him, there is a surge of His grace that overcomes bondages, flesh, and all the power of the enemy!

While the word “obedience” is frequently used in Scripture, you will want to be observant for the many times when the concept is expressed without using the actual word.

The obedience practiced by Jesus was born of trusting His Father as well as loving Him; and thus He contrasted this “obedience” with the “obedience” of the Pharisees, which lacked these essential ingredients.

Scripture Study: Read Matthew 7:21-27. *(10 minutes)*

Examine 7:21 and answer this question: Who does Jesus say will enter the Kingdom?

What does He call this?

Why do you think Jesus was making this distinction?

Examine 7:23. Why do you think Jesus’ explanation of why they are not included amounts to the same thing as saying they do not have genuine faith?

In 7:24-26, what does Jesus teach about obedience?

Can you see why obedience is linked to breakthroughs?

Concept: When the Bible speaks of a Christian being “in the flesh,” it is referring to those times when a genuine Christian is actually operating in unbelief. This is what causes this person to be “in the flesh.” *(5 minutes)*

Read Romans 8:4, 6-7.

Read Romans 8:4 but substitute the phrase, “according to the flesh,” with “in unbelief”; and see how this verse impacts you.

If you substitute “unbelief” for “flesh” in 8:6 and 7, what does Paul say results from operating in unbelief?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Come to your Savior this morning and bring your unbelief and disobedience to Him for His

forgiveness and cleansing.

Receive His love for you as compassion and encouragement.

By faith in Christ, draw from Him His zeal for the Father's glory.

Specifically trust Jesus Christ to be your personal Shepherd today.

Stop and count your various challenges as a joy this morning, because you can trust the goodness of God to be controlling the things you're facing.

Pray God's blessings upon your enemies.

Commit to your Father your coming day; and go in His grace!

Lesson 7

Jesus often spoke about our faith in His Father.

As you study God's Word in order to grow in your own faith, you will want to become alert to the many times Scripture is speaking about faith, about trusting God while using figures of speech, word pictures, or terms which merely imply the use of faith.

Your ability to peer into Scripture and recognize these concepts will enhance your joy and excitement as you study the very thoughts of God!

Scripture Study: Search John 14:1-6 for Jesus' teaching about faith. *(5 minutes)*
Where does Jesus first mention faith in this passage?

What do you think Jesus expected Thomas (and the rest) to do as they heard Him?

Scripture Study: Now search John 14:7-14 for what Jesus is teaching us about faith. *(5 minutes)*

What did Jesus direct Philip to do that would enable him to realize that he was encountering the Father in Jesus?

What do you "hear" God saying to you about faith as you read this passage?

Scripture Study: Read John 15:1-10. *(5 minutes)*

What role does faith have in abiding in Christ?

What comes to you about faith as you read this passage looking for faith?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

By faith in Christ, take your "place" with Him. Abide in Him.

Be still and let the Father tend you since He is the "vinedresser."

By faith count upon Jesus Christ to be living in you, for thus He is abiding in you.

By trusting God as your own Father, let Him love on you this morning.

Absorb His goodness into your own self, for you are one with Him.

Rejoice in Him all day!

Lesson 8

Why does God only work through our faith? Have you ever really pondered this question? If not, think about it for a moment.

Here is an incredible thing! Abraham actually believed the promise that God had made; and God credited it to his account as righteousness! There is something about faith that activates the flow of God's life-giving power!

Faith honors God as God! Faith exalts God as the one worthy of full confidence. Faith puts one's life and welfare into the hands of the Almighty God! Faith is worship!

Scripture Study: Read Genesis 15:1-18. *(15 minutes)*
What promises did God give Abraham?

What was the specific promise God gave which brought forth Abraham's righteousness?

In 15:8, Abraham is not moving in unbelief. Rather he is seeking a confirmation to his faith; and God gives it to him in a supernatural scene in which God the Father cuts a covenant with God the Son in regard to God's faithful commitment to His promise.

Can you think of a covenant God has cut with His Son on your behalf which offers full assurance that He will fulfill His promises to you?

Read Romans 4:16. What makes you a descendent of Abraham?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Read Matthew 26:26-28 before the Lord and worship your Savior this morning for giving you assurance of being included in this covenant.

Wait upon Him for a few minutes. Let Him just be with you.

In the places you are struggling, offer Him your trust as your morning worship.

