

## Week 50

# Walking By Faith

### Key Verse

**2 Corinthians 5:7** "We walk by faith, not by sight."

## + Introduction

Have you ever tried walking through a room that is truly pitch black? There are few things more terrifying than having to move forward through a space where you cannot tell what is in front of you. Sometimes, we can move freely through a dark room if we already know the exact layout of the room. For example, if you wake up in the middle of the night in your bedroom needing a glass of water, you can probably walk through your room to get what you need because you know where everything is. However, to do this confidently, you need to assume that no one has moved the furniture around your room. If someone moved your dresser or a chair into your walking path, you might be in for a world of hurt when you walk directly into the corner with your foot!

For most of us, moving forward into the future feels a little bit like walking in the dark. We do not know exactly where we are going or what is in front of us, and we look for anything to light up our path. As Christians, the nature of our immediate future is just as mysterious as it is for any other person. However, we can walk confidently even in the dark because of **faith**. Faith gives us confidence in our long-term future, and it allows us to move forward even when we cannot see what is immediately in front of us. In this lesson, we are going to explore what it means to **live by faith**. As Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:7, "*We walk by faith, not by sight.*"

In the lesson today, we will look at what walking by faith is and what it is not. We will see how God's Word gives us direction on this path called life.

## + Walking by Faith Requires Belief

**Basic Truth:** The key ingredient of walking by faith is belief. It means placing the weight of our trust in Jesus.

The first important aspect that we must understand about faith is that its roots come from belief. The vital questions that we must answer are a) What is belief? And b) In what do we need to believe?

Regarding the definition of belief, there are a couple of different things to consider. The basic definition of 'believe' means "to accept or regard (something) as true."<sup>1</sup> However, the belief and faith that the New Testament teaches requires more than simple mental assent that something is true. There is an extra layer to biblical faith and belief, and that element is **trust**.<sup>2</sup> It is one thing to say, "I believe that this old rickety bridge is in good working order." It is another thing entirely to entrust that bridge with your weight by walking over it. Belief requires the willingness to put the weight of your life on something, trusting that it can hold you up.

Walking by faith means putting the weight of our trust in Jesus Himself. Walking by faith means believing that Jesus is the answer to all the deepest questions of our mind, the cure for all the hurts that wound us, and the truth that illuminates our purpose and calling.

In Mark chapter 9, Jesus encounters a man whose son is possessed by a demon. According to the man, the demon caused his son to be mute, giving him violent and dangerous seizures. The disciples were not able to cast the demon out, and the man told Jesus that his son had been this way since childhood. In a moment of desperation, the man says this to Jesus, *"It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!"* Jesus responds by saying, *"If You can? All things are possible to him who believes."* The father immediately realized his mistake and corrected himself, *"I do believe; help my unbelief."* (Mark 9:22-25)

This story beautifully illustrates the nature of faith and how God interacts with our faith for His purposes. The father has a deep hurt and need that he knows he cannot take care of by himself. His son is ravaged by the demon possessing him, and there is nothing the father can do to heal his boy. In desperation, he goes to Jesus with a glimmer of hope that something about Him might give Him the authority to heal the boy. Perhaps he had seen Jesus feed the four thousand just days before (Mark 8), and maybe he began to suspect that Jesus might be the Messiah. In an act of boldness, he asks Jesus to heal his son, saying, *"if you can."* Jesus seized on this, emphasizing that all things are possible for those who believe. The father acknowledges that he does believe while asking Jesus to help his unbelief.

Of course, Jesus did heal the boy, but the crux of this story involves the nature of belief. When Jesus found out that the disciples were not able to cast out the demon, He said, *"O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?"* (Mark 9:19) The disciples lacked the faith and belief to deal with the demon. The father acknowledged his own lack of belief to Jesus, yet it was still enough for Jesus to choose to act. While the man admits that his faith might not be **as much** as it should be, we find out that **the amount of faith is much less important than the object of one's faith**. Where did he place his faith? He believed that Jesus was able to heal the problems plaguing his son, and his faith was placed correctly.

The first step in walking by faith is the step of belief. We must learn to place our trust and the weight of our life on the person of Jesus, and on nothing else. Colossians chapter 1 tells us that Jesus is

the image of the invisible God, and that all things were created through Him and for Him, and that all things are held together in Him (Colossians 1:16). The meaning behind the material universe, behind every good and beautiful thing in life, behind every relationship, and behind every dream and passion is found in Jesus, Himself. Belief requires casting aside the unworthy things that we have looked to for comfort, security, pleasure, meaning, and purpose in favor of the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Philippians 3:8).

The life of faith is a life of belief. It is a life of belief that Jesus is the Son of God and is the answer to the deepest needs and desires of our hearts. It is a life of belief that God has our best interests at heart, and those things can only be found in Jesus, Himself.

## + Walking by Faith Requires Obedience

**Basic Truth:** Walking by Faith means walking in obedience to God's calling and His statutes.

If the first key ingredient in walking by faith is belief, then obedience is the second key ingredient. The correct response to belief at each stage is the willingness to follow through on the commands and expectations of God. Belief begets obedience, and God expects that those who believe in Him will walk in His ways. God makes it abundantly clear in His Word that He does not look for ornate sacrifices, beautiful words, or mighty works of power to be pleased. Instead, He looks for a humble, obedient heart.

