

Study 1. Increase Our Faith

Growing Faith in God

What comes to mind when you think of the word “Faith?” Assurance? Hope? Confidence? These things are all connected to faith, but faith, unconnected to a source, is wishful thinking, like the sign one can buy in the store with the words, *Have Faith*. No, faith in faith alone is not what we need. Some people try and use faith as some sort of energy, like a psychic tool to achieve their dreams. What I want to experience, and what I want you to experience, is faith in the God who can move mountains, and for that, we need to connect our faith to the One who can do abundantly more than what we could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Jesus told us that we could have this faith in God. He encouraged us to walk in it, knowing the power source is critical.

Here is the essence of faith in God: **“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6)**. The fact that you are here, proves that you are seeking God in some measure, with a desire to increase your faith in God. God is pleased with that step! Faith in the right source pleases Him: “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” So, my desire and aim for this teaching series is that we all grow in faith in God together and approach this topic with the expectation that we will grow in our faith and see breakthroughs to prayer, knowing that He answers prayer. We will experience the joy that comes from answered prayer, for faith is not meant to be complicated; God wants you to grow in your faith. It is His will.

The topic of faith is an important one for the days in which we live. In my opinion, America is approaching a time of persecution for Christians. Jesus promised His people that persecution would come (John 16:33). In the West, we have not experienced the trials and persecution to the same level our brothers and sisters have endured worldwide, but I believe we need to be prepared. When trials and persecution happen, you will need to trust God as you have never trusted Him before. The Scriptures teach us that in the last days, our faith will be tested and that many will fall away (2 Thessalonians 2:3. The word “rebellion” in the NIV is elsewhere translated as “falling away” in the KJV or “apostasy” in the NAS). We must start preparing to live by faith now, not when the going gets tough. Faith in God is like a body muscle growing as we use it. The five wise virgins waiting for the Bridegroom were prepared ahead of time for the darkness. They had extra oil for their lamps. The five foolish virgins were unprepared for the night before the Bridegroom came (Matthew 25:1-13).

One of the most important things the disciples ever asked Jesus was how they should grow in their faith. They said to Him, **“Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5)**. To start, I thought it would be helpful to give you a real-life example from the life of a man who exhibited extraordinary faith, George Mueller.

An Example of Faith

George Mueller was born in Prussia, Eastern Europe, in 1805 and died in 1898 at 93. He grew up a very ungodly man, often stealing from his father and friends. His early years were that of a drunk and worldly-minded man. Now and then, he tried to change and reform his life. He knew deep inside that his life was displeasing to God, but again and again, he could not change his lifestyle

of deception, theft, and drunkenness until one of his drinking buddies told him of something he did on a Saturday night. In his own words, Mueller said:

One Saturday afternoon, about the middle of November 1825, I took a walk with my friend Beta. On our return, he told me that he was in the habit of going on Saturday evenings to the house of a Christian, where there was a meeting. He told me they read the Bible, sang, prayed, and read a printed sermon on further inquiry. No sooner had I heard this, but it was to me as if I had found something after which I had been seeking all my life long. I immediately wished to go with my friend, who was not at once willing to take me, for knowing me as a merry young man, he thought I should not like this meeting. At last, however, he said he would call for me.¹

When he got to the meeting, a man named Kayser, who afterward became a missionary to Africa, asked for God's blessing upon the meeting while praying on his knees. "This kneeling down made a deep impression on me," said Mueller. The meeting was composed of a hymn at the beginning, a chapter from the Bible, and a printed sermon that was then read. The time together ended with another hymn. In speaking about the experience of reading and meditating on Scripture with a group of godly folks, he said, "I was happy, though if I had been asked why I was happy, I could not clearly have explained it." That evening was the turning point in his life. He said, "Whether I fell on my knees when I returned home, I do not remember, but this much I know, I lay peaceful and happy in my bed. I do not doubt that on that evening, God began a work of grace in me, though I obtained joy without any deep sorrow of heart and with scarcely any knowledge."