Declare Him to be faithful over every situation you are facing today.

Call forth His purposes to win the lost through His Church!

Pray for your Church according to the needs; but pray in faith!

Lesson 9

The reason for the purpose of creation is to bring glory to God. He deserves all the honor. His worth, properly recognized, establishes the worth of all other things; and faith in Him aligns a person with God's intended order for creation.

Your freedom always comes by means of His grace, and thus He receives the honor!

Faith in the promises of God allows God to fulfill His promises without humans having to deserve them. This faith then releases the flow of His grace! What a God we serve!

Scripture Study: Read Romans 4:16. *(5 minutes)*
Explain Paul's reason for saying that it must be by faith.

What is the role assigned to God's promises?

What should you do regarding the promises of God?

Scripture Study: Read Romans 4:18-20. There are a number of lessons for you to apply to your own life in your journey "from faith to faith." In fact, this passage is loaded with practical help. Extract God's lessons for your own life. *(10 minutes)*

(1)

___ (2)

___ (3)

___ (4)

___ (5)

___ (6)

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Thank your heavenly Father for His promises to you.

Worship Him as the God who faithfully fulfills His promises!

Over every obstacle in your life, declare God's promises.

Bow before Him and wait upon Him in quiet worship.

Pray His will into some of the needs of your local Church.

Pray for the eyes of others to be opened to the glory of God in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Lesson 10

Your enemy is unbelief, for when you attempt life without trusting God, you make yourself vulnerable to Satan who is eager to discredit the worthiness of the Glorious One!

Therefore, what you are really battling every day is your own propensity to default to unbelief. To overcome, you must feed your faith; and the best way is to use Scripture and prayer as a means to feeding upon Christ Himself.

Learning to recognize when you have fallen into unbelief is a major key to living in the power of God: i.e. the Gospel.

Scripture Study: Read Luke 22:31-32. (*5 minutes*)

What was Satan's strategy?

Why do you think Jesus warned Peter?

Do you think Peter benefited from this warning?

What was the focus of Jesus' prayer?

What does this tell you about the strategy Satan uses to rob, steal, and oppress you?

Scripture Study: Read and memorize 1 Timothy 6:12. If you have already memorized this verse, refresh your mind with it. (*10 minutes*)

Why do you think Paul calls this "the good fight"?

What do you think Paul would say is "the bad fight"?

The term, "eternal life," in the Greek is, "life of the ages." When Paul orders you to "take hold of the life of the ages," he is referring to your use of your faith. What exactly do you think Paul has in mind for you to do?

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Thank Jesus for securing your faith for you and for giving it to you as His gift! It is a precious, costly gift!

Use your faith to honor Him as God and to give thanks this morning, for this is the heart of worship!

Lift your hands to Him as an act of submission and adoration!

Extol God for all His virtues! Proclaim as many as you can think of!

Now trust Him according to one or more of His promises in the places you need His help. Believe that He is sending you into your day to use your life!

Lesson 11

The society around you is the product of unbelief; therefore it washes you in various forms of unbelief as you move through your day. In order to honor God and trust Him, you will find it necessary to actively nourish your faith.

You will have to do some planning in order to carry this out for two reasons: (1) If you do not plan to strengthen your faith aggressively, you will default to attempting to cope with life in your own strength, which is unbelief. (2) Satan isn't stupid. He has plans to strip as many blessings from you as possible as a means of dishonoring God. Therefore, you have to be intentional about using your faith.

God frequently tells us, "forget not" and "remember," because He well knows our tendency to get caught up in the frenzy of activity and find ourselves operating in unbelief.

Scripture Study: Lets examine the lessons from Abraham again. Read Romans 4:17-21.
(15 minutes)

In 4:17, what does it say about God?

In 4:18, how did Abraham deal with discouraging circumstances and long delays?

In 4:19, did Abraham practice denial with respect to his difficulties?

In 4:20, the Greek says, "in view of the promise of God." This emphasizes

In 4:20, the Greek says, [he] "was made strong in faith giving glory to God." What does this tell you about how to grow in your faith?

In 4:21, you will see the result of keeping God's promises "in view" as you meet problems. What are these results?

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Use your Bible to bring a promise from God to His throne.

Read it to Him. Then wait upon Him with His promise in view.

Ask the Holy Spirit to deeply implant God's promise inside you soul.

