

Increasing your Faith

Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. After dismissing the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone. But the boat was already over a mile from land, battered by the waves, because the wind was against them. Around three in the morning, He came toward them walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified. "It's a ghost!" they said, and cried out in fear.

Immediately Jesus spoke to them. "Have courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."
"Lord, if it's You," Peter answered Him, "command me to come to You on the water."
"Come!" He said.

And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out His hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those in the boat worshiped Him and said, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Faith

We have talked about what faith asks of us... Remember? Both Fear and Faith ask us to believe in that which we don't see. We go through our life with choices. Make no mistake to take no action or to choose nothing is an action. But each choice we make is one of either fear or faith. Many times when we choose fear we go through the same cycle again and again, mostly because we haven't learned the lesson of faith that God wants us to understand. When we choose Fear or faith there are repercussions and consequences. They may be positive or negative. When we choose faith they are usually positive although they may not appear so immediately.

Bible Faith Examples

The bible tells us in Hebrews 11:1 that is important for a lot of reasons: "Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. For our ancestors won God's approval by it.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by God's command, so that what is seen has been made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

By faith Enoch was taken away so he did not experience death, and he was not to be found because God took him away. For prior to his removal he was approved, since he had pleased God. Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him.

By faith Noah, after he was warned about what was not yet seen and motivated by godly fear, built an ark to deliver his family. By faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith even Sarah herself, when she was unable to have children, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since she considered that the One who had promised was faithful. Therefore from one man — in fact, from one as good as dead — came offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as innumerable as the grains of sand by the seashore.

These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they were thinking about where they came from, they would have had an opportunity to return. But they now desire a better place — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and he was offering his unique son, the one it had been said about, Your seed will be traced through Isaac. He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead, and as an illustration, he received him back.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and he worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, as he was nearing the end of his life, mentioned the exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions concerning his bones.

By faith, after Moses was born, he was hidden by his parents for three months, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they didn't fear the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and

chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the short-lived pleasure of sin. For he considered the reproach because of the Messiah to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since his attention was on the reward.

By faith he left Egypt behind, not being afraid of the king's anger, for Moses persevered as one who sees Him who is invisible. By faith he instituted the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch the Israelites. By faith they crossed the Red Sea as though they were on dry land. When the Egyptians attempted to do this, they were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after being encircled by the Israelites for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute received the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed.

And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength after being weak, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead — they were raised to life again. Some men were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection, and others experienced mockings and scourgings, as well as bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, destitute, afflicted, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and on mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us

Today it is my intention to expand our understanding of faith through Godly principles and concepts. The first idea that I want to share is that Faith is not just a feeling... It is our being confident and assured that God will do what he has promised to do. How many people know that the Bible is filled with promises from God?

Here is a challenge for you... If you are not walking in the Spirit and trusting God but rather are simply doing your own planning without God in it, you are not advancing your faith or bringing glory to God. Essentially, like I was, you may be trying to be in total control of your own life instead of surrendering it to God. How can you claim he is your God if you don't trust him?

Like I was many people don't want to give up control of their own life to God. I am not talking about the Pastor taking control of your life. Not my job... I am talking about you surrendering your will to his. Over my life I have done many things but the most-revelatory thing I have discovered is how important surrender and faith is.

I cannot be my own savior. I don't even want to try. I give my life to Jesus and guess what, now it works! I am free, I am happy! Am I done? Nope, but I am in the place in my life where I am willing to learn...

So what? How does that impact me? Everyone wants to be loved, valued, useful and be happy. If you don't - here is my diagnosis... You're delusional.

We have talked about our state

Well, let me share with you briefly this morning about ten specific ways that you can increase your faith

Some ways to increase your Faith

We increase faith by overcoming trials and adversity

Do you believe today that God knows what you need? Do you believe that he knows what will strengthen you and grow your faith? What is a faith that is not tested?

We increase faith by seeking to understand God's nature

God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is loving, merciful, kind, gentle and Holy. He is a Jealous God who wants a relationship with you. As we read his Word and Pray he reveals his nature to us.

We increase faith by studying the Word of God

The Word of God is our insight into God himself. It is his divine revelation to us. We are told in 2 Timothy 3:16 that All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.