The first four years of his life in Christ were somewhat uneventful, but in July 1829, he came into an entire and complete surrender of the heart. He writes,

I gave myself fully to the Lord. Honors, pleasures, money, and my physical powers, my mental powers—all were laid down at the feet of Jesus, and I became a great lover of the Word of God. I found my all in God, and my faith is not merely exercised regarding temporal things but also everything because I cleave to the Word. My knowledge of God and His Word is what helps me.²

After a few years of learning to trust God by hearing Him speak and act upon it, God led him to begin an orphanage with only two shillings (around fifty cents) to his name. He committed to God that he would never ask for money, and any time the needs were not met, he would take it as a sign that God no longer needed the work. Through faith and just the strength of his prayer life, Mueller would pray in all the needs for a work that became five large orphanages, buildings of sizeable solid granite that, before he died, met the requirements of no less than 10,000 orphans, 2,000 at any one time. At 29, he started the Scripture Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad. Its purpose was to aid Christian day schools, assist missionaries, and circulate the Scriptures.

This institution, without worldly patronage, committees, subscribers, or memberships, but through faith in the Lord alone, had obtained and disbursed no less a sum than one and a half million pounds. Such an amount of money was an astronomical sum for the time he was living, especially

¹ James G. Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*, Printed by Whitaker House, Pages 190-203.

² *Ibid*

considering that the invoice of the fourteen-ton bell called Big Ben at the Houses of Parliament in London was only £572 (pounds) in 1858. The bulk of this enormous sum was spent on the orphanages. He sometimes would gather the children and pray with them about their needs. Sometimes mealtime was almost at hand, and they did not know where the food would come from, but God always had it in hand. One time they prayed the blessing over the food, even though there was none on the table, only to have a person bring the food as the prayer ended. God never let them down in all those years of praying and trusting God. Six hundred pounds a week was required to support the orphans at the time of Mueller's death, yet the Lord sent them their daily bread day by day.

What could George Mueller's faith in God be attributed to? Was this faith a gift of God, or did he cultivate a life of faith?

What You See is What You Get

When I consider the life of George Mueller, it makes me wonder how he grew to have that measure of faith. What was his secret? I believe that in times of need, God gives people a gift of faith for a particular situation or task, but faith is also a choice. Mueller had to make many little choices, which cultivated his faith and caused it to grow. Our choices are inspired or affected by several things, such as our desire to please God, our beliefs, and our obedience. I think an essential secret of George Mueller's faith was his worldview. What do I mean by a worldview? A worldview consists of underlying assumptions and images that provide a lens through which we view the world. Perhaps the school you attended as you grew up taught you that the world came about through evolution. Maybe you were taught that there is nothing beyond death and no God and that man came about by chance. Those thoughts and assumptions about the world form your worldview and perception of how the world operates. How we see the world we live in will affect how we live. We need a paradigm shift, a change in our awareness of the world and how it operates, to live a life of faith in God. George Mueller had a biblical worldview, which all God's people need to have as a lens to view the world. Scripture puts it like this:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).

Humanity is in the middle of a spiritual war where we are being shaped and conformed to a worldview promoted to us on every side, with ideas contradicting the Word of God. Satan is called the “**ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient**” (Ephesians 2:2). When we understand that a godless and faithless worldview is broadcast to us by media 24/7, it is clear we are under a great deal of pressure to conform to a worldview that excludes God and makes trusting Him seem foolish. This world system does not have room for the concept of trusting God. We are being manipulated to believe and trust only in what can be explained and substantiated by our minds and five senses. We must be aware of what influences our thoughts for the better or worse. The pattern of this world will take us down a different road than the road you set for yourself when you dedicated yourself to Christ and His kingdom. Nothing but conformity to Jesus can overcome conformity to the world system. Living a life of faith is challenging if we see the world only in the way we have been programmed to by our upbringing and schooling. In our thought life day by day, we are confronted with a choice of worldviews to live by, this world's

values or God's. If we do not know the Word of God, we will be unable to think according to the Scriptures, and it will be challenging to grow in our faith in God.

Let me show you some drawings below as an example of how we see something affected by previous data input. You've probably already seen this drawing – but what do you see?



Most people will see a beautiful young woman in the drawing. The next drawing gives us a sharper picture. What do you see when you scroll down?