Begin to rejoice over the goodness of God and His faithfulness!

Pray for your family using God's promises.

Lesson 12

Paul spotlighted one of man's greatest needs in Romans 3:17: "And the path of peace they have not known." Everywhere people long for this illusive, inner peace.

Jesus gave you this gift, and it is a powerful weapon against the world system. The world does not understand your peace, because it is rooted in God's counting you righteous with the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ! What a gift!

You are to guard your peace, for Satan must break through your peace in order to damage you and to dishonor God.

Scripture Study: Read Romans 5:1. *(5 minutes)*

Why is it right for God to give you "peace with God" as you trust Him?

When you lose your peace, what do you think is happening?

Scripture Study: Read Romans 16:20. *(5 minutes)*

What is the strategic importance of your operating in His peace even when there are difficulties coming against you?

Why does Satan want you to try to succeed in life without living in the peace of God?

Scripture Study: Read Ephesians 6:13-17. *(5 minutes)*

The "armor of God" is nothing less than the gospel, which is the power of God.

Read Ephesians 6:15. If soldiers could not successfully fight in jungles, deserts, or on mountains without anything on their feet, why could a Christian not successfully fight the devil without peace?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Read Romans 5:1 before the Lord. Now receive His peace based upon the merits of Christ as opposed to your own record.

Now ask God to give you the lost family and friends in your life based upon the merits of Christ.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and use you in sharing your testimony with others today.

Pray for your Church to become a soul-winning team!

Lesson 13

Your peace and your joy send light streaming into Satan's plans! They are the results of your faith in Jesus Christ; and oh, how that disarms the unbeliever doled out by your enemy.

Can you have this peace when there is chaos surrounding your life? Yes, this peace shines all the more when there is trouble. Satan will do all he can to persuade you to give it up. Instead, fight the good fight of faith and take hold of the life of the ages!

You cannot be passive in this world. Expect to have to battle against unbelief and be prepared to move into faith toward God during your day. This is routine.

Scripture Study: Read John 14:27. *(5 minutes)*

The world offers peace based upon circumstances.

Jesus offers peace based upon

Scripture Study: Read John 16:33. *(5 minutes)*

In the world, Jesus promises that you will experience

How does faith relate to obeying His command to "take courage"?

Journal: Write before the Lord what you are thinking and feeling about your faith and your experience with peace in a world which seems to keep the pressure on you. *(5 minutes)*

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

By faith, receive Jesus as your peace this morning.

By faith, submit yourself to the Lord. Resist the devil, and he will flee!

Declare God's promises over the things that are threatening your peace.

Determine that you will honor God as He truly is by keeping His promises in view.

Pray for some others this morning who are being tempted to forsake their peace.

Ask the Holy Spirit to use you today as a minister of peace!

Lesson 15

As you head into this day, there will be many attempts of the world to give you a dose of unbelief. You already know this. The question then is: what will you do to counter the thoughts and feelings that come to weaken your confidence in God? Do you have a plan? Satan does.

Your faith needs “faith-food.” What is “faith-food”? The promises of God nourish and replenish your faith, which is why Paul says at the beginning of all his epistles, “grace to you,” and at their close, “grace be with you.” He implies that as you read his God-given words, you will receive fresh grace, and that as you put his letters down and move into your day, there will be fresh grace going with you!

Scripture Study: Read 2 Corinthians 1:20. *(15 minutes)*
Just take a wild guess at how many promises God has made:

Where is the one place God will say, “Yes,” to you regarding these promises?

In order for you to personally experience these promises, what are you to do?

Can you find a promise that you need God to “stamp” with His “Yes”? If so, locate it and write down the verse.

Can you think of other verses that might mean a great deal to your faith? If so, write down some references either here or in your Bible.

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Bring a promise from the Lord before Him.

Now, use the faith He has given you to take your place, “in Him.”

Be still and listen for His “Yes.”

Rejoice in His love for you!

Worship Him with your faith in Him!

Pray for others to become worshipers of God!

Determine to live today by trusting in your Savior.

Lesson 16

Growing in your faith is more than an individual matter. Everyone has some up and down times during which you need to either be encouraging someone else or someone needs to be encouraging you. This is God's plan, and therefore it honors Him for you to participate in it.

