

CHAPTER TEN

HOW TO GROW AND DEVELOP YOUR FAITH

A. FAITH IS VERY IMPORTANT

Faith is one of the most important things for a new believer to understand and develop. Faith is often the subject of great misunderstanding. To some people faith seems very ambiguous. Perhaps you've had questions about faith. Maybe you've heard phrases like, "blind faith," "a leap of faith," or "keep the faith." What is faith? Is it blind? Is it a leap? Can we keep it? Have you ever found yourself saying, "I wish I had more faith"? In this chapter we will look at the subject of faith and learn how to develop our faith.

1. Living by faith

a. Romans 1:17

What are the just (believers) to live by? _____

b. 2 Corinthians 5:7

We walk by _____, not by _____

God's Word is full of promises for the believer. To live by faith is simply to take God at His Word. When you believe God and His Word regardless of, and in spite of, what you can see, feel, taste, smell or touch, you are walking by faith.

B. WHAT IS FAITH?

1. Hebrews 11:1

Faith is _____

The Amplified Bible helps us see more clearly what this verse is saying about faith. Now **faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].**

FAITH: In a nutshell, faith is simply taking God at His Word. Faith is convinced that God's Word works even before we see any physical evidence of it. Faith is a knowing. Faith is not a mental or emotional feeling, although, at times, your mind and emotions may *feel* full of

faith. At other times, your mind and emotions may *feel* empty. Faith is not a feeling. Faith banks on the facts of God's Word regardless of feelings. Faith stems out of our spirit, or heart — it is a spiritual force. When the pressure is on, mental *faith* or emotional *faith* will not be able to stand. True heart faith will not be shaken when tested; it will stand firm on what it knows to be true. True faith is assured of God's Word and God's faithfulness to perform His Word.

C. WE RECEIVE THINGS FROM GOD BY FAITH

Have you ever noticed that everything God promises us in His Word must be received by faith? We don't obtain anything from God by our good works, our sacrifice, our devoted life, our Christian service, or even by crying or begging God. The way we receive anything from God is by faith; that is, believing what God said in His Word and acting like we believe it. Let's look at a few of the things we can receive from God by faith.

1. Ephesians 2:8

Through faith we are _____

2. Matthew 9:21,22,27-29

Our faith can make us _____

3. James 5:15

The prayer of faith will _____

4. James 1:5-8

By asking in faith, we shall receive _____

What will we receive if we don't have faith? (v. 7.) _____

5. Hebrews 11:6

What must we have to please God? _____

God is not a big ogre Who is sitting in heaven with His arms crossed, shaking His head, wondering why we aren't pleasing Him with more faith. No, the reason that it is impossible to please God without faith is that God knows the only way for His children to receive His blessings is by faith, and God is pleased when His children receive and walk in His blessings. When we have faith, we receive God's blessings, and when we are blessed, God is pleased!

If we have faith in God and diligently seek Him, what will we receive? _____

6. Mark 9:23

What is possible to those who believe (to those who have faith)? _____

D. OUR FAITH CAN GROW

Have you ever prayed for more faith? What happened? Faith doesn't come by praying for it. If you did pray for more faith, perhaps the only thing you noticed was there was an increased hunger in your heart for God's Word — because faith comes and faith grows only as we read, hear and meditate on God's Word.

Romans 10:17

How does faith come? How do we get more faith? _____

Faith Grows: Faith comes to us from God's Word. We cannot have real faith, the God-kind of faith, separate from His Word. God and His Word are one. To believe in God, we must believe what He has said in His Word. The more of God's Word that we hear, study and meditate upon, the more our faith can grow. Our faith development is in direct relationship to the amount of God's Word we have hidden in our heart. True faith is a knowing kind of faith. In other words, we aren't hoping God's Word works, nor are we wondering when or if it will work. When we have faith in God and His Word, we absolutely know with certainty that God's Word works! When we hear and meditate on God's Word over and over, we are convinced in our heart of God's Word. At this point, we move from the realm of hoping to the realm of knowing. *Knowing faith* is the kind of faith necessary to receive from God.

E. RELEASING OUR FAITH AND RECEIVING FROM GOD

Perhaps the greatest area of confusion and frustration concerning faith is, *How does it work?* We know what God has promised us, but how do we receive it in "real" life? Maybe you've heard people, or perhaps you, yourself, have said, "I believed God for something by faith, and it didn't work." Does God's Word work or not? Is faith just a theory, or can we experience the reality of faith in everyday life? How do we release our faith and receive from God in practical, everyday life?

