

The Life of Faith

Advance in Faith – Level 1 – Unit 5
February 4th to March 18th

Week 3 Faith Builders and Busters



Introduction

Quick Review: What we have established so far...

- Faith is more than simply beneficial to the life of the believer. Faith is essential (Heb. 11:6).
- The goal of faith is life. Faith is the means, but life is the end. Faith, when appropriately directed, leads to life abundant and life eternal.
- Faith is by definition a *“reasonable and relational trust in God and submission to God based on a confidence in both the integrity and consistency of God’s character”*.
- Faith has God as its object and Jesus Christ his Son as its ultimate critical focal point (Hebrews 12:1-3).
- Faith is NOT an immunisation against the realities of life and human experience.
- Faith is NOT a “mechanism” with which we leverage God in order to get things from him.
- Faith, although the opposite of fear and doubt, is NOT characterised by the absence of fear and doubt.
- The key to building strong faith is to know God more fully, a life-long process that requires both revelation from God and personal relationship with God.

The purpose of this session is:

- *To identify the things that build faith as well as those things that undermine faith and encourage believers to actively develop faith-building habits*

1. Faith Builders

Romans 4:20

“Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God”.

It is possible for faith to develop i.e. to grow stronger and deeper. When it does, God is glorified. What causes faith to grow?

1. Receiving the Gospel:

- **Romans 10:17 (NLT)**

“So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.

Embracing the Gospel is the beginning point of faith formation. It is hearing and receiving the message about the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus that awakens the first faith response in us.

However, the Gospel continues to be the catalyst for ongoing faith development in our spiritual journey and maturity in the faith can be understood as the extent to which the received Gospel has reshaped our beliefs and behaviours.

2. Receiving the Word of God:

- **Matthew 13:23 (NLT)**

“The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

God’s word is a revelation of both his will and his way and provides us with essential insight into what God is doing in the world (His will) and how he is doing it (His way). Receiving God’s word into the heart is like receiving seed into soil (Matthew 13:18-23). The seed itself has the intrinsic power to produce life and bear fruit (faith) but whether or not it does depend on the “quality” (receptivity) of the soil.

3. Christ-centred spiritual formation:

- **Colossians 2:7 (NLT)**

“Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness”.

As the focal point of our faith and the primary revelation of God, the person of Jesus Christ and our connection to him should always be at the centre of our faith formation. It is all too easy to make the faith life about something other than Him i.e. “purpose” or “mission” or “spiritual warfare” or some other incidental aspect of the faith journey.

4. Righteous Reminders:

- **Philippians 3:1 (NLT)**

“Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith”.

- **2 Peter 1:12**

“Therefore, I will always remind you about these things, even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live”.

These righteous reminders can come via the reading of scripture, a prompting from the Holy Spirit, a message from a Bible teacher or a private conversation with a friend. Revisiting and reconnecting with established truth helps to build strong faith.

5. Righteous Relationships:

- **1 Thessalonians 3:2**

“...and we sent Timothy to visit you. He is our brother and God’s co-worker in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith...”

- **Jude 1:20**

“But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit”.

One of the most effective builders of faith is the network of people that you gather around you. By opening your heart and life to the input of others who are strong in faith you develop your own.

6. Righteous Rebuke:

- **Titus 1:12-13**

“... reprimand them sternly to make them strong in the faith”.

Discipline of any kind is always difficult to embrace but in the end it produces good fruit. Godly reprimand is an expression of love and while it always hurts it never harms (See Hebrews 12:1-10).

7. Righteous Confession:

- **2 Corinthians 4:13-14**

“So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you. But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.” We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you”.

Faith finds its expression in both word and deed, but confession plays a particularly important role in establishing faith. Aligning the words you speak with the words God speaks is essential to strengthening your conviction about the goodness, greatness and rightness of God.

1. Faith Busters

In the same way that faith can be deliberately built up it can also be intentionally broken down. What undermines faith?

1. The Seduction of Materialism:

- **1 Timothy 6:10+17**

“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows... Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy”.

The gravitational pull of consumer-based pleasures and luxuries can lure the heart away from a life of intimacy with God and dependency upon God. The dual deceptions of perceived self-sufficiency and the power of wealth can lull the human heart into a false sense of security and ultimately undermine complete trust in God.

2. The Distraction of Contention:

- **1 Timothy 1:4**

“Don’t let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations, which don’t help people live a life of faith in God”.

Pointless arguments over inconsequential matters of theology and spirituality distract people from the weightier matters of the faith life. They also have the potential to undermine the faith of others and create confusion, particularly in those whose newness to the faith leaves them vulnerable.

3. False Teaching:

- **Romans 16:17**

“And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people’s faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them”.

- **2 Timothy 2:18**

“They have left the path of truth, claiming that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; in this way, they have turned some people away from the faith”.

One of Paul’s constant struggles in ministry was the plethora of false teachings that emerged during his lifetime. “Alternative” Gospels that sought to put people back under a system of legalistic relationship with God or that questioned the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ were a constant threat to the faith of the early disciples.

4. Satanic resistance:

- **Ephesians 6:16**

“In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil”.

- **1 Thessalonians 3:5**

“That is why, when I could bear it no longer, I sent Timothy to find out whether your faith was still strong. I was afraid that the tempter had gotten the best of you and that our work had been useless”.

Paul reminds us in Ephesians Ch. 6 that we are engaged in a very real conflict of spiritual dimensions and eternal proportions. The enemy of our souls is out to “rob, kill and destroy” and the ultimate target of his attacks is our faith in God.

5. Sinful rebellion:

- **1 Timothy 1:19**

“Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked”.

Wilful disobedience towards God weakens our faith in him as it is the ultimate expression of autonomy and selfishness.

6. Fear and Doubt:

- **Matthew 18:23-27**

“Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” Jesus responded, “Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!””

The fear and doubt produced by overwhelming circumstances often challenges our ability to trust God. When life’s imperfections and inconsistencies are thrust upon us, we can quickly find ourselves feeling threatened and unable to confidently trust God.

“When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer.” – Corrie Ten Boom

Conclusion:

In summary: faith can be deliberately developed through the cultivation of godly habits that both facilitate our discovery of God’s character and reinforce our dependency on God’s provision. Likewise, the awareness and avoidance of things that undermine our trust in God can help to develop deep, resilient and enduring faith in Him.

Group Discussion:

1. Which of the “faith busters” have you struggled with the most in recent times? In what way did it undermine your faith and how did you go about addressing it?
2. Which of the “faith builders” stood out for you during the teaching session? Why do you think it got your attention? Could God be prompting you to take action on it?
3. What habits have you already built into your daily routines that help you build faith and strengthen your dependency on God?

Memory Verse:

Romans 4:20

“Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God”.