Loners frustrate this divine strategy for growing in faith and, as a result, suffer unnecessarily. In addition to hurting themselves, they let their brothers and sisters down by not being there for them when they need encouragement.

We are our brothers' keeper in regard to their faith. In this way, we all grow.

Scripture Study: Read Hebrews 3:1-6. (5 minutes)

Who is "the builder"?

What is He building?

_____ And what is this?

Scripture Study: Read Hebrews 3:12-13. (5 minutes)

In 3:12, what is called "evil"?

In 3:13, what is the remedy for unbelief?

In 3:13, how does God protect you by using the encouragement of others?

Journal: Write your thoughts about where you are in experiencing Christ as the builder of His church through the encouragement of His people. Are you a loner? Are you giving encouragement to others on a regular basis? Are you allowing others to encourage you? Write out your thoughts about these questions. (5 minutes)

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Tell the Lord this morning that you recognize that He is building a house which is His church, and that you are a part.

Ask Him to protect you from becoming hard by sin deceiving you.

Ask Him for the ministry of encouraging the faith of others.

Ask Him to connect you with other brothers and sisters for everyone's benefit.

Pray for the faith of your friends who are struggling.

Worship Jesus Christ this morning as the builder of your church!

Lesson 17

One of the proofs of your faith is your love for your Christian brothers and sisters. Another is your enjoyment of the presence of God and your desire to honor Him in corporate worship.

Those who lack an appetite for fellowship with God may, in fact, need to examine themselves to see if they possess genuine, saving faith; for some may merely be going along on the faith of someone else. In such cases, there may be little ability to taste and see that the Lord is good.

David said, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’” – Psalm 122:1. Whether you are encouraged or discouraged in your faith, you can be glad to go into a place where others are joining together to honor and worship the God of all beauty. For not only will this glorify God, but you will have the opportunity to give in such a way that you will be strengthened also.

Scripture Meditation: Read Psalm 122. Thinking of Jerusalem as your church, write down your thoughts about how your faith can grow and be used among your brothers and sisters. *(10 minutes)*

Scripture Reflection: Read Psalm 100. How might coming before the Lord affect your faith and your joy? How might this attitude change something you are currently doing on Sundays? *(5 minutes)*

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Bring your church and its corporate worship experience before the Lord this morning that there might be great joy in God Himself!

Lift your own hands to the Lord and declare His goodness out loud!

Pray for everyone’s faith in God to increase today!

Ask God for His miracles of faith to occur today in His “house,” the Church!

Come to God and let your heart receive the love He has for you this morning.

Ask God to grant saving faith for everyone who comes who has been merely going through the motions.

Lesson 18

Every day there are things that happen which test your faith. What is your attitude toward things that test your current willingness to trust God for His help? Do you accept the unwelcome circumstances as an assignment from the One who loves you? If so, then you will find yourself growing in your confidence in His favor. You will be one who is hard to discourage, because you keep believing that He is trustworthy.

Oh how this glorifies your God! What pure worship is this faith!

Scripture Study: Read James 1:2-8. *(15 minutes)*

James knows that God allows everyone's faith to be tested for many reasons. What are the reasons you can think of that would cause God to test our faith?

Do you value endurance as much as these verses indicate? _____ Exactly how much do you value endurance? How much is it worth to you?

How do you think your faith is affected by how you value endurance?

When you are in a difficult circumstance, and you do or do not consider it all joy, how do you think this affects what happens to you?

Looking at this text in James 1:2-8, why did you answer as you did in the above question?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Repent before the Lord for any recent times you have not considered it a joy to encounter something hard.

Trust the Holy Spirit this morning to give you fresh grace to trust God at all times so that His praise shall constantly be in your mouth.

Now begin to worship Him by bowing, or lifting your hands to Him, or by some other way that expresses your adoration toward Him!

Use words to tell Him how worthy He is to be trusted even when you do not understand.

Thank Him for all His goodness to you.

Become still. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Drink in His tenderness toward you. Let Him comfort you.

Ask Him to take you to someone who needs your testimony today.

Lesson 19

Faith dwells easily with the man who is at ease with his own neediness, which is to say that faith and humility are companions. When you are not surprised by your total lack of wisdom or ability, but instead turn immediately to depend upon God, you are living the life of faith; and God is being honored!

