

## LESSON 8

### FAITH

Faith is essential in a Christian's life. The Bible says "... *without faith it is impossible to please God ...*". [1] Faith is a force that we can release and increase in our lives. Faith is like the petrol we use to run our cars. Petrol explodes inside the engine and it is the force which causes the car to move. Without petrol a car will not go. Without faith we will be stuck motionless in our spiritual life. And just as the petrol must be ignited by turning the engine on, so we must switch faith on in order to release spiritual power. In other words, we have to *have* faith and we have to *use* faith.

This study will explain a number of important things about faith including what faith is, what faith does, how to build faith, how to exercise faith and the two dimensions of faith.

#### **What is faith?**

The Bible defines faith in the following way:

***"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."*** [2]

Faith takes hold of things available in the spiritual realm and brings them into reality in the natural realm. Faith is not wishful thinking, it is not just a desire that things might change. Faith is absolute confidence that what is not presently seen, will be seen.

The Bible gives an account of a man by the name of Abraham, who is described as the father of faith.[3] He lived around 4,000 years ago and one particular event in his life teaches us a lot about faith. Hebrews 11: 11-12 summarises this lesson:

*“By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.”*

When he was a relatively younger man, God had promised to Abraham that he would have son and that through this son would come *“descendants as numerous as the stars”*.<sup>[4]</sup> But years went by and still Abraham’s wife, whose name was Sarah, remained barren. It got to the point that they were both past the age of child-bearing. Despite the impossibility of them now ever having a child, however, Abraham believed the promise of God. When Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was 90, God informed Abraham through an angel that a son would be born in one year’s time. It doesn’t take too much imagination to realise the faith Abraham had to exercise, some three months later, in order to get this result! Through faith Abraham overcame all the obstacles in the natural. He reached over into the spiritual, took hold of the promise of God and acted accordingly.

The faith that Abraham exercised rested on the certainty of the promise of God. Faith is built upon the foundation of the word of God. Faith is not ‘blind’. Faith sees a higher law at work than natural law. Faith recognises the goodness and truthfulness of God and believes that what he has said, despite all the evidence to the contrary, will come to pass.

### **What does faith do?**

Faith gets the attention of God and causes him to act. It is the conduit through which flows the power of God. An event in the life of Jesus demonstrates the result of faith:

*“A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.*

*When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, “If I just touched his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.*

*At once Jesus realised that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”*

*“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.*

*Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”*

Mark 5:24-34

There are a number of important principles of faith revealed in this passage:

- The woman's faith rested upon the knowledge of the goodness of God. She recognised God did not want her to remain ill. She had spent all her money and exhausted all possibility in the natural of being healed. Despite many years of suffering she was not resigned to her 'fate', or that it was God's 'will' that she should suffer. She knew God's great love and power, and saw it revealed in Jesus.
- The woman identified the source of her healing, Jesus Christ. She *had* faith that Jesus would heal her when she touched him.
- The woman *released* her faith in her action of touching the clothes worn by Jesus. There was a moment in time when she understood that God would answer her deepest need.
- Power flowed from Jesus. Jesus did not pray for this woman's healing. He wasn't even sure who it was that touched him by faith. He felt power go through him, but he didn't know who it was directed to. Note that a large crowd was pressing in all around Jesus. Many would have been sick, but only one person used faith to be healed. Her faith got the attention of God and caused him to release healing power through Jesus. This power was tangible and real. It overcame the realities of the natural world and reordered them. The woman felt this power, her bleeding immediately stopped, and she knew she was well in her body.
- It was faith that produced the result. Jesus said so. God's promise was available but it had to be acted upon. Faith reached out and took hold of the promise in the spiritual realm, and brought it into reality in the natural realm.

### How to build faith

Faith is like a muscle. As it is exercised it becomes stronger. This principle is demonstrated in the life of David. When faced with the challenge to go and fight Goliath, David said to King Saul in order to get his permission:

*"...Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."*

1 Samuel 17:34-37

David killed the lion and the bear before he faced Goliath. He was required to fight and overcome foes that grew larger. A bear is a much bigger creature than a lion, and Goliath was that much bigger again than a bear. David had seen the supernatural power of God at work in his life as he exercised faith. It wasn't by his own strength that he had overcome, but by the power of God which was released as he acted in faith. (David had earlier been anointed with oil by the Prophet Samuel as the future king to replace Saul. At that point in time, the Holy Spirit had come upon him in power.)

Some Christians go through life not using faith at all and then when some major trial comes upon them they do not have the knowledge of how to use faith to overcome it. It is important that you use faith in the 'small' things, so that you will know how to use faith for the 'big' things.

This principle of faith is also revealed in a lesson that Jesus taught his disciples:

*“The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it..*

*In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”*

*“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.””*

Mark 11:12-14, 20-24

If you can conquer the ‘fig tree’ then you will be able to conquer the ‘mountain’.

### **How to exercise faith**

Every person in the world uses faith. Separated from God, however, they use that ability primarily in its negative form, which is *fear*.

