

Name: _____

Date: _____

Christian Leadership

How to influence the ideas, opinions and actions of others for Jesus Christ.

Lesson 10: Faith of a Leader (Day One) God's Faithfulness

Your faith as a leader is based on God's faithfulness. Since God can be trusted, you are secure in placing your faith in Him. You can step out and lead because of His faithfulness.

For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.⁵ The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.^{NIV} Psalm 33:4-5

Read Psalm 33:4-5 and answer questions: 1-3:

1. For the _____ of the LORD is _____ and _____

2. In what areas of the world and in your life personally, is God faithful? _____

The Hebrew word emunah, (אֱמוּנָה) that we translate faithfulness in Psalm 33 means firmness, steadfastness, fidelity.¹ It means that God is constant, strong and sure. He is loyal, unchanging and consistent. He is trustworthy, dependable and reliable.

3. Think deeply (meditate) on God's faithfulness described in the above paragraphs. How does this part of God's character help you to trust Him? _____

We are placing our faith in a God who is totally trustworthy at all times. Therefore we are secure in our faith because God is faithful. We can trust God because He is dependable, reliable, unchanging and true with us and with all people. Plus God's faithfulness is grounded in His righteousness, justice and unfailing love.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.^{NIV} Psalm 145:13

4. Read Psalm 145:13. The LORD is faithful to _____ His _____

¹ BibleWorks 6

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God can be trusted to keep all of His promises. What He says, He will do. God's promises basically tell us what He will or will not do where we are concerned. They declare how we are affected by the past, the present and the future. The Bible contains God's promises to mankind.

In many translations of the Old Testament, God's word is translated as promise because His word is true; it is a promise. "The Old Testament did not use a specific Hebrew word for promise. It used quite ordinary words to encapsulate (sum up) the pivotal (key) promise of God: speak, say, swear."²

Man's word is not always a promise. That is, you or I may say we are going to do something and then forget about it or just plain not do it. You have heard children say, "Yes I will clean my room, I promise!" They are saying, "not only am I telling you that I will clean my room, I really will do it."

Read Joshua 21:45 in the NIV and NKJ versions below:

Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.
^{NIV} Joshua 21:45

Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass. ^{NKJ} Joshua 21:45

5. According to both translations of Joshua 21:45, why can you place your faith in God?

Bible versions depend on the translators' interpretation as they translate from the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. After they determine what the original word meant in the original language, they have to choose a word in their own language that best fits its meaning. Greek and Hebrew words don't always translate word for word into another language and culture. The translator studies the word and context carefully and chooses a word or words that he or she believes accurately portray the meaning of the text.

Sometimes one translation seems to capture the essence of what the original author intended better than another. Nevertheless, if you compare various translations, you will find that most transmit the meaning quite well even if the passage is described in different words. Just like the two versions of Joshua 21:45 above, the meaning is clear and anyone reading it will come up with the same truth: God is faithful and keeps His word.

Although we don't have the original, inerrant (without error) autographs or manuscripts, we can be assured of the reliability of the copies that we do have. No other books of antiquity (distant past) have been copied as much as the New Testament. We have 5,686 copies of the Greek manuscripts and 19,284 ancient manuscripts in other languages. The importance of the copies is

² Butler, Trent C., Holman bible Dictionary, Homan bible Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1991, page 1140.

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twofold: 1. Copies can be compared with other copies for an accurate reconstruction or restoration of the original text. 2. No other historical book or ancient literature come close to these numbers.³

One of the impressive ways that we have in confirming the Old Testament’s reliability is the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. A shepherd boy looking for his goat threw a rock into a cave and heard something break. Upon investigating he found several large jars containing leather scrolls of the Hebrew Bible. They had been well preserved for nearly 1,900 years.⁴ They are named the Dead Sea Scrolls because they were found on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is a salt lake bordered by Israel, the West Bank and Jordan.