God is eager to supply your every need; but He reserves the right to be in control of the timing and the method of supply. Then the only question which remains is: will you trust Him and by faith draw from Him the wisdom so crucial to everyday life?

Scripture Study: Read James 1:2-8 once again, for these verses must define how you live.
(10 minutes)

What are the commands in this passage?

What are the promises in this passage?

Why is the command, “Consider it all joy...when...” a test of your faith?

How important do you think wisdom is to your life right in your present circumstances?

What can you do to reap the benefits of God’s promise to give you wisdom?

What perhaps do you need to change in order to really receive God’s best in your present trials?

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Bring your sad unbelief to God this morning and let Him set you free from every bondage! Jesus said that even a mustard seed of faith would be enough to do powerful things, so thank God for giving you more faith than the mustard seed!

Use your faith to express your confidence in God’s love and wisdom for your life in all the things you are facing for Him!

By faith see Christ as your righteousness.

By faith receive His peace.

By faith use His promise to receive His wisdom.

Pray for your brothers and sisters to grow in their ability to rightly interpret their circumstances for God’s glory.

Lesson 20

Passivity is not a winning option. Giving up is another dead end that does not successfully end the pain. Resignation is a form of giving up, but it only dulls the pain by numbing the senses. Resignation is somewhat like cutting the nerves so that you will not feel the pain, but in the process, you lose your ability to feel alive.

“The life we now live we live by faith in the Son of God who....” - Galatians 2:20. Unbelief is your enemy, and you must not submit to it just because there is pain.

Pain can motivate us to take our refuge in God and to receive His comfort. Many a Christian has used his pain to become more alive, more alert to God and to faith. Resignation is an old strategy of Satan who wishes to use your pain to cause you to give up. The Spirit of God who lives in you says, “Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called!”

A Spiritual Exercise: Use Jesus’ model prayer in Matthew 6:8-15 to make comments that apply to your life now. (*15 minutes*)

In Matthew 6:8, why does Jesus tell you this, and how does it apply to your situation?

“My Father who is in heaven...” In response to this, write out your thoughts.

“Hallowed be Your name.” Write down how you might make God’s name holy in your situation.

“Your Kingdom come...” “Your will be done” in my situation “like it is done in heaven.” What is God’s will in your situation? Not for others, but for you.

“Give me this day my daily [provision].” What do you need to ask of God by faith in His promise?

“Forgive me my debts...” For what do you need His forgiveness today?

“As I forgive my debtors.” Who are you forgiving today?

“Lead me out of temptation and free me from evil.” From what temptations to do evil do you

need His deliverance today?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Now take what you have written and begin to pray through “The Lord’s Prayer,” and He will meet you and turn your pain into something redemptive.

Don’t forget the worship part that comes at the conclusion to this prayer!

Lesson 21

God often meets us at the end of our rope. You already knew this, but it doesn't mean it is any easier to trust God when He is walking us down toward the end. I suspect we think we are at the end of our rope a good while before we actually get there, so there is a test of our faith in the whole process.

In addition to the worship He receives from our trust at such times, we experience deep changes in our souls as we honor Him as God when we do not understand what is happening. He brings us to the point at which we will choose surrender or resignation.

In surrender we give up all control into the hands of the One we have learned to trust, while resignation still wants the control but is too weary to continue. Within resignation there is anger. It refuses to trust the goodness of God. It is a protest!

Scripture Study: Read Matthew 26:36-46. (*5 minutes*)

What would this have looked like if Jesus had been simply resigned?

How can you tell that Jesus came to the end of His rope and surrendered to His Father out of trust?

Scripture Study: Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. (*5 minutes*)

Did Paul move into resignation or surrender?

How can you tell?

Journal: If you have recently been at the end of your rope or been tempted to move into resignation as opposed to deepening surrender, communicate with the Lord on paper. (*5 minutes*)

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

If you find that you have given up in the form of resignation, bring it to the Father and aggressively move into surrender to His will!

Choose faith in Him this morning.

Declare His goodness and wisdom over your life in all that He has caused to happen to you

according to Romans 8:28.

By faith worship Him as the God who only does what is good and right!

Renounce every lie that your unbelief has allowed to hang around!

Pray one of God's promises over your life!

Ask God for an opportunity to encourage someone else's faith today.