The chances are that many of you will see a more refined picture of the young woman. Some people can see an older woman in the drawing. Can you see the older woman? Now scroll down to the third drawing:



If one were to put up the first drawing on a PowerPoint slide and only allow half the room to view the first drawing and the other half to be shown the third drawing, the place would be split into an argument when the second drawing is displayed. It is difficult to shake from your mind what you have been programmed to see by the first picture.

What you see is a result of your conditioning. If 10 seconds can determine what you see in that drawing, imagine how a lifetime of knowledge and experience affects your perception and worldview!

[In what way do you think modern life is shaping your worldview to conform to its standard? How has life changed, for example, in the last 100 years?](#)

Considering George Mueller's great measure of faith, which changed not only his life but the lives of countless others, it is clear that his worldview was shaped by his belief in the promises of God's Word and that God would provide not only for his needs but the orphans he cared for as well. George Mueller became a great man of faith by changing his worldview to a biblical one, formed by his love for the Scriptures. The Word of God transformed his heart and mind. Did you notice the two things he said about himself? He said that he gave himself entirely to the Lord and the knowledge of the Word of God. What this world tells us often contradicts what God tells us to believe. There is an invisible world that intersects with the physical world, and God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and longs for His people to ask Him to work on their behalf, those who are connected to Him by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God has no favorites, and what He did for George Mueller, He wants to do for us, too.

Although God has different gifts and callings for all of His children, He wants all of us to live a life of faith. Scripture says, “**For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him**” (2 Chronicles 16:9). Throughout the earth includes you and me too! God is looking for individuals wholly committed to His kingdom. When He sees evidence that your heart is fully committed to Him, He comes alongside you to strengthen and help you. He has work for us to do in this world, for we are called to be kingdom builders—God’s kingdom builders. This work is accomplished through His power working in and through us, by faith! To live a life of faith, we must have a heavenly perspective.

What is Faith?

Faith is in the spiritual realm, what money is in the commercial realm (Anon). Alexander MacLaren said, "Faith is the sight of the inward eye."³ Webster’s New World dictionary uses words such as: “confidence, belief, to be convinced of, reliance or complete trust.”⁴ The Greek word often used in the New Testament is *Pistis*, which Strong’s Biblical Dictionary defines as: “persuasion, giving credence to someone, the moral conviction of religious truth.”⁵ We are saying that faith comes to people when they give credence to or trust that God is speaking to them through His Word.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

We could paraphrase the Scripture above by saying that faith comes from hearing God speak and hearing God speak through the Word of God. The more one feeds their mind with God's thoughts, the more faith will grow in a person’s heart. Let's use an example of a computer. If data is never loaded onto the Internet for you to access, how will you be able to use the Internet? At one time, software programs had to be loaded onto our computers, whereas now Cloud Computing has taken over. The data is on the Internet for us to access and use. If the information was not there, we could not use it! In the same way, faith in God comes as one grows in the knowledge of God’s thoughts expressed in the Word of God, the data of God that we are to access and use. But, of course, the Word of God is more than just data. Jesus said, “**...the words I speak to you are Spirit and Life!**” (John 6:63).

One person might say, “I don’t have any faith.” But God says that everyone has been given a measure of faith:

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Romans 12:3. KJV).

We put our faith in people every day. Have you ever been to the doctor or dentist? You have shown confidence in the doctor or dentist by allowing them to work on your body or teeth. All of us have faith. When people get on a plane, they exercise faith in the airplane mechanic and the pilot that

³ Gathered Gold, Compiled by John Blanchard, Printed by Evangelical Press, Welwyn, Herts, England. Page 92.

⁴ Webster’s New World Dictionary, Third College Edition, Printed by Prentice Hall, Page 487.

⁵ Found on e-sword.com, Rom 10:17.

they are adequately trained. You trust that the pilot can get you to your destination! Think of the trust that you invest in people daily. When you think of it that way, why do we have difficulty trusting God? This is where our worldview becomes apparent. God is asking you to place your trust and complete reliance on Him. He said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15). I used to play a game with my son when he was young. I would stand him on the counter in the kitchen and tell him to jump into my arms. Not once did he ever look down and wonder whether I could catch him and save him from the fall. We have so much to learn from children about their simple trust and childlike faith. It means a change in our worldview to that of faith in God.

