

Bible Study on Faith

I wrote this article to encourage Christians everywhere to live out their beliefs. It will be helpful to people who want to lead a Bible study on faith with their different groups and to others who are simply curious about what the Bible says about faith.

Please enjoy this article; I pray that it assists you in your walk with Him!

What is faith according to the Bible?

The Bible defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). To put it another way, faith is a dynamic energy that gives the substance of our hopes and offers up-to-date proof of things we cannot see.

Faith takes what you see in the unseen and forces it into natural reality.

When we heard the entire narrative of Jesus, it was the ideal illustration of this. His birth, life, death, and resurrection were all recounted to us. And once He came and died for us, we learned what He is calling us to accomplish. Faith blossomed in our hearts as we listened to this amazing tale, and we made the decision to obey God. We made the decision to turn from our sins, accept the Holy Spirit, and be baptized. And the moment we did was the moment we received salvation from our sin and we became born again. Now we can spend eternity with Him and fulfill His will upon this earth and in the one to come. Praise God! And none of this would have happened if we didn't have faith. Remember, that faith takes what is in the spiritual being and brings it into the natural by simply trusting God's word.

How do we receive faith

Believe it or not, the secret to developing faith is surprisingly simple - it all comes down to exposure. Whether you hear about it or read about it, the more you engage with the subject, the stronger your faith will become. As the Bible wisely states, "faith comes from hearing,

and hearing through the word of God." So, if you're looking to deepen your beliefs, the key is to immerse yourself in the message. It's an effortless yet powerful way to cultivate a genuine, unwavering faith.

To have faith in God, we must immerse ourselves in His divine teachings. Likewise, to have faith in worldly pursuits, such as investments, philosophy, or science, we must listen to and heed the words of those who offer guidance in these realms.

When we place our trust in earthly advice, we are, in God's eyes, denying our faith in Him. All lack of belief in the divine is, in essence, a belief in something other than God. The more we lend our ears to the world's wisdom, the more our faith in God will diminish, and our faith in the material will grow.

Believe in God's word, and your faith will flourish. But if you indulge in worldly views and entertainment, your belief in God will diminish. To truly receive faith from God, you must prioritize His teachings over the opinions and distractions of this world. Focusing on God's wisdom will strengthen your faith while being overly concerned with earthly matters will hinder your spiritual growth. The choice is yours - embrace God's word and let your faith blossom or get caught up in the world and watch your belief fade away. To develop faith in God, you need to prioritize God's views, thoughts, teachings, and joy over everything else in the world. The best way to achieve this is by reading, listening to, and engaging with the word of God regularly. Expecting to strengthen your faith by only spending two minutes a day reading the Bible while filling the rest of your day with unhelpful content will not work. You must actively choose to read the Bible consistently and apply its teachings in your life.

How to grow in faith

We have already examined Romans 10:17, which tells us that faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes from the word of God. Therefore, we understand how faith is formed. However, as we see in passages like Mark 4, Matthew 13, and Luke 8, for our faith to be effective and produce results, it must undergo a process. The process that Jesus talked about in these passages is known as "the parable of the sower." In simple terms, the story is about a man who went to plant seeds in his field, and as he did, the seeds landed on four different types of soil.

The first type is the wayside or the path. When the seed fell on the ground, birds quickly came and ate it.

The second type is the rocky ground that has little soil. The seed grew fast, but when the sun came up, the plant withered and died.

The third type of ground was filled with thorns. When the seed was planted there, it grew alongside the thorns, which ended up choking it.

The fourth type of ground had rich soil. When the seed was sown in this soil, it thrived and produced a lot of fruit. This process can happen all at once or in separate steps, but it is necessary for growth. Before explaining these steps, it's important to outline some key principles that Jesus taught in this lesson. Without these principles, the steps would be hard to understand.

Principle #1: The word of God acts like a seed (Mark 4:14). It is an unchanging seed (1 Peter 1:23). This means that if the word of God does not build faith in our lives, it is not because of the seed's quality.

Principle #2: After the seed is planted and watered, it grows on its own. The only reason it might not grow is due to the type of soil (Mark 4:5-8).

Principle #3: Our hearts are the soil. This is where the word of God is planted (Mark 4:15).

Having established these truths, let's begin.