Lesson 22

Time delays put great pressure on your faith. All sorts of thoughts come: “Does God see?” “Does He care?” “Am I an exception?” “Perhaps I am not good enough.” “Doesn’t He see that time has run out?” During these seasons, your “Why’s?” go unanswered while doubt sniffs around, looking for a place to bore into your soul.

You will frequently answer this question: “Will you trust My timing in your life? Yes or No?”

Isn’t this type of patient faith in the goodness of God the very essence of endurance? No wonder God places such value upon your endurance, for it is faith prospering under duress.

Scripture Study: Read Hebrews 6:12. (*5 minutes*)

The NAS refers to not being sluggish. How is sluggishness akin to being passive?

What does it take to inherit some of God’s promises?

If the reason for the universe is that God might be glorified, what is the value of faith that is patient?

Scripture Meditation: Read Hebrews 6:12 over and over, slowly allowing it to sink into your soul. (*5 minutes*)

Journal: Take Hebrews 6:12 into your life situation and apply it. What things have tested your patience? (*5 minutes*)

What promises are you holding before God?

What are some thoughts you might share with your Father about His timing in your life?

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

In reference to God’s timing in your life, honor Him by worshipping Him!
Declare His divine wisdom in arranging the details of your life!

Now be still and let Him love you.

Receive His affection for you this morning.

Pray His promises into the areas of need in your life.

Pray His promises into your church family.

Ask the Holy Spirit to lead your church as missionaries today so that the gospel will go out to others!

Lesson 23

When Jesus gave His most compact message concerning how the Kingdom of God differs from the world, He surprised us by making such a big deal about worry. We might think He would focus upon some other common sin such as anger or pride or hate; but no, He went right to the heart of what makes the world system tick: worry!

Why worry? Because worry is a statement about the Father, and it's not a good statement. Worry says that God cannot be trusted, and therefore we must take care of our own needs. Jesus' argument is a defense of the Father's utter goodness and faithfulness, for it is faith that recognizes God as He is.

I think unbelief is the root of all evil, and it is my theory that the first sin unbelief spawns is worry. From worry flows the other attitudes and actions which contradict God.

Scripture Study: Read Matthew 6:25. (*5 minutes*)

Jesus says, "For this reason," do not worry. For what reason does He say we should not worry? How does "not worrying" follow from what He has been saying?

Explanation: In 6:19, Jesus talks about what you treasure, for this spot in your heart is reserved for God alone. Many things want this spot in your heart; but perhaps Jesus picked money because it is the most common competitor. Then, in 6:22-23, Jesus discussed how your "treasure" influences the way you "see" or interpret your circumstances. We all think we see our situations clearly; but when God is not our treasure, He says we are not seeing clearly. Thus "our light" is really darkness. But, if we treasure God, we will see life as God sees it; and then it is reasonable to not worry! (*5 minutes*)

Prayer Time: (*15 – 30 minutes*)

Bow before your faithful Father God and surrender to Him your sin of worry!

By faith in Him, receive His forgiveness and the cleansing of the blood of Christ!

Confess God as faithful and true in meeting all your needs.

Declare that God alone is your true source for all of life!

Worship Him as the Great Provider for you and your family!

Determine before the Lord that you will begin to carve out a life without worry.

Lesson 24

You have many needs, and you will instinctively act to meet them by means that seem right to you. However, if you do not make God your treasure, you will “see” your problems through the prism of unbelief instead of faith. Worry then, will define your life.

Jesus knows you well. He knows that worry stalks you and urges you to defend yourself, to take care of yourself; and all this takes a huge toll on your health as well as on your relationships.

Only a clear view of God will enable you to trust, and this is a choice. This is one reason that when you worship, your faith grows, whereas if you become absorbed in all the details of life, you feel your faith ebbing. Choose faith!

Scripture Study: Watch for how all the pieces fit as you reread Matthew 6:19-34. (15 minutes)

Many people use worry as a motivator to action. Why do you think Jesus would argue against this practice?

What patterns of worry do you see in your own life?

When you are “triggered” by worry, what can you do that will help you to obey Jesus’ command to not worry?

Take Matthew 6:32, and rewrite it in your own words, explaining what you think Jesus really meant by this powerful sentence.

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

This morning, make a break with worry!

By faith in Jesus Christ, receive His righteousness, for this is the power to break this habit.

By faith, draw from your Savior His view of the Father.

Ask the Holy Spirit to take you into Christ’s School of Faith vs. worry.