Just as scholars compare all the Greek manuscripts to determine the original words, scholars took the Dead Sea Scrolls and compared them with other copies of Hebrew manuscripts. In particular the complete manuscript of Isaiah that was found in one of the clay jars was compared with the Hebrew text (Masoretic) of 916 A.D. The comparison is highly accurate with 95 % of the two manuscripts being identical. The other 5% have to do with letters or copyist errors that do not significantly change the meaning of the passage.⁵

6. Explain in your own words why God’s faithfulness and the reliability of the Bible are related?

7. As a Christian leader, how will you improve in your own faithfulness to Him and to others?

Personal Application: Meditate on God’s Faithfulness: Deuteronomy 7:9a, Deuteronomy 32:4, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, 10:13, and 1 John 1:9.

Share with one person today or tomorrow how God has been faithful to you and how this helps you place your faith in Him? After you have shared, please write the person’s response(s).

³ McDowell, Josh, The New Evidence That Demands A Verdict. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville 1999, p.34-35

⁴ Ibid, p78.

⁵ Ibid, p78-79

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What is another practical way that you can help others to trust the Faithful One?

Lesson 10: Faith of a Leader (Day Two) Trust the Promises of God

Your faith as a leader is interwoven with God's promises. You trust what God says and you help others believe God as well. However, not everything written in the Bible is a promise that God wants us to claim personally. In other words, we can't say, "God, You promised by this particular verse that I would be rich and You must make me wealthy."

For example, the book of Proverbs contains godly principles that we should follow, but are not necessarily promises. We should honor the Lord with our money (Proverbs 3:9-10), however this is not a promise for everyone to claim in order to receive more money from the Lord. There are devoted Christians who are poor in regard to monetary wealth and there are ungodly people who are very wealthy. Please remember also that when God blesses you, that does not mean that you will have lots of money and never have any trouble in your life (Proverbs 10:22). The point is that when you follow these rules you will generally have a good result. When you don't follow the wisdom of the proverbs, you will generally have a bad result. Remember too, that we Christians are living with an eternal perspective (viewpoint).

Read with discernment (sensitivity). Even if a particular promise is not meant for us personally, we are to learn about God, how He works and respond to Him accordingly. The Bible is a record of God's working with individuals and nations at certain points in time in order to accomplish His main goal of redemptive (buying back sinners) history.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."^{NIV} Genesis 3:15

1. Read Genesis 3:15. What is the one unifying (makes into one unit) promise of the Bible?

From Genesis to Revelation, the promise of Christ Jesus brings together the whole of Scripture. We are blessed to live in a time when the promise of Christ can be fully understood. However as with most of God's promises there are conditions to meet.

if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (^{NIV} Romans 10:9-10).

2. Read Romans 10:9-10. What is the condition for the promise of Christ's saving a person?

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The condition for salvation rests in a person's outward and inward response to Christ as Savior and Master. It is not a one time response but a lifetime commitment. It is a state of being. Jesus is always our Master and we always follow Him.

3. Consider Romans 10:9-10. How are you meeting the qualifications of this promise of salvation? _____

Now God does speak to believers through His word in various ways. He may take Scripture and impress it upon you in such a way that you are to apply it specifically to yourself or your personal situation. He may give you instructions and answers as you meditate on passages of Scripture. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern how God is speaking to you through Scripture and be aware that God will not ask you to do anything that is sinful or evil.

God spoke to Abraham and he believed. From the beginning, Abraham's was not a passive (inactive) faith. God told him to start moving (Genesis 12:1) toward an unknown destination and he did. Can you relate to Abraham? Perhaps God has you moving and you don't know where you are going.

If Abraham had not trusted God, He could have easily raised up another leader. God's plans are never dependent on anyone or anything. In the same way, if we fail to act when God calls, He may give our assignment to another.