Step 1: Listen to the Word of God

The first and most important step is to hear or read the Word of God.

Just as a farmer cannot plant seeds without going out to do so (Mark 4:14), faith comes from what we hear, and what we hear comes from the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

While this may seem obvious, it is a crucial step. If we overlook this, we will not produce any fruit, and faith will not work in our lives.

Nurture your heart by reading the Bible every day.

Step 2: Comprehend the Word of God The next step to gaining faith is to grasp the meaning of the Bible.

“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, then the evil one comes and takes away what was planted in his heart. This is the person who received the seed by the wayside.” (Matthew 13:19)

The first type of soil, or heart condition, refers to the seed that was scattered along the path. This condition symbolizes a heart that does not comprehend the message of the Bible. Jesus pointed out that “if anyone hears the word and does not understand it,” then the evil one will take it away. This is the only type of soil that prevents the word of God from growing. All other types of soil allow the word of God, or the seed of faith, to flourish in our lives. To foster faith within us, it is essential first to hear the word of God and then to understand it so that it can take root in our hearts.

Step 3: Be Stable and Secure

The third step involves having a heart that is well-prepared so that the seed can grow strong. "The person who receives the seed on rocky ground is like one who hears the word and quickly accepts it with joy; however, they have no deep roots and only last for a short time. When trouble or hardship comes because of the word, they quickly fall away." (Matthew 13:20-21)

Luke’s account also mentions temptation alongside persecution and trouble, indicating that it refers to all kinds of challenges we may face.

Having a strong foundation within ourselves is crucial for facing challenges. Jesus emphasizes in this passage that if we fail to withstand trials, our understanding of God’s word will be blocked, and our ability to grow in faith will be limited. It's important to remember that faith is built through hearing, and hearing comes from the word of God. If the word of God brings us faith, then it serves as the seed that we need to plant in our hearts. So, what does it mean to have a solid foundation within us, and how can we achieve that?

Jesus taught us how to resist temptation, challenges, and persecution just before His arrest. He found His disciples asleep instead of praying and said, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:40-41). At this moment, Jesus was only hours away from crucifixion, while His disciples chose to sleep instead of praying. As a result, the disciples eventually abandoned Jesus, and Peter even denied knowing Him three times.

Prayer is essential for deepening our hearts' soil, allowing the Word of God to take root, so we can withstand trials, no matter how tough they may be. If you want to cultivate strong faith, commit yourself to both the word of God and prayer.

Step 4: Let Go of Worldly Concerns

The fourth step is to have a heart that isn't troubled by the issues of this world.

The scripture states that someone who receives the word but is caught up in worldly concerns and the lure of wealth becomes unproductive. To nurture a strong faith, it is essential to understand that God provides for our needs. We should not worry about what we eat, drink, or wear, as these are the concerns of those who don't know God. Our heavenly Father understands our needs. Instead, we should prioritize seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness, and everything else will be given to us. For our faith to grow, we must focus on God's Kingdom and stop fretting over our everyday needs or desiring worldly possessions. This teaching comes right after Jesus discussed prayer, fasting, and giving, indicating that practicing these elements helps deepen our relationship with God. Additionally, there is a promise that when we seek His Kingdom first, all our necessities will be provided. Jesus also mentions that those who give up everything for Him and the Gospel will receive abundant blessings in this life as well as eternal life in the future. Thus, let us seek Him earnestly, desiring nothing but Him, and we will be blessed and our faith will grow, allowing us to bear much fruit.

Step 5: Be the Good Soil

To be good soil, your heart needs to be less cluttered.

Good soil represents a heart that (1) listens to the word, (2) grasps the word, (3) is rooted in love and prayer, and (4) is free from worries about worldly issues.

That's all there is to it.

By committing to listening to the word and dedicating time to prayer, we naturally cultivate faith that is powerful, much like a mustard seed.

Initially, our faith may appear small, but with a daily commitment to these practices, our faith can grow into a mighty tree, providing shelter for the birds of the air.

The Prayer of Faith (How to Release Faith)

What is the prayer of faith?

