

# Faith

*“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” (Hebrews 12:2).*

What is faith? To have faith is to believe, trust, or rely on someone or something. You have faith in a chair when you sit on it, trusting that it will keep you from falling to the ground. When it comes to talking about faith and a relationship with God, we are talking about putting our trust in Jesus as the one who will deliver us from sin and death and give us eternal life. You could trust in your own good deeds to make you acceptable to God or you could rely on the fact that other people are worse than you. But to do that, you are trusting in the wrong person. Faith in yourself or some good thing will not get you a relationship with God. Jesus, the Son of God who died to pay for your sins, is the only person who is a worthy focus of your trust. So faith in Jesus is the very foundation of our Christian life (Romans 3:28). Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that faith is what begins our relationship with God: “by grace you have been saved, through faith.”

Once you are a follower of Christ, you should not start trusting in yourself. Many Christians try to live a good life, but they think that they can do it all on their own. They think they don’t need to keep relying on Jesus. But we need to keep relying on Jesus every day of our lives. Faith is how you begin a relationship with God. Faith in Jesus is also how you find joy and satisfaction for living the Christ-like life. Faith is what pleases God from start to finish (Hebrews 11:6). Trusting in yourself will only result in frustration and

disappointment. So put your focus on Jesus – daily rely on him (Hebrews 12:2).

How is Jesus the example of faith we should follow?

Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. This tells us at least two things. First, it reminds us that Jesus is the one we need to trust. As the author of our faith, he is the one who is worthy of being believed and relied upon. Second, it tells us that Jesus is the perfect example of a person who has faith. Matthew 26:36-46 shows Jesus' faith in action. In this story, Jesus agonizes over the fact that he is going to die and that all the sin of the world would be poured on him. He prays to God, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus was willing to trust the Father, and so must we follow his example. Even when facing difficulties in our lives, we can continue to rely on God. Our difficulties are nothing compared to what Jesus faced, and yet Jesus went through it, trusting his Father.

The challenge for us: As you develop a Christ-like life, begin by renewing your faith in Jesus. Commit to trusting Jesus every day, all the time, for everything.

## **Digging Deeper**

Matthew 26:36-46 – The faith of Jesus

# Hope

*“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:5). “But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (Romans 8:25).*

Someone might say, “I hope I win the lottery” or “I hope this snow quits.” “I hope we can go to Hawaii for vacation” or “I hope my team wins the Super Bowl.”

Is that the same kind of hope that the Bible says we should have? When we say, “I put my hope in the Lord” or “I hope that Jesus is coming back,” are we just wishing for something that may or may not happen?

As followers of Christ, when we say that we have hope, we are reaffirming that something in the future is certain, so we can continue to trust God. Romans 8:25 reminds us that hope has to do with what we do not yet have. As Christians, our hope is not in things that may or may not happen. Our hope is in things that will certainly happen. Jesus will certainly have the final victory. We will certainly live forever with God.

So our hope as Christians is not a content-empty, wishful dream like “hoping” or “wishing” for the snow to quit or your team to win the Super Bowl. In those things, the outcome is not certain. They may or may not happen. As followers of Christ, our outcome is certain. We will surely live forever with God. We will never lose God’s love (Romans 8:38-39). Jesus will have the victory. As Christians, our hope is in Jesus who is faithful and just.

We can have hope based on the certainty of who God is and what he will do for us. We can put our hope in the Lord on a daily basis because we know that God loves us. Even when we sin, he will forgive us when we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). He is always faithful and never evil, so putting our hope in the Lord is wise even when things are not going how we want them to.

How does “hope in the Lord” help us live a Christ-like life? When we put our hope in the Lord, we are keeping our focus on him and we are turning our lives over to his care. That is why Romans 8:25 says that we “wait for it patiently.” If we worry about our life now or about the future, or if we get impatient with God, we are not putting our hope in the Lord. If we put our hope in ourselves or in something other than Jesus, we will be disappointed. When we put our hope in Jesus, “hope does not disappoint,” because the one we are putting our hope in is certainly going to be faithful – the Holy Spirit is with us guaranteeing that God will not forget us.

Keeping our hope focused on Jesus will help us daily to live for God. Putting our hope in other things will be disappointing. So where is your hope?

### **Digging Deeper**

Romans 8:38-39 – Nothing can separate us

Isaiah 40:28-31 – Hope in the Lord

# Love

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5).*

What does it take to develop a Christ-like life? Can we become like Christ just by wishing it to be true? Not likely. Developing a Christ-like life is a process that takes time. Becoming like Christ in our character involves disciplining ourselves to start thinking and acting in ways that are pleasing to God. Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4), but getting our day to day lives to match our position before God is a lifelong process.

Because the process takes a lifetime, we have a lifetime to work at developing our relationship with God. In Deuteronomy 6:5, God tells his people that he wants them to love him above everything else. Jesus repeated this command, calling it the greatest commandment – that we should love God with our whole heart, soul, and strength (Matthew 22:34-40).

Deuteronomy 6:5 uses heart, soul, and strength to tell us that our whole being should be loving God. Every aspect of who we are is to be involved in loving God. Every bit of us – our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, actions, words, relationships, commitments - should be devoted to God. Everything about us should show people that God is most important in our lives.

How can we love God like that? The first thing is to be sure we have a relationship with Jesus. The Bible tells us that it is through Jesus that we can come to God (John 6:40; 14:21; Ephesians 2:18). When we turn to Jesus in faith, when we begin a relationship with Jesus, we are also beginning a

relationship with God the Father. Believing in Jesus is the first step toward loving God with our whole being.

Once we have begun a relationship with God through Jesus, we should continue to love Jesus. How do we love Jesus? By doing what he asks us to do. In John 14:23, Jesus says, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” This is describing a personal relationship between us and God that deepens as we love Jesus and live in a way that is pleasing to him. What is it that pleases Jesus? We have to turn to the Bible to see what Jesus wants in our life.

Galatians 5:22-23 gives us a list of some of the kinds of qualities that Jesus wants in our life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Starting to develop those qualities in our life puts us on the way toward loving God wholeheartedly.

As you continue in the process of becoming like Christ, Love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. Live to please God in every aspect of your life.

## **Digging Deeper**

Matthew 22:34-40 – God’s greatest command . . .