Many times when God calls a leader there will be a radical life change. This life change will test one's faith as it tested Abraham's. However, the testing serves a purpose. God is fitting that person for service so that the changes will deepen and strengthen his or her faith.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."^{NIV} Genesis 12:2-3

4. Read the promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3. List the seven parts of this promise:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

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Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.^{NIV} Galatians 3:6-9

5. Read Galatians 3:6-9 and fill in the appropriate blanks. Think about the words that you write.

Consider Abraham: "He _____ God and it was _____ to him as _____." Understand, then, that those who _____ are _____ of Abraham. The _____ foresaw that God would _____ the Gentiles by _____, and announced the _____ in _____ to Abraham: "All _____ will be _____ through you." So those who have _____ are _____ along with Abraham the man of _____

6. Are you a child (descendent) of Abraham according to Galatians 3:6? Yes No (Circle one)

7. How did you become a descendant of Abraham? _____

8. What do you think the value is of knowing that you are a seed or an offspring of Abraham?

In Galatians 3 Paul explains what it means that "all nations will be blessed" through Abraham. It means that Christ will come through his seed or through his descendants (offspring). Abraham's first children became the Israelites, later called Jews. These were the people that God chose to carry forth His word and promises to the world.

Jesus was born into the family of Mary and Joseph, descendants of Abraham. Now, in Christ, Abraham is also our spiritual father and we can rightfully trust the promises that are meant for Abraham's children. In other words, we are in the family of God and are blessed. In Christ, we have the ability to bless the people of the earth by carrying forth the gospel.

Personal Application: Read and mediate on Romans 4:13-25.

Pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit. Explain in your own words how this passage of Scripture will help you lead others to trust in the promises of God?

Share any other insight the Holy Spirit brought to your attention regarding these verses:

Lesson 10: Faith of a Leader (Day Three) Faith is Progressive

The faith of a leader is not static or stationary. It moves and advances. In a word, your faith is progressive. That means that you will go forward in faith in steps or increments. Sometimes your movement will seem slight, barely noticeable and other times it may seem like you are being shot to the moon.

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

^{NIV} 2 Thessalonians 1:3

1. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3. Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica and comments on their faith. What does he write about it? _____

Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. ^{NIV} 2 Thessalonians 1:4

2. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:4. Under what conditions was the believer's faith growing?

The Thessalonians' faith was growing through persecutions and trials. Suffering, though not at all pleasant, can be used by God to increase our faith. It teaches us perseverance or determination to cling to Christ no matter what difficulty we are facing. One of the ways that we cling to Christ is by seeking His strength and encouragement through prayer.

In Lesson 9: Prayer of a Leader (Day One) we touched on praying in faith. Faith is important and necessary for anyone's first step into the cleansing blood of Christ and hence into a relationship with God. We are primarily talking about the *Faith of a Leader*, but as a leader your responsibility will be to pray for those you shepherd to have a strong and unwavering faith not only for them to step into the Kingdom, but for them to have a steady and uninterrupted journey.

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And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

3. Hebrews 11:6 states that without _____ it is _____ to please _____

But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:32

4. Read Luke 22:32. Why did Jesus pray for Simon Peter? _____

5. After Peter turned back, what was he supposed to do? _____

Yes, Peter denied knowing Jesus but repented and turned back to his Lord. Jesus wanted Peter, his chosen leader to take his lesson of faith and to strengthen others. This is always a guiding, biblical principle. Our lessons, gifts and resources are not for us alone but are to be used to help others, especially Christians.

The Greek word for faith in the above two scriptures is *pistis* (πίστις). It is a noun that means the state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted. It is trust and confidence in God in the active sense.⁶

For a Christian it means placing your faith, trust and confidence in Christ. You rely on God's promises in the Bible and what He says about Jesus. You can expect help from Christ in both the spiritual and physical sense.

