

Ethan Temple Prayer Meeting
Tools for Life
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The Stages of Our Faith

Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:1-3, 6

I. Introduction: Every single aspect of our lives is affected by our faith. It is the single most important thing Jesus Christ sought to teach His disciples, and He was disappointed when they did not display it (Mark 16:14). We grow in faith through trials; however, we will likely struggle with our faith as we endure the process.

II. Faith Encounters Many Obstacles

A. Human Reason. God may say things to us that seem unreasonable, and we miss out on some of His blessings because we fail to do what we are asked when it doesn't fit our expectations.

B. Living by Sight. Oftentimes, we don't trust God and seek to live by sight rather than by faith.

C. Surrendering to Our Feelings. When we're challenged, we often feel like we can't do something. This is a great hindrance to our faith.

D. Negative Counsel. If God challenges you to do something, asking others for advice is a mistake. People's opinions should never outweigh God's, and He would never ask you to do something without empowering you.

E. Feelings of Guilt. Sometimes, dwelling on the past can hinder our faith. Instead of asking God for forgiveness and moving on, many people remain trapped in previous failures.

F. Neglecting the Word of God. The Bible is the fuel of our faith, and if we do not read it, we cannot begin to see how the Father enables His people and that He will do the same for us.

G. Continuing in Sin. God will not use us for His purposes if we are living in sin. It short-circuits our faith in all ways.

H. Satan's Tactics. The devil wants us to doubt God and to divide our allegiance. He is like an undertow that slowly pulls us away from the Father.

III. The Development of Faith

A. The author of Hebrews explains that, without faith, it is impossible to please God (v. 11:6). When we allow obstacles to interfere, we are displeasing God. We must trust Him if we are to advance through the stages of faith.

B. The key to faith is focus. Where we focus our attention determines our level of trust in God.

IV. The Stages of Faith

A. Little Faith. This is restless faith that says, "I think He can, but I'm not certain."

Little faith is unsure and struggles to believe.

1. While the sea raged outside, Jesus was fast asleep inside the boat. The disciples woke Him saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" (Matt. 8:23-27). They were focused on their circumstances rather than trusting in the Son of God who travelled with them.
2. The father who brought his epileptic son to Jesus for healing also had little faith. He cried out asking God to help with his disbelief, and his son was immediately healed (Mark 9: 17-24).

B. Great Faith. This is maturing faith that is growing, becoming stronger, and standing on the truth of the Word of God.

1. David displayed great faith when he fought Goliath. His focus was on God, not the size of his opponent (1 Sam. 17:26).
2. The centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant knew He was a man under authority who could do whatever God desired simply with a word (Matt. 8:5-10).
3. The Canaanite woman who pleaded with Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter showed persistence in prayer. Jesus tested her, saw her faith was great, and healed her child (Matt. 15:21-28).
4. A woman suffering from hemorrhages knew that touching the hem of Jesus' garment would heal her, and her faith made her well (Matt. 9:20-22). She focused on Him, not her illness or how people might judge her.

C. Perfect Faith. This is a resting faith that no longer asks God but rather trusts that He has already addressed a concern. It is built on expectation, anticipation, and joy rather than struggles and doubt.

1. Abraham showed perfect faith through his willingness to trust God and sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1-5). Abraham told his servant to wait, saying, “I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you” (v. 5). It reveals that he trusted in God to keep His word and protect the son He had promised.
2. Perfect faith will not come overnight, but we can attain it when we keep our focus on God, no matter what challenges are before us.

V. Conclusion: Is your faith a struggling one, or could you say you are at least touching the hem of the garment of great faith? If you keep your focus on God, read His Word, and approach Him in prayer with a clean heart and a willingness to surrender your life to Him, you'll soon be walking in perfect faith.