Pray for your friends who struggle with this sin also.

Thank God for coming to your rescue.

Lesson 25

When you drop into your old default mode of unbelief, which is the flesh, faith in God may seem unreachable. Right then, you must “reckon,” “consider,” “count” yourself crucified with Christ. (Galatians 2:20) Confess with your mouth the truth that you no longer live, but that Christ lives in you. Confess with your mouth that you now live by faith in the Son of God! This is the good fight of faith!

Scripture Meditation: Slowly read and reread Romans 1:16-17. Let the Holy Spirit build these truths deep into your inner being. *(5 minutes)*

Scripture Study: Read Galatians 2:20-21. *(5 minutes)*

What is the role of your faith in experiencing this power?

When you are wallowing in unbelief, what happens to your sense of being loved by Christ?

What does “nullify” the grace of God?

Scripture Exercise: Rewrite Galatians 2:20 in your own words. *(5 minutes)*

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Make Galatians 2:20 your confession before the Lord.

Believe that you have been crucified with Christ, and believe that His defeat of your unbelief is in you.

Rejoice in your Savior’s love for you this morning!

By faith, receive His righteousness (His character) for yourself.

Get still and wait quietly in His presence. Just be with Him.

Submit yourself to Him.

Trust Him for your day.

Lesson 26

Complaining will cripple your life, for your words of unbelief being sown into the air empower your flesh; and the darkness will increase accordingly.

What you say affects the way you feel. James called the tongue the rudder to your ship, for the tongue determines your direction.

Of course, when worry is being allowed to remain, complaining will be right behind.

Faith is not about denial. Faith sees the problems very clearly, but then intentionally turns to God for His help.

Scripture Study: Read Romans 10:3-11. *(15 minutes)*

In 10:3, Paul speaks of those who did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. What do you think is involved in subjecting or submitting yourself to the righteousness of God?

Why would your flesh not want to submit to the righteousness of God?

In 10:6 and 8, Paul says what faith says. What does faith say?

Examine 10:9-10. Can you believe in your heart something God said but fail to be bold enough to confess it? _____ What is the result of “such believing”?

Can a person confess something God said without truly believing it in his heart? _____ What is the result of “such confessing”?

In 10:11, Paul says that when you do both, i.e. believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, you will not be

Can you think of ways to practically take this practice into your life style?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

If complaining has been a habit of yours, please renounce it now.

Use the gospel as God’s power to break this habit, this temptation to complain when things do not go according to your plans.

Confess God’s promises over your problems.

Believe that God is only good to you.
Renounce all accusations against God.
Ask God for opportunities today to tell others about His goodness.

Lesson 27

Discouragement is a frequent visitor who knocks upon your “door.” It’s a great new day when you wake up and realize that you don’t have to answer that knock!

Have you learned to recognize discouragement’s “voice”?

David learned to encourage himself in the Lord. You don’t have to be passive. You don’t have to accept the devil’s interpretation of things in your life. You can begin to confess the truths of God; and the devil will flee!

Thinking Through: What is it the devil wants to take from you when he comes with discouraging thoughts? *(5 minutes)*

_____ How does this relate to your faith?

Scripture Study: Read Luke 22:31-32. *(5 minutes)*

Speculate upon how Satan might have used discouragement as a way of tempting Peter to sin.

_____ How might Peter have defeated Satan and avoided sinning?

Scripture Study: Read James 4:7. *(5 minutes)*

What do you think it means for you to submit to God when the devil comes with discouraging thoughts?

_____ How are you to resist the devil?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Confess that Christ is your Savior and that He has given you His faith!
By faith, possess your inheritance, which is found in the Person of Jesus.
Give to the Lord the honor He deserves by praising Him!
Let your heart take courage from Christ Jesus, your Savior!
Pray His promises over the places you are being tempted.
Resist the devil! Make him flee by using the truths of God!
Declare God’s blessing upon your church family!

Lesson 28

Perhaps you have seen someone trying to talk himself into faith only to end up being shallow and ineffective. What is wrong with this approach?

Confession is critical; but your tongue must be confessing what is genuinely in your heart. Remember, “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” Therefore, you must sow Scripture into your heart, for this is where true faith is incubated.

Does this mean that you should not confess God’s truths until your heart fully believes? No, not at all. Confessing Christ as your Savior will aid your heart in coming into faith; and then you can confess the truths of God in a way that makes demons flee!