Faith is active in the sense that you believe in God and act upon those truths as set forth in the Bible. If one does not act and live according to what God has said, that person is without faith; he is faithless. Faith is not a passive belief. One cannot say the "sinner's prayer"⁷ and continue to live according to his or her own wishes. Accepting Christ in faith is a life time commitment of loyalty and service to the King. When Christ is trusted as Savior and Lord, one is saying, "I trust, rely, depend, serve and place my hope in the Triune God."

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22

6. Read and meditate on Hebrews 10:19-22. What are three things that faith (and the Holy Spirit) cause a believer to do?

⁶ Frederick William Danker based on Walter Bauer's A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and the Early Christian Literature, 3rd edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 2000.

⁷ The "sinner's prayer" is a name given to a prayer whereby a person admits that he is a sinner and accepts by grace Christ as Savior and Lord. This is supposed to be a decision to give up control of one's life and follow Christ.

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- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

The Church Doctrine of Justification states that man is saved by faith in Christ and His work on the cross. Christ alone is our righteousness and we are justified (freed from guilt) by His blood alone. It is a free gift of grace (underserved merit or acceptance). No works are involved. However, it takes active participation with one's will. You choose by faith to have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. You know Christ paid the penalty for all of your sins. You choose to draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith that you have been cleansed. Therefore you choose not to entertain a guilty conscience for past sins for which you are clean, holy and pure. However, although we won't pay for our sins in hell there can be consequences on this earth for past actions.

Some have mistakenly taken the free gift of salvation to mean passivity and that activity becomes works of the flesh. Not so! Your life in Christ is an active one from the moment you recognize your sin and choose the Spirit's prompting of grace. You are to actively seek God and actively do what He says. See the difference. You actively take God's grace by faith and work the assignments from the Leader's hand. You actively work in God's strength and power.

Satan and his demons believe God exists and they know He wrote the Bible through men. They know without a doubt that Christ died for the sins of the world. Nevertheless, they act against God's plans and purposes. A person can also believe God exists and even that Christ paid the punishment for man's sins and still act against His commands and purposes. Both the evil spirits and these evil humans are faithless. They will not share in a joyful, eternal life.

Personal Application: Mediate on and memorize Hebrews 12:2.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.^{NIV}
 Hebrews 12:2

What assurance do you have that your faith will progress or go forward in the right way?

Lesson 10: Faith of a Leader (Day Four) Attitudes Affect Faith

You must have the right attitude about yourself to be a faithful leader. Be confident that you are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Recognize that you have the mind and sweet fragrance of Christ. Know that you are loving and giving. God is pleased with you and has an excellent plan for your life! God wants you to have friends and healthy relationships. He desires your success and happiness in His Kingdom (Psalm 37: 4). He is a relational God (John 3:16).

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Sometimes because of our past sins and faulty relationships we may believe that there is something wrong with us. Even our current sins and faulty relationships can make us wonder "what is the matter with me!" We may even have a wrong attitude about our race, gender, appearance, intelligence or skills. God does not have favorites based on any of these things (Acts 10:34-35). God made all and accepts all who does what is good and right in Christ.

In your relationships, as in all areas of your life, God is in control. Therefore, He may allow difficult relationships to help you grow in Christ likeness. God may also block certain friendships for your own spiritual welfare. He may have bigger (i.e. fruitful) plans for you than being part of certain fellowships, even if they are believers.

We live in a fallen world, and this will also adversely (negatively) affect our relationships. This includes family, friends and really anyone on the face of the earth. However, if you are concerned about your ability to make friends and keep them or your relationships in general, pray the following prayer:

Almighty and Loving Father, You are faithful and delight to answer our prayers. Please reveal to me any unknown sin or incorrect personality trait that is keeping me from healthy relationships. Are there sins of jealousy, self righteousness, pride or selfishness in my life that is hindering my progress? Cleanse me of any of these unholy characteristics and help me to correct them. I trust You to help me with any necessary changes and I thank You that I am a likeable and loveable person. Heal all my relationships, especially (insert your own) and establish good Christian friends in my life. Make me a good family member, friend and employee (employer). Thank You in Jesus, Amen.