The prayer of faith is a prayer offered with conviction over any situation or challenge, particularly for physical ailments that lead to healing. Some ministries argue that the prayer of faith mentioned in James chapter 5 does not refer to physical healing, but this interpretation is incorrect. It is accurate that the prayer of faith can be prayed over any circumstance and should be, but the context in James 5 is explicit. The apostle James addresses the sick and instructs that they should be prayed for by the Church elders to receive healing.

Consider this passage:

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.” (James 5:13-15). James clearly states that a prayer offered in faith will bring healing to the sick. This is a promise from God. Through this scripture, God assures us that if a prayer of faith is made for the sick, they will be healed. This indicates a consistent success rate, making it clear that God desires this to happen every time.

Moreover, this is not merely advice; it is a directive. God commands that those who are ill should seek the elders of the church, and the elders should use oil to anoint the sick and pray in faith for their healing. If God is commanding this, it shows that healing is His will.

To claim that healing isn't God's will after reading this passage suggests a lack of understanding or a distorted perspective. Some ministries reference 1 John 5:14-15, stating, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that

we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” They might interpret these verses to imply that we can pray for healing, but only if it aligns with God's will. If someone doesn't get healed, they may conclude that it wasn't God's will in that case.

This line of thinking is troubling because it disregards the clear message in James 5:13-15 that God intends to heal. James emphasizes that the sick should call on the elders, who are commanded to pray in faith for healing, with the promise that God will heal each time faith is exercised. It strongly indicates that healing is indeed God's will. One cannot read James 5:13-15 with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and arrive at the conflicting conclusion mentioned earlier. It is not possible to claim that God heals some people and not others, as this contradicts what James discussed in James 5. It also contradicts Jesus' teachings in Mark 16:15-18, Luke 10:1-9, and Matthew 17:14-21, as well as the examples found in the book of Acts.

This way of thinking may match our own experiences and the times we have not seen the sick healed, but when did we decide to base our beliefs on our experiences? I believe that those who are righteous are meant to live by faith. I thought we were instructed to walk by faith and not by what we see. I thought the just was supposed to live by faith. I thought we were commanded to walk by faith and not by sight. It cannot be said that God heals some individuals and not others, as this goes against what James wrote in James 5. This also goes against the teachings of Jesus found in Mark 16:15-18, Luke 10:1-9, and Matthew 17:14-21, as well as the examples in the book of Acts.

This belief might align with our own experiences, especially in times when we haven't witnessed healing, but why do we choose to base our beliefs on our personal experiences? I have always thought that righteous people are meant to live by faith. I believe we are told to walk by faith and not by what we see. His persistent prayers were answered and resulted in positive growth. God listens to our prayers. While His answers may not align with our expectations in timing or manner, we can always rely on His response being in accordance with His perfect plan. Sin is one of the barriers to receiving answers to our prayers. It creates a divide between us and God. Confession helps to mend and strengthen that bond. The Greek term for confession is "exomologeō," while "hamartia" refers to sin. We can confess our sins either to God or to those we have wronged.

In 1 John 1:7-10, it states that if we live in the light as He is in the light, we have a shared connection, and the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth is not with us. If we admit our sins, God is faithful and fair to forgive and purify us from all wrongdoing. Denying our sins makes God a liar, and His word is not in us. Confessing sins should be done with great care, and we must turn away from them. Sin is harmful and brings us down. While sin cannot be erased, God offers forgiveness when we are sincere. The Roman Catholic Church views confession as a sacrament established by Christ, while Orthodox Christians see it as a means of spiritual healing. To confess our sins means to live in truth. We need to repent and align ourselves with what is right. Telling God about our wrongdoings in prayer is essential to being a Christian. When we admit our sins, He forgives and cleanses us through His sacrifice.

As representatives of Christ, we are called to bring others back to God. We all share in the ministry of reconciliation, as stated by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the task of helping others find reconciliation as well. We are ambassadors for Christ, urging people to reconnect with God. As believers, it is our God-given duty to guide others to Christ. Salvation empowers us for this mission. When someone is in Christ, they become a new creation; the old life is gone, and everything becomes new. This transformation comes from the Holy Spirit within us. All we seek in life can be found by choosing God through salvation, serving Him, and leading others to know Him. This is the Ministry of Reconciliation.

