The Stages of Our Faith

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 11:1-3, 6 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Genesis 22:1-5 | 1 Samuel 17

SUMMARY
Throughout Scripture, it has been made evident that God honors faith.

Our wholehearted belief in the Lord is important because, when we truly place our trust in Him, the Savior is glorified. Our Father wants us to always have confidence that He will fulfill His promises to us. He also wants us to completely rely upon Him, regardless of the situation or circumstance. This is because every aspect of our lives is affected by the strength and vitality of our faith.

SERMON POINTS

Why We Struggle With Our Faith.

Unfortunately, we often face many obstacles to our faith. As we encounter situations that cause us to question God’s involvement in our lives, our trust in Him can waver. What are some of the hindrances we experience? They include:

- **Human Reason.** At times, the Lord may command us to do something that appears absolutely unreasonable. His instruction defies logic from our point of view. However, we will miss His best blessings if we fail to do what He asks. Remember, God does not require us to understand His will, just obey it, even if it seems unreasonable.

- **Living by Sight.** It is said that seeing is believing; however, the Lord usually doesn’t give us visual evidence of His activity. We must trust Him even when we don’t see Him working.

- **Surrendering to Our Feelings.** There are times when we reach the limit of our emotions. Feelings of insecurity or inadequacy paralyze us and stop us from proceeding. But God wants us to push through those emotions and trust Him.

- **Negative Counsel From Others.** It is normal for us to seek advice from our loved ones, but they may not recognize what the Lord is accomplishing in and through us. Therefore, God’s instructions must always trump their opinions. We must obey Him regardless of what others may say.

- **Feelings of Guilt.** Our regret of past sins may also impede us from fully trusting the Lord. Believing ourselves unworthy of His love, we doubt His favor and His promise to work supernaturally in our lives. But we must always remember the Father forgives us on the basis of Christ’s shed blood on the cross, not by our own merit.

- **Neglecting the Word of God.** Daily meditation upon Scripture is absolutely vital to our faith. The Word is the fuel of our trust in the Father because it reminds us of how He’s helped others in the past. If we neglect to read the Word, our confidence in the Lord will surely falter.

- **Continuing in Sin.** When we insist on holding on to sinful habits and behaviors, we lose the ability to believe God for all He wants to do in our lives. This is because sin short-circuits our faith and distracts us from our relationship with the Father.

- **Satan’s Tactics.** The enemy will do whatever he can to thwart our devotion to the Lord—always suggesting God will not do as He has promised. Never believe the devil’s lies.

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We cannot allow unbelief to drive us away from the Lord. Instead, we must focus on His unfailing character, taking Hebrews 11:6 to heart: “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to
God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” When we do so, we can move through the stages of faith, which are:

**Little or restless faith.** The person with little faith says, “I think the Lord can do as He says, but I’m not certain He will.” He or she struggles to believe in God’s promises.

The disciples displayed this weak confidence in the Lord in Matthew 8:23-27. Jesus slept while a great storm arose on the Sea of Galilee. Overcome with fear because of the thrashing winds and the waves pouring over the side of the boat, the disciples woke Him saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!” (v. 25). He responded, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” (v. 26).

Their focus was on what they were seeing and feeling instead of the fact that the Son of God was with them. The same can happen to us. If we center our attention on our difficulties rather than the Lord, it doesn’t take much to sink us. The only way for us to have peace in life is to focus on the Father.

**Great or maturing faith.** The person with great faith trusts the Word of God and relies on the unfailing character of the Lord. He or she says, “Not only do I know the Father can help me, I am sure He will.”

David showed this deep reliance upon the Lord when he fought Goliath (1 Sam. 17). So did the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment and was healed (Matt. 9:20-22). They had great faith and could trust God’s timing and provision, regardless of how their circumstances appeared.

This was also the testimony of the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant (Matt. 8:5-10). He recognized the authority Jesus had as the Son of God and said, “Just say the word, and my servant will be healed” (v. 8). Jesus replied, “ Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel” (v. 10).

**Perfect or resting faith.** People with perfect faith say, “God has promised me, so I trust what He has said is already accomplished.” They no longer ask the Lord for the desires of their hearts. Instead, they thank Him that His perfect provision is already fulfilled—whether they presently see it or not.

One of the best examples of perfect faith in Scripture is Abraham (Gen. 22:1-5). When he and his wife Sarah were well beyond child-bearing age, God miraculously provided them with their son Isaac. But then the Lord asked something very difficult—“Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and offer him there as a burnt offering” (v. 2). Abraham willingly complied, assured that the Lord would keep His promise to provide many descendants through Isaac. He did not know how God would do so, but Abraham absolutely trusted He would—and the Lord spared Isaac.

**RESPONSE**

How strong is your faith? Perhaps you trust that God can help you, but do you truly believe that He will? Do you need to see evidence of His activity in your situation in order to rely upon Him? Or do you trust that His promises to you are already fulfilled regardless of what you see and feel?

Perfect faith is the Father’s goal for each of His children, but it does not occur overnight. You must read God’s Word, make sure your heart is clean, and surrender your life to Him completely—trusting that He has the most wonderful plan for your life. Are you willing? Remember, God will honor your faith and give you life at its very best. Therefore, thank the Lord in every circumstance and praise Him that His promises are already accomplished. This is the surest way to have your faith perfected.

**What stage of faith are you currently experiencing?**

What might you do to strengthen your faith?

**Does your behavior positively reflect the Lord and His goodness?** Do you exhibit faith in a way that shows God’s sovereignty in your life?

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