People fear that certain things will happen, and what they believe comes to pass! People fear sickness, lack, destruction, separation, evil etc. and these things happen to them. However, as Christians, God wants us to trust him and believe in his promises of health, provision, blessing, a long-life, peace, security, joy etc. We need to

bring our fears out in the open and confess them as sin. Fear is a denial of the goodness of God. When we fear we are saying to God that we do not trust him. The result is that we fall into the devil's trap. We must overcome our fears and their consequences by putting our faith in God, trusting in his promises and reaching out to him for the fulfilment of those promises in our lives.

The key to exercising faith is found in another event in the life of Jesus:

*"... Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side ... (and) ... he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.*

*During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*

*"Lord, if it is you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you upon the water." "Come," he said.*

*Then Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.*

*"You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt? And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down."*

## Matthew 14: 22-32

This passage reveals the following principles on the exercise or release of faith:

- Faith arises from the word of God. Romans 10:17 says “...*faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*” Jesus said one simple word to Peter, “*Come*”. Peter’s faith was built upon that single word. Faith is not presumption nor is it blind. Faith is founded upon the truthfulness of God’s word.
- Peter had to act upon that word. He could have doubted Jesus and never stepped out of the boat. But Peter knew Jesus. He knew Jesus never lied. Although in the natural it was impossible for a man to walk on water, yet if Jesus had said for him to come, then his authority went beyond natural laws, and the miraculous was made possible. Peter’s faith was revealed when he climbed down out of the boat and stood upon the water. He could have remained in the boat believing that God would permit him to walk on water, but never releasing faith by his action.
- The enemy of Peter’s faith was fear. He took his eyes off Jesus and looked down, thinking to himself “I must be mad. What am I doing out here? I can’t walk on water!” The minute fear displaced faith he began to sink. Fear stopped the flow of the power of God.

**The two dimensions of faith**

This study has so far explored *acts* of faith and their results. However, there is another dimension of faith that is also emphasised in the scripture and that is the *life* of faith. There is an outward working of faith, and there is an inward expression of faith.



The book of Galatians was written to correct a false teaching that had tricked the Christians in the Galatian church to leave their life of faith and trust in a life of works. They were led to believe that through their own efforts they could be made acceptable to God, and they attempted to produce a righteousness of their own accord through religious acts. But it is impossible for us to live pure lives separate from faith.

The apostle Paul wrote in this regard *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 2:20) Every moment of every day we live by faith in Jesus Christ. Our words and actions flow from the reality of the new creation, which is energised by the Spirit of God who dwells within us. Religious acts have no value. *“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”* (Galatians 5:6)

### **The power of our words**

Just as faith comes from God’s Word, faith is revealed in what comes out of our mouths, our words. The Bible teaches much about words because *“The tongue has the power of life and death ...”*. [5]

Words are an extension of our very being. They are produced out of our own hearts. Jesus said *“... For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks”*. [6] What we believe will always surface through our mouths. Consequently, our words are inextricably interlinked with the essence of who we truly are. Jesus himself is described as *“the Word”*, and he defined his own words in the following way *“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life”*. [7] The words of your mouth direct your life, whether you like it or not, or whether you believe it or not. Your words determine your

future. The fulfilment of God's destiny for you, the amount of his power that will be exercised in your life and the degree to which you will be victorious over Satan is directly related to your willingness to submit your tongue by faith to the truth as revealed by God.

Faith-filled words carry an active, creative power. Words are the agency by which God himself accomplishes his purposes:

*"And God said, "Let there be ..." and there was ..."*

Genesis 1:3

*"For the word of God is living and active."*

Hebrews 4:12

*"... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*

Isaiah 55:11

*"He sent forth his word and healed them ..."*

Psalms 107:20

Just as God ordained his own Word to be the agency of his power, so he has established this pattern also for us. Again, looking at the occasion of the withered fig-tree and the lesson Jesus taught, consider the importance Jesus places on speaking and its connection with faith:

*"... Then he **said** to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it...*

*"In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"*

*“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone **says** to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ **and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.**”*

Mark 11:14, 20-23

Another principle of faith is demonstrated in this passage with regard to words spoken out of faith. Notice, it wasn’t sufficient just for Jesus to think a certain result into being – he had to speak it out loud. And his words were the expression of faith. When he spoke, it was not immediately obvious to the disciples that what he had spoken had come to pass. The fig tree withered from the roots up, so the immediate impact occurred under the ground. It wasn’t until the following day that, with astonishment, Peter realised what Jesus had said had come to pass.

When we speak by faith, it may not be immediately obvious to our natural eyes that what we have asked in prayer and declared to be true, has occurred. It is not as is often said “What you see is what you get”. Rather, it is true that “What you say is what you get”. It is by faith that we know that God has acted on our behalf.