James 5:13-20 emphasizes the significance of prayer, patience, healing, and confession. It encourages specific prayers, as God prefers clarity over vague requests. While He understands our desires, He wants us to articulate them clearly. In Mark 10:51, we see an example where Jesus asked blind Bartimaeus what he wanted. The blind man replied, asking for his sight, and Jesus provided an answer focused on that exact need. Though God knows everything, His responses may not always align with our expectations. Our hopes may differ from His plans, which are aimed at our ultimate good. According to James, our goal in prayer should be to discover God's will. Prayer serves as a means to fulfill His plans on earth rather than our own wishes. This is why seeking God's guidance through prayer is crucial when we face difficulties.

Consider the case of Elijah. Initially, when he prayed, the heavens heard his call, but no rain came. This was a test of his faith. Despite the challenge, Elijah remained steadfast, trusting

that his prayer would eventually be answered. He prayed once more, and heaven responded with rain, causing the earth to produce more. He had confidence in his prayer, believing that something would happen. The book of James honestly points out that Elijah was not flawless, just like us. He was chosen by God because of his willingness and obedience to God's will. God used him to fulfill His purpose through his patience. When you pray and hope for a quick answer but don't receive one, do not lose heart. Trust the situation to God; He can do the impossible whenever He chooses. He does not always give immediate healing in response to every prayer, not because the prayer lacked faith, but because the answer is often known only to God. It is best to leave it in His care. Even the most faithful people have heard God say "no" to their prayers, yet they continue to trust Him.

Let's keep our focus on Jesus no matter the situation and let's grow in Him until we all achieve unity in faith and understanding of the Son of God, reaching maturity that reflects the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). This way, when we pray for healing, we will witness the Lord fulfill His promise to restore those who are sick.

How to pray the prayer of faith (step-by-step)

If anyone demonstrated the prayer of faith perfectly, it was Jesus. This is something we can all agree on. Thus, it is wise to consider what Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, particularly regarding the prayer of faith. "Have faith in God. Truly, I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. So I tell you, everything you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:22-24) This scripture provides a clear explanation of the prayer of faith found in the Bible. Jesus outlines the steps to pray this prayer, encouraging us to aim higher.

Step 1: Have faith in God It might seem unusual to start with this, but the reality is that we can place our faith in many things when praying. We can trust in our prayers, in our own goodness, in the length of our prayers, in the number of people who are praying, and more. However, none of these things hold God's power. It is only when we place our faith in God that we will see His power start to show.

Step 2: Speak to the mountain

The next thing Jesus tells us is that when we pray with faith, we should talk to the mountain. This means speaking to the problem, the illness, or even the body itself. Many people find this part of praying with faith difficult. They feel it is strange to address the body or the problem and command it to leave in Jesus' name. Honestly, it does seem strange to those who do not believe. But Jesus clearly stated, "whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, he will have whatever he says." This is why Jesus often told people things like, "Be healed," "Be cleansed," "Come out of him," "Peace be still," "Take up your mat and walk," and "Stretch forth your hand." The apostles followed His example. Peter told the paralyzed man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Paul spoke to the evil spirit in Acts 16:16, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." This shows that it is not only a command from Jesus but also an example from His ministry and the early church believers.

Step 3: Believe Without Doubt

"'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says." (Mark 11:23). "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." (Mark 11:24). These verses show us what it means to have faith without doubt. In verse 24, Jesus tells us to believe that we have already received what we asked for as soon as we pray with faith.

Many Christians want to have faith only after they see results. We may not say this directly, but that is what happens when we pray and then quickly look for signs in our surroundings to see if it has happened. Often, we rely on our senses to confirm that what we prayed for occurred, instead of trusting that our faith assures us it has already taken place.

It is important to grasp this message!

Jesus taught us to believe we received our requests the very moment we prayed, rather than waiting for a physical sign of receipt. This aligns with Hebrews 11:1, which describes faith. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith brings reality to what we hope for and serves as proof of what our senses cannot confirm.

Faith has the power to transform what is unseen (our hopes) into what we can experience in the physical world. In simpler terms, genuine faith recognizes the mountain moving even before it actually does. If faith is swayed by what is visible, it cannot truly be faith because it is meant to be “the evidence of things not seen.” This is why Jesus emphasized that we need to believe we received our requests the moment we prayed; otherwise, it lacks the essence of true faith.

This article aims to aid you in your journey with God.