We increase faith when we pray and God answers our prayers

When a child looks at their father they see someone that they trust. I remember when I was little, I used to climb up on the icebox fridge and jump off into my father's arms. I had faith in him to catch me. God is a great father; when we leap in faith in his will he will always catch us. This is simple faith. Remember when Peter stepped out of the boat, he asked Jesus if he could come to him, and he waited on his timing. There was no concrete road from the Boat to Jesus. Peter had to step out in faith. He was going to walk on the water. In natural man's mind, there is no way this is going to work. God's ways are not our ways.

We increase faith when we take ownership of those times when we have not had the faith we needed to press forward

We can't snow God. He knows when we have blown it. The great thing is that we just say sorry and ask for his help and we try again. We always need to choose faith over fear. Sometimes that choice is not obvious and so we miss it. In this way we keep going around and around until we see that we have a choice to make. When we choose faith we move forward. We need to come back into the will of God. Everything Jesus did, he did in the will of the father.

We increase faith when we apply the principles of God's Word and realize their value

If we want to grow we need to read the Word of God and apply his principles to our lives. God will honor our willingness to follow him and obey his will. If we really apply the principles that God gives us we will see him working in our lives. When we can see him in our lives our faith increases.

We increase faith when we study and observe how God does things

Sometimes God lets us go through things to let us learn. He cares enough about us to let us make some mistakes and discover truths through hardship and difficulty. If a person prays for patience he brings situations into their life to help them develop it. Ever notice that sometimes God will work in situations or with people that we would never expect? That's because his ways are not our ways. He has plans to prosper us... That isn't always financial as is often taken, but really means that he causes us to grow and become more like him.

We increase faith when we see him working in others

Sometimes when God is working in others they exhibit, what's a polite way to put this... Challenging behaviors. As a result, they help us build character. Often times the things we see in our children or in others that annoys us, is the very thing we see in ourselves and God is utilizing their development to send us a character building lesson. At other times God is doing amazing things in their lives. A while back I spoke about the meaning of the phrase from faith to faith. When we bear witness to the amazing things that God is doing in our lives we build faith in others. When we hear what God is doing in their lives we gain faith in our own. The profession of what God is doing in the lives of people builds our own faith.

We increase faith through worship

We offer our lives up as worship and God blesses us. Remember the power of the spoken word. It was with a word that God created the heavens and the earth? "And God said let there be..." There is a lot of power in the words we speak. We can speak life or death, into people's lives. When we speak and sing in worship we are proclaiming God's goodness to all those around us. Ever notice that when we help those in need when we ourselves are hurting, that we begin to feel better? That is

because the love of God is reflected in the situation. Whatsoever we do unto the least of these people we do as unto the Lord. There is a blessing in worship.

We increase faith by dying to ourselves and obeying his will

Our faith increases when we step back and just obey God. When we obey God it doesn't always have to make sense. Gods ways are not our ways, we just have to listen and obey. When we listen and obey our heavenly Father, it brings him honor and shows our faith in him. His Word tells us that without faith it is impossible to please him.

We increase faith by meditating on the Word of God

The bible is more than just a book; it is the revealed Word of God. It inspires us, strengthens our faith, corrects us, teaches us, guides us and so on. If we want to understand what God wants in a given situation then prayer and reading his Word will show us what we need to understand his will. God has given us his text as a handbook for our life. He has given us examples for life in its pages and he wants us to be diligent and look. Up above we talked about reading his Word we begin to understand him and our faith grows and matures as we walk the journey of sanctification. Here is the ticket though it is not just about reading a book, it is about meditating on it and beginning to see the ways that his Word applies in our lives.

If you want to see the miraculous in your life, if you want real change, this requires faith. For we know that without faith it is impossible to please God. It doesn't matter what your income level, it doesn't matter your education level, it doesn't matter the year make or model of your car, God can transform your life and develop in you the person he created you to be. But it takes faith, faith to let go and let God; Faith to have trust in God. All relationship must have trust. We can love people and not trust them. To really see God move in our live we must have the faith in him. Faith is trust in God. God will not jump in and force you, he is waiting for your choice to trust him and turn your faith to him.