Sometimes, we just beat up on ourselves. We find fault with what we say, how we look, what we do or what we don't do. We are an easy target because we are always around! You may even think that to put yourself down is the humble thing to do. It is just as wrong to put yourself down as it is to puff yourself up. Neither are honoring to our Creator.

If you grew up with parents, relatives or caregivers that were constantly putting you down, you might actually have a "mental" recording telling you untrue things about yourself. You may even be in a situation right now where you are being verbally abused. Satan, the source of these lies and false accusations will use them to steal your joy and peace. It will take constant prayer and vigilance (attention) to overcome false thought patterns.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ^{NIV} Ephesians 6:16

1. Read Ephesians 6:16. What do you take up when Satan, the evil one, begins his attack or character assassination on you? _____

Paul is using the picture of a large, leather, shield. The Romans could soak it in water so that when their enemy shot flame-tipped arrows, the fire would be quenched. Your faith is like that shield. When you trust who you are in Christ, Satan's fiery arrows of destruction are put out.

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For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well
^{NIV} Psalm 139:13-14

2. Read Psalm 139:13-14. Who created your inmost (deepest) being? _____
3. Who knit you together in your mother's womb? _____
4. When you have a bad attitude about yourself or others, who are you ultimately putting down?
Why? _____

God created every single part of you. He gave the DNA⁸ instructions for every microscopic detail of your being. You are perfectly put together.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.^{NIV} Genesis 1:27

5. Man, which includes male and female are created to be like God, resembling Him in certain ways. How does this affect the way that you think about yourself? _____

You are made in the image or likeness of God. Recall, in Lesson 7: The Name, we learned about some of God's characteristics or attributes that He shares with us. For example, God shares His faithfulness, wisdom, mercy and goodness. Read Genesis 1:28 and answer question 6.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."^{NIV} Genesis 1:28

6. God told the man and the woman to fill the earth and _____ it. _____ over the fish of the sea and the _____ of the air and _____ every _____ creature that moves on the ground.

8

Deoxyribonucleic acid or DNA is a nucleic acid molecule that contains the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all living organisms. The main role of DNA is the long-term storage of information and it is often compared to a set of blueprints, since DNA contains the instructions needed to construct other components of cells, such as proteins and RNA molecules. The DNA segments that carry this genetic information are called genes, but other DNA sequences have structural purposes, or are involved in regulating the use of this genetic information. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

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God is the Ruler and Master Controller. We are made in His image in ruling and controlling the earth. As a Christian leader, you are called to govern all things in righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24).

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.^{NIV} James 3:9

Cursing is not only exclaiming foul words, it is also saying evil or hurtful things about another human being. Even hoping for evil to come to another is silent cursing and definitely wrong. Cursing can also mean lightly esteeming others or making someone loathsome⁹ Teenagers are very adept at making others loathsome to their peers. Seeking popularity, the sin of caring more for what others think than God, can cause a rash of cursing. To make themselves seem cool teenagers may dishonor others by ignoring, gossiping or making sport of frailties (weaknesses). Sadly, teenagers are not the only ones to curse and not to bless others.

7. What implications does James 3:9 have for you personally and for the people that you lead?

All men and women are made in the image of God, in God's likeness. Granted, it may be difficult to see God's appearance in some people, but Scripture tells us it is there. When we think about the beauty and magnificence of the LORD and that all human beings have been made in His image, it gives us a concrete reason to love and honor others.

Thinking badly about yourself or having a guilty conscience over past sins can be very discouraging. You may be disheartened and deterred from moving ahead each day. This is a faithless position, one that lacks truth and power. If this is where you are, you will not stay here. If you are past this and do not have a problem with how you view yourself this is a good reminder that other people do have a poor view of themselves. You can help them!