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).

It means throwing yourself into the arms of Christ unreservedly and saying, "...not my will be done, but yours" (Matthew 26:39). Faith is the daring of the soul to go further than it can see (William N. Clarke). Believe that the Lord is there and will reward you for earnestly seeking Him.

How Can I Grow My Faith—How is it Increased?

We have seen from the Scriptures that "God has given every man a measure of faith." How important is this measure of faith given to you? The amount of faith you possess is less important than what you do with that faith. As we have already seen, faith grows in the use of it. Believe in God for small things and see answers, and you then have faith for the next steps, for bigger and bigger things. Are you learning to trust and rely on God at all times? If you are, then when hard times come, our trust in God will be easier. After all, God is not limited; any limits placed on us are due to our lack of understanding and low expectations. Since we have all been dealt a measure of faith, the problem is not growing the receptacle (faith) but adding knowledge and stepping out in obedience to what you know of God's Word. Let's look now to what Jesus said concerning growing in faith:

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" ⁶He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. ⁷"Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? ⁹Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty' "(Luke 17:5-10).

How do we understand Jesus' answer to the apostles in response to their question concerning growing in faith? Why is He talking about servants preparing dinner for their master? The passage's context occurs after Jesus' radical statement that a disciple of Christ is to forgive his brother seven times in one day if he turns and repents. The Rabbis said that if a person forgave another three times, he was a perfect man. Jesus advocated that His people are to go a long way further than the rest of the world. The chief antagonists of the Lord and His disciples were the Pharisees and the

rulers. Disciples of Jesus were not to be bitter and resentful toward the Pharisees for their opposition but to maintain a heart of forgiveness. The disciple's response to the statement was that they each needed greater faith, an increase of faith to forgive to that level. Jesus said that it is not about the size of their faith or ours; our faith can be as small as a mustard seed, one of the smallest seeds. It's more about what we do with the measure of faith we have. It is about acting out of obedience to our Master's wishes based on our knowledge of Him and His will. They were to see themselves as servants doing everything the Master said to do, whether plowing the fields or making the supper. Faith grows out of obedience to live out what we know about the Lord's character and His will, and this will produce good things (good fruit) from an outflow of one's life of faith.

I think it will help us if I use the analogy of Charles Cooper from his book, *"Fight, Flight, or Faith."* The book aims to show Christians how to survive dark days and hard times. Charles encourages us to think of faith as an empty pie dish in the book. We don't grow the pie dish. We add to the pie dish the ingredients for the pie, which he views as knowledge or newly acquired information. I quote from his book:

The container that holds the pie and gives it shape is faith. Knowledge is the content of the pie. Each slice is an individual truth or conviction. The container does not grow or get any larger; it remains the same. The number of pieces in the pie changes relative to what one believes about a given issue. The Bible describes the number of "slices" a particular person has regarding any particular issue as that of "unbelief," "little faith," or "great faith."⁶

At any time in your life, you are either in a trial, going into a trial, or coming out of one. God is committed to building your character through your life experiences. Each test is a lesson on using another piece of the pie. In one place, the apostle Peter writes, **"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge (2 Peter 1:5).** What knowledge of God do you have that you can put to use in this trial of your faith? God is at work in our lives, giving us experiential learning of His character and His Word. Knowledge is more than head knowledge; it is a piece of knowledge that is experienced.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Think of it: the works you have done and are doing have been prepared for you ahead of time for you to walk in. God has more work planned out for you to do. Do these works have anything to do with our level of faith or our expectation of God? I think so! In light of this, consider what you want to believe God for.

What would you want people to remember about your life when you are gone? What would you want them to remember as your most significant accomplishment?