One of the main keys to releasing our faith and receiving from God is that our asking and our believing must line up and be in agreement with God's Word, His will and His character. For example, a believer can find Scripture to stand on for just about anything (both good and bad) if it is taken out of context. The things that a believer asks and believes God for have

to be consistent with God's character and His Word.

For instance, God would not grant a request from one believer that would cause ill will to another person. Why? Because God's character is love.

God would not grant a believer's request for prosperity that stemmed out of pride, covetousness or selfishness. Why? Because God opposes the proud, and His nature is selflessness.

God would respond to a believer's faith in the areas of healing. Why? Because His nature is to give good and perfect gifts to His children. Healing is good!

God would respond to a believer's faith in the area of prosperity that stemmed out of a content and willing-to-give heart. Why? Because God wants believers to be blessed with material things for their own enjoyment, and so they can bless others with liberal gifts.

Another secret may be in understanding that exercising our faith is a two-part equation. Just like one nickel plus another nickel equals ten cents, so, too, faith is the sum of two parts. The two halves that equal faith are **believing** and **confessing**; that is, believing God's Word in our heart and confessing (or saying) God's Word with our mouth.

BELIEVING WITH HEART + CONFESSING WITH MOUTH = FAITH

Let's look at the components of faith in the following Scriptures. Pay particular attention to the connection between **believing** and **confessing**.

1. 2 Corinthians 4:13

I _____ and therefore _____

We _____ and therefore _____

2. Romans 10:8,9

The word of faith we preach says if we _____
the Lord Jesus, and _____ that God raised Him
from the dead, we will be saved.

3. Mark 11:22,23

To have faith in God, or as some translations read, to have the faith of God or the God-kind of faith, we need to believe in our heart and confess with our mouth.

What are we to believe? _____

Where are we to believe and not doubt? _____

According to verse 23, what will we have? _____

4. Matthew 12:34

Out of the abundance of the _____, the _____

It is important that what we believe in our heart is in line with God's Word, because inevitably what is in our heart will come out our mouth. If God's Word fills our heart and mouth, then our faith will produce good, godly things. If negative things fill our heart and our mouth, then our faith will produce bad, ungodly things.

Perhaps you wonder, *What do I do if I feel weak in faith? What should I do to strengthen my faith?* The answer begins with this: Take time *daily* to read, hear and meditate on God's Word. As you do, His Word will fill your heart. As God's Word fills your heart, your mouth will automatically confess that which is in your heart in abundance. God's Word will fill your mouth as well as your heart, and you will find yourself living by faith and receiving God's blessings in your life. Remember the equation,

$$\text{Believing with heart} + \text{Confessing with mouth} = \text{Faith}$$

F. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Make it your goal to live by faith: to walk by faith and not by sight. Live a life of *faith adventures*. Begin now to believe God and His Word for something you need or desire in your Christian life. Start by believing God for something *small*. As you grow in faith, you can believe God for *bigger* things. Here are some steps that will be helpful as you get started on the adventure of living by faith.

1. Identify a need or a desire in your life.

Remember, this need or desire must be compatible with what we know about God's will and His character, as revealed in His Word.

2. Search the Scriptures to find promises from God that cover your need or desire.

3. Ask yourself this important question: "Do I believe in my heart that these Scriptures are for me?"

a. If you can answer "yes," then move on to step #4.

- b. If your answer is "no," or "I'm not sure," then go back over the Scriptures and read them and meditate on them until the *light bulb* goes off in your heart and you can say "yes" to step #2.
4. According to 1 John 5:14,15 and Mark 11:24 and in accordance with the Scriptures you have found that cover your case, ask God for your need or your heart's desire.
5. Believe God heard you and believe you have now received the petitions you desired.
6. Thank God that He heard you; and from this moment, thank Him for the answer.
7. Let your mouth agree with what you believe in your heart. Hold fast to your confession of faith until the answer to your faith is manifested.
8. Don't put time limits on your request. Trust God for the perfect timing. You stay strong in faith rejoicing until your answer is manifested. At times this may require faith and patience. For encouragement look up Hebrews 10:23 and Hebrews 6:15.

G. GROUP EXERCISE

There are many good books on the subject of faith. It would be a good group exercise for each person in the group to read several books on this important subject of faith.

Some suggestions would be books by Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Hagin, Jr., Kenneth Copeland, Smith Wigglesworth, Charles Capps, John Osteen, Fred Price, Lester Sumrall and Oral Roberts.