Discouragement is not of God. He wants you to be encouraged that you were made in His image and that in Christ you are secure and free from guilt and shame. He took away your sin, guilt and shame on the cross (Hebrews 10:22).

According to the Oxford American Dictionary, self-esteem is a noun meaning a favorable opinion of one's self, self-respect. We have a favorable opinion of ourselves because we are made in God's image. So instead of self-esteem, we really have God-esteem. We have respect for God and the humans that He created. See the subtle difference. Our value rests in the God who made and loves us. We trust God for an evaluation of ourselves. By faith we offer our attitudes, talents, gifts and good works each day to magnify (enlarge) the LORD.

⁹ Butler, Trent C., Holman Bible Dictionary, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1991.

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Personal Application:

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.^{NIV} 2 Corinthians 5:20

An ambassador is a diplomat sent by one country as a permanent representative or on a special mission to another.¹⁰ The apostle Paul called himself an ambassador even when he was in prison (Ephesians 6:20). Paul also tells believers that we are Christ's ambassadors. We are here by special appointment, sent by heaven on a special mission.

God has chosen you. You have exactly what God wants to use in leading and influencing others for the Kingdom. **Build your faith** in God by confessing (agree; declare) with Scripture about who you are in Christ.

For example, confess 2 Corinthians 5:20: I am Christ's ambassador. God makes appeals through me. I implore others on Christ's behalf so that they are reconciled to God.

Look up, read, personalize and confess these Scriptures: Zephaniah 3:17, 1 Corinthians 14:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 2:6-8, Philippians 2:13-16, Revelation 1:5-6

Lesson 10: Faith of a Leader (Day Five) Strengthening your Faith

What happens when things don't turn out the way you thought? You pray and really felt God telling you to go in a certain direction. But your way becomes blocked and no matter how hard you pray, nothing seems to happen. In the same light, you felt God saying that a sick friend was going to be healed and yet that person died. There could be other kinds of circumstances where you perceive God telling you something and it doesn't come to pass.

This happens to individuals and to church bodies of all denominations. Recently a charismatic church in Raleigh had fasted and prayed for a young boy who had become ill with a virus. The church had come together mightily in intercession for the healing of this lad. Many in the church prophesied that he would be healed and they rejoiced at God's answer. However, the child died.

Another church, conservative in affiliation, led by the elders felt a call to build a larger worship center. Everyone was in agreement and felt it was God's will. Contracts were signed and they went forward. Half way through the process there was a problem with the land. Although it was a large piece of property it would still not accommodate adequate parking spaces for cars.

1. Can you share a time when you really believed God for something and it didn't come to pass?

¹⁰ Ehrlich, Eugene, Oxford American Dictionary, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1980.

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2. If you had a story to share above, how did this affect your faith in God? What did you learn?

I was at the two churches mentioned above during their worship services, both after the boy died, and after the property was deemed unworkable. Both pastors spoke to their congregations as faithful leaders. The congregation that had lost a young child was in a very tender and vulnerable place. The pastor spoke compassionately, addressing every possible question his congregation might have regarding this sad occasion. He told them that he had never seen a group of people come together so faithfully. They had passionately done absolutely everything the Scriptures had called for in seeking God for healing. He reminded them that God is sovereign and ultimately it was His decision. The pastor upheld God as the faithful One of love, compassion and mercy.

The other pastor also addressed his congregation. He explained the facts of the situation and that they had an exit clause in the real estate contract. The church would exercise this option and not go forward with the purchase. He simply said that he and the elders had all been in agreement to purchase the land and now they were in agreement not to purchase the land. He ended his explanation by saying “This is what I thought God’s will was, but I was wrong.”