Jesus is described in Hebrews 3:1 as “*the Apostle of our confession*”. Our confession must line up with his will and purposes. The Greek word translated “confession” is *homologia* which is a compound word made up of *homou* which means “the same” and *logos* which means “word, speech, talk”. Therefore, when our words line up with God’s Word, he has committed himself to act upon our words. Of course, he will not respond to fleshy, self-seeking motives. Nevertheless, when our words line up with his will as revealed in his Word, in humility

trusting in the promises of God and with right motive. God watches over his Word to perform it.<sup>[8]</sup>

Note that the Word of God can be made ineffective through unbelief, which is inactive faith because of ignorance; or disbelief, which is willful refusal to believe, choosing instead to be skeptical. Under these circumstances, we will not speak faith-filled words in line with the truth, but rather we will essentially be believing the lies of the devil rather than truth, speaking contrary to the Bible and experiencing the consequences.

Just reciting the Word without faith is also an error. This involves what James calls “*selfish ambition*”.<sup>[9]</sup> It is a form of witchcraft and an attempt to manipulate God, in order to receive things from God on the basis of wrong motives.

### **The power of attorney**

Jesus has given us the power of attorney. That is, we are commissioned by Jesus to speak and act on his behalf. Our words carry the same authority as if spoken by Jesus Christ himself. Jesus laboured this point:

*“And I will do whatever you ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.”*

John 14:13

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing...If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask (Greek “aiteo”) whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”*

John 15:5, 7

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit– fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name.”*

John 15:16

*“In that day you will no longer ask (Greek “erotao”) me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name.”*

John 16:23

*“In that day you will ask (Greek “aiteo”) in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”*

John 16:26-27

The Greek word translated “ask” is *aiteo* which means “*strictly a demand for something due*”. [10] This compares with *erotao* which “*properly means a request as a favor*”. [11] In other words, we are not asking in a worldly kind of hope that maybe God will hear us and maybe he will grant us a favour. Rather we are asking with absolute confidence and we are fully expectant that we will receive the answer to our request. That is faith!

The Great Commission clearly expresses the granting of the power of attorney:

*“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation... And these signs will accompany those who believe: **In my name** they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will*

*not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”*

Mark 16:15-18

We are authorized to speak and act ‘in his name’. On his behalf, we declare the gospel and overcome the works of Satan, performing the signs which accompany and confirm the gospel.

### **Authority over Satan**

Victory over Satan is achieved by submitting to God’s Word which is the truth and rejecting Satan’s lies. The battle is fought by the means of words. James 4:7 says *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* How we submit to God is by taking his Word as truth and obeying it. How we resist the devil is by rejecting his lies and saying no to temptation.

Jesus overcame Satan’s temptation by quoting scripture – *“It is written ...”* he stated each and every time he was tempted. He lined up his own words, and submitted himself, with what the scriptures said:

*“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”*

*Jesus answered, “**It is written:** ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*

*Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For **it is written**:*

*"He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."*

*Jesus answered him, "**It is also written**: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

*Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For **it is written**: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

*Then the devil left him..."*

Matthew 4:1-11

There is a direct relationship between the value we place on the Word of God and our commitment to line up our own words with God's Word, and the authority we are able to exercise over Satan. In order to experience victory over Satan we must speak the truth. Revelation 12:11 says *"They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony ..."* Our fight against Satan will be won or lost according to our confession. Just as Jesus responded to each of Satan's temptations with *"It is written ..."*, when thoughts of fear, lust, doubt, jealousy etc come, we should respond *"It is written ..."*:

- No weapon formed against me will prosper, and I will refute every tongue that accuses me. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is my vindication from God (Isaiah 54:17).
- I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1John 5:18).
- I am more than a conqueror through him who loved me (Romans 8:37).
- I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2Timothy 1:7).
- Neither demons nor any powers can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:36-39).
- I have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1:13).
- I am seated with Christ in the heavenly places far above all rule, authority, power and dominion (Ephesians 1:20-21; 2:6).
- I am always led in triumphant procession in Christ (2Corinthians 2:14).
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).
- I am in Christ and I believe, therefore, the incomparably great power of God is available to me (Ephesians 1:13, 19).
- I have been given authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm me (Luke 5:18).
- I have been given authority to cast out demons (Luke 9:1, Mark 16:17).
- The weapons I possess are not the weapons of this world. They have divine power to demolish strongholds (2Corinthians 10:4).
- I overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony (Revelation 12:11).
- I have renounced secret and shameful ways (2Corinthians 4:2).
- I have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Colossians 2:10).
- I resist the devil and he must flee from me (James 4:7).



**Conclusion**

Faith is the key that will unlock the power and authority of God in your life. Confront your fears with the Word of God. Let faith be built in your heart as you put your trust in him and his Word. Act and speak on the firm foundation of God's Word. Use faith, and see the reality of God's love and power demonstrated in and through your life.

---

**Lesson 8 Footnotes**

[1] Hebrews 11:6

[2] Hebrews 11:1

[3] Romans 4:11-16

[4] Genesis 22:17

[5] Proverbs 18:21

[6] Matthew 12:34

[7] John 1:1, 6:63

[8] Jeremiah 1:12

[9] James 3:14 – 4: 3

[10] Strong's Greek dictionary

[11] Strong's Greek dictionary