Scripture Study: Read John 8:31-32. *(5 minutes)*

These Jews had already believed in Jesus, but what did they need to do in order to find freedom on a continuing basis?

How would you apply what Jesus said about continuing in His word to your own life?

What is it that sets you free? _____ And how is this activated in your life?

Scripture Study: Read Luke 8:8-15. *(10 minutes)*

What does the seed represent in Jesus’ story?

What do the different “soils” represent?

The success or failure of the different “soils” depended upon

What is the reason Jesus gave for the differing results?

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Come to God your Father this morning by confessing His acceptance of you in His Son. Jesus said that His Father was the vinedresser and that as you would abide in Him, the Father would tend you, nourish you, comfort you, and repair you.

Revel in your Savior Jesus Christ and in His achievements!

Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Pray for His Kingdom to come and bring saving faith to those in your circle of influence.

Lesson 29

Is being corrected hard for you? Are you quick to take correction as rejection?

If you are easily offended by correction, it indicates that you are not living in the Gospel. Why would I say this? Because the man who is trusting Christ to be his adequacy is not easily threatened by discovering that he has a lack of which he was not aware.

To live in the righteousness of Christ means that you are enjoying humility and faith, and this leaves you with a sense of security which is based upon the merits of Christ as opposed to yourself. When you live this way, corrections can serve to point you more to your Savior.

Scripture Study: Leaders are commanded by God to teach, counsel, rebuke, reprove, and warn as part of being responsible to their charges. They are also commanded to be gentle and wise in the ways they administer these corrections; but our culture does not easily accept such ministry as part of love. *(15 minutes)*

Read Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

Elders who sin and refuse to receive correction are to be rebuked publicly. (1 Timothy 5:17-21)

Paul said, as a great compliment to the church in Rome, that they were able to admonish one another. (Romans 15:14) Admonish means to counsel or to confront.

Read Hebrews 12:4-13. Being corrected is part of the Father's love for you, so when you receive it that way, you are being a wise child.

Read Hebrews 13:17. What do you think the author means by letting them do this with joy and not with grief?

Read Galatians 6:1-2. Every Christian has a responsibility to _____

Finish this sentence: The more you trust God, the easier it is for you to _____

Prayer Time: *(15 – 30 minutes)*

Ask God to forgive you for clinging to your insecurities.

Come now to Christ and receive His adequacy.

Receive His love for you.

Tell Him that you want to receive corrections as part of His care for you.

Ask God to send the right ones into your life who will care enough about you to correct you with wisdom.

Ask your Father to use you to care enough about a few that you would risk correcting them in love.

Pray for your church to become a family of people who guard one another this way.

Lesson 30

Paul uses the expression, “as your (pl) faith grows,” as a handy way of saying, “as you mature, as you make progress, as you become more like Christ.” It’s good to take his expression as going to the root of the matter. (2 Corinthians 10:15)

As you grow in your trust in God, you are becoming a whole person. Another way of saying this is that as you grow in your faith, you are becoming a full-time worshipper of God!

To grow in your faith means that you are decreasing in your unbelief; and this means that sin is being overcome in your life! This is why Paul anticipates that you are becoming a super-conqueror through Him Who has been loving you. (Romans 8:37)

To trust God in some areas is easier for you than others. To grow in faith means that you are constantly growing in your desire and ability to trust Him in all areas.

Scripture Meditation: Read Romans 1:16-17 over and over, as this is the core of your life of faith. Meditate upon these words. (5 minutes)

Scripture Study: Read Romans 14:23b. (5 minutes)

Why is it true that whatever you do that is not based upon your trusting God is sin?

Because this is true, why does Paul call your battle for faith, “the good fight”? (1 Timothy 6:12)

Scripture Study: Read Romans 14:17. What three things are the evidences that you are going “from faith to faith” in the Gospel? (5 minutes)

Prayer Time: (15 – 30 minutes)

Thank God for giving you this precious gift of saving faith.

Use your faith this morning to recognize His nature so that you may declare His worthiness into the heavens!

In all the places you are battling, confess Christ as your righteousness!

Believe His promises for the breakthroughs you need.

Let Him use you to believe for someone else’s need to be met today.

Ask God to pour finances into your Church so that you might increase His fame!