Perhaps you will always be sure and right about what God is saying to you. But more than likely there will be times as a leader when you will simply be wrong. It is best to admit it. We are not infallible (never wrong). We can make mistakes. Men and women in the Bible were not always correct in assessing what God was telling them. Barnabas and Paul would not have done anything that they thought was outside of God’s will. They both believed so strongly in their views that they had a sharp disagreement over whether they should take Mark (Gospel writer) with them. On an earlier mission trip, Mark had left and returned home. Paul seems to have viewed this as desertion. **But here’s the point:** there would not have been a *sharp* disagreement if they had both heard from God correctly.

They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.
^{NIV} Acts 15:39-40

Note: Paul was in prison and was writing years after Act 15:39. *Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.*^{NIV} 2 Timothy 4:11

3. Read Acts 15:39-40 and 2 Timothy 4:11. What leadership lesson do you learn?

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Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.
NIV Acts 16:6

4. Read Acts 16:6-7. What faith lesson do you learn from the Spirit stopping Paul twice?

It appears that God's plan for Paul and his companions had changed and Paul didn't hear about it in his daily prayers. The Scripture says that the Holy Spirit kept him from preaching in the province of Asia there. The Word doesn't say that the Spirit told him to move on. The same is true when they tried to enter Bithynia. If, 10 miles outside of Bithynia, we had asked Paul if that was the direction God wanted him to go, most likely he would have answered yes. Nevertheless, his way was ultimately blocked.

Paul acted on what he knew and what he believed to be God's plan. He acted in faith. He was not always correct but God was always faithful. God is still faithful. If you misunderstand God, His Spirit will get you back on the right path. He works in unique and wondrous ways to keep us moving in the right direction. But please be cautious. This does not mean that you can just go forward as you please and expect the Spirit's assistance if it is not God's will.

It is important to remember to be flexible and adaptable to the Spirit's leading. There are times when you will be called upon to persevere, suffer and endure. On the other hand, there may be times when you will be wrong and if you stubbornly cling to false ideas or dreams, it will be detrimental to your faith in God. However, your faith will be strengthened as you trust God to give you wisdom and discernment day by day.

Personal Application: Optional: Write any faith challenge that you are experiencing right now?

Please write how your "letter minister" may pray for you? _____

Lesson 10: Faith of a Leader (Day Six) Faith in Spite of Circumstances

We briefly discussed discouragement in Day 4 of this Lesson. If discouragement goes on for too long, a leader could become depressed, extremely disheartened and full of self pity. This condition actually takes a leader into faithless territory where he or she begins to question God's plan, love and sovereign control over his or her life. This is a dangerous position: this leader is not trusting God.

Lesson 10

As a leader you will need to seek God's help in pulling yourself out of this black hole when you become weary of doing good. You will also be called upon to help others climb out of this dark, sad, pit of hell when they fall into it. Now realize that we are talking about healthy, normal individuals in this section and not those who may need medical attention. Prayer will help you discern the difference and how God wants this individual healed or treated.

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."^{NIV} 1 Kings 19:3-4

1. Read 1 Kings 19:3-4. Was Elijah discouraged? Yes No (Circle one) Depressed? Yes No (Circle one) Was Elijah trusting God? Yes No (Circle one)

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper."^{NIV} 1 Kings 19:11-12

2. Read 1 Kings 19:11-12. What do you think is the significance of the LORD telling Elijah to go out and stand on the mountain in His presence? _____

God showed Elijah that he must get his focus off his circumstances. The right focus is God (Hebrews 12:2). Elijah was thinking about Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-18) and became afraid and discouraged. God is greater than any problem, no matter how severe it may seem.

Trust that God has a holy purpose for your life. Know that your difficult period may help you to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3). Recognize that God had Elijah's faithless period recorded to help succeeding generations. Submit to God and admit that you have no valid reason for being discouraged or depressed. You are serving Jesus and things are going perfectly for the Kingdom.

Personal Application: Memorize Jeremiah 17:7-8

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.⁸ He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."^{NIV} Jeremiah 17:7-8

Next: Lesson 11: Knowing God's will

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