Every trial that you find yourself in is filtered through the hands of a loving and sovereign God. He has allowed each trial or situation to come into your life to teach you to walk by faith and use the knowledge you have gained about His Word and character. Knowing God's nature and all we

⁶ Charles Cooper, *Fight, Flight or Faith*, Published by Strong Tower Publishing, Page 123.

can about His will through His Word is integral to faith. Before God created the world, He had an idea of the finished product of each of us reading these words. The Bible says, “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). Whatever trial you find yourself going through right now, reach out and hold on to a promise of God that relates to that situation. Quote it to the Lord. Isn't that exactly what Jesus did? When He faced temptation by Satan in the wilderness, the Lord used a “piece of the pie,” His knowledge of God and His Word. He could have just spoken what He wanted to, for what issues out of His lips is the Word of God, but to be an example to you and me, Jesus quoted from God's Word, which became a direct living word to the situation He faced.

This kind of word alive for the situation at hand is called a Rhema word, a specific word for a particular circumstance. For illustration purposes, we will call this “a piece of the pie in the pie dish of faith.” This Greek word, *Rhema*, is used in Ephesians 6:17, where we are told to take up the sword of the Spirit, the *word of God* (Rhema, the specific, living word for the situation at hand). Sometimes this word may not be in Scripture, it may be a simple witness in your heart about something you have asked God to do for you, and you sense a “yes” from God in your spirit. However, a Rhema word will always align with the Scriptures, the written word. That is why we must gain an understanding and knowledge of the Word of God and how it relates to our faith.

¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us— whatever we ask— we know that we have what we asked of him (1 John 5:14-15).

If we know and can be confident that what we are asking for is under God's will and is what He wants to do, we can view ourselves as partners with Him, just carrying out the very thing He wants to do on earth. We bring the reality of the kingdom of God into our lives on earth. The Rhema word is always specific to the situation, a word that the Spirit of God inspires. Perhaps this is what took place when the disciple Nathanael, also called Bartholomew, was moved very quickly by Jesus from a state of unbelief to faith. Let's read the passage:

⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." ⁴⁸"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." ⁵⁰Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that" (John 1:45-50).

What do you think happened in this passage to move Nathanael so quickly to a place of discipleship? It was Jesus speaking a word that only God could have known! We would probably call it a word of knowledge today. It was more than likely a prayer that Nathanael had prayed while alone with God sitting under the fig tree. We can only guess based on what we see here, but I believe Nathanael enjoyed one-on-one time with God while sitting under the fig tree, perhaps asking God if He knew and saw him. When he met Christ, the Lord said that He had seen him

under the fig tree; it was a unique word to Nathanael's heart that God heard his prayer, whatever it was, while he was under the fig tree. To Nathanael, it was the realization that God knew him. It was a “piece of the pie in his dish of faith.” God was watching him. The Lord knew what was in his heart, that he had nothing false, and that He saw him under the fig tree when Phillip approached Him. Experiential pieces of knowledge in his pie dish of faith gave Nathaniel evidence to trust for things not yet seen.

Thomas, the disciple, was also moved in such a way to faith. He was not in the Upper Room when the others saw Jesus enter their midst. When he heard about it later, he would not believe it. Only when Jesus came to him personally and showed him the nail prints on His hands and feet did Thomas believe. His faith didn't get bigger; he was given experiential knowledge to apply to his faith. He fell on his knees, saying, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; **blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed**” (John 20:28-29). Seeing is not believing. “Seeing is seeing. Believing is being confident without seeing” (G. Campbell Morgan).

Sense evidence, such as Thomas was given, is a beautiful thing to add to our pie dish of faith, but we are more blessed if we believe and act just by God's Word. This acting on the Word of God was the secret of George Mueller. His worldview was one of trust in his Heavenly Father and His resources. The Word of God mixed with faith is a powerful weapon in the life of a Christian man or woman and will bring great fruit to your life and those around you. Remember that you do not have to drum up an extraordinary measure of faith; take the measure you have, mix it with faith in God's Word, and you can connect to faith more significant than your own, faith that comes from God. Nothing is too hard for Him. By faith, you will connect with the extraordinary, the All-Sufficient One.

Let's pray: Father, thank You for giving me a measure of faith. Please help me to use that faith in my walk through this life, believing You to provide not only for me but for others as well. I want to live an extraordinary life by trusting in Your promises. Increase my faith, Father. Amen.

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