**1 SAMUEL 15:22** *"Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."*

**HOSEA 6:6** *"For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."*

**JOHN 14:15** *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."*

As each of the above passages attests, obedience is the action that God is looking for as a sign and evidence of faith. The faith that makes us obey is alone the faith that marks the children of God.<sup>3</sup>

Israel's first king, Saul, repeatedly ran into issues when he chose to do what he wanted instead of obeying the commands of the Lord. When confronted with his disobedience in 1 Samuel 15 (he took the spoils from a battle when he was explicitly instructed not to do so), he responded by essentially saying, "but I built an altar and made sacrifices to the Lord!" Never mind the fact that he also built a monument to himself, Saul's issue was his lack of obedience. God did not want an altar or sacrifices to appease Him; He simply wanted Saul's faith and obedience. This lack of faith and obedience led to God's rejection of Saul as Israel's king, selecting David as the next king.

Hosea chapter 6 gives us a similar message from God, who was fed up with the disobedience of His people. Earlier in the book, we are given a picture of Hosea giving grace and taking back his wife, who repeatedly left him for a life of prostitution. This relationship was meant as a picture of Israel's betrayal of God and His grace toward them. In chapter 6, He tells the Israelites that their

sacrifices were meaningless and offensive to Him when not coupled with loyalty and faithfulness to the covenant. Faith in action looks like obedience.

Jesus speaks similarly to His disciples in John chapter 14, telling them that if they truly love Him, then they will keep His commandments (John 14:15, 23). Jesus has a similar conversation with Peter after the resurrection. Peter made a confession of faith in Jesus in Matthew chapter 16, saying, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."* But Peter was shaken after denying Jesus three times before His crucifixion. After appearing to Peter and the disciples resurrected, Jesus asks Peter three times, *"Do you love me?"* Each time Peter answered yes, and Jesus told him to *"Feed my sheep."* Jesus knew that Peter truly did love Him and had faith in Him, so Jesus gave him a job to obey. Faith is followed by obedience. You can trace the obedience of Peter throughout the book of Acts and 1 & 2 Peter.

Obedience is faith in action because it means that we are trusting that God's ways are better than the ways of the world or what we can come up with on our own. Obedience is a visible expression of our invisible faith. Remember, it was disobedience that broke the relationship between God and man as explained in Genesis (Genesis 2-3). Where the 'rubber meets the road' in walking by faith is in our willingness or unwillingness to walk in obedience. The question for each of us is this: will we continue to act in faith and obedience even when it is hard?

- Will we obey the Bible's sexual ethics, even when the world tells us differently?
- Will we obey God's call to be upright and have integrity, even when it is easier to cut corners in business?
- Will we obey God's command to be humble and serve, even when it is tempting to exploit our power and influence?

Day-to-day obedience is where our faith is lived out with every step we take and every decision we make.

## ✚ Walking by Faith Does Not Mean Walking Blindly

**Basic Truth:** Walking by faith is supported with reasonable evidence supporting belief. The witness of Scripture, our minds, the evidence of creation, and personal experiences of God's faithfulness support and bolster our faith.

We have covered the key ingredients of walking by faith: belief and obedience. Now we need to consider what this belief and obedience might look like over the course of a lifetime. When discussing faith, you might often hear someone talk about 'blind faith,' suggesting a belief completely devoid of evidence or reasons to believe. However, the kind of belief and obedience discussed in the Bible is anything but blind. In fact, those who believe see evidence of God's movement in their life all over the place.

**HEBREWS 11:1-2** *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it, the men of old gained approval."*

The author of Hebrews begins by defining the nature of faith. Faith means belief and confidence in something that we cannot quite see fully. Does this mean that the 'men of old' (the heroes of the faith) never saw evidence of God's faithfulness in their lives? Of course not! The author of Hebrews goes on to give a list of examples of those who walked by faith. You can read all of these in the entirety of Hebrews 11; here are a few:

**ABEL (11:4)**—brought an acceptable offering to God.

**ENOCH (11:5)**—lived a life pleasing to God through faith and was taken up with Him.

**NOAH (11:7)**—In faith obeyed God and built the ark.

**ABRAHAM (11:8)**—in faith responded to God with obedience by going to the Promised Land. In faith offered up Isaac to be sacrificed, even knowing that he was the promised son. He believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead!

**MOSES (11:23)**—In faith obeyed God in leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

**RAHAB (11:31)**—Responded to God in faith in Jericho and was spared.

We act in faith on God's promises just as Abraham and the others did, but we do that from a position of trust based on all the knowledge we have of God. For example, Abraham followed God's order based on his faith that God would keep His promise to raise up a nation through Isaac. Abraham knew that God would keep His promises by learning through a lifetime of walking with God; his was a reasoned and informed faith.<sup>4</sup>

After giving these examples and many more, the author of Hebrews brings the argument to a close by pointing to Jesus Himself, writing in Hebrews 12:1-2,

*"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

When we fix our eyes on Jesus, we are reminded of the result of our faith. We are reminded of the fact that Jesus saved us from sin, that He picked us up out of the habits and perversion of mind that led us to death, and that He has given us a hope and a future. Jesus, Himself, gave us the example by obeying the will of the Father, while looking forward confidently to the joy set before Him. Jesus knew that in His obedience, the Father would be glorified and that one day at His name, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2).

Jesus walked in obedience to the Father. He saw the future joy and glory that would come from His obedience. In the same way, the heroes of the faith responded to God with belief based on His movements and actions in their lives. Noah, Abraham, and Moses all took gigantic leaps of

faith and obedience toward God, but they also had legitimate reasons to believe in Him. They all communicated with Him and experienced the reality of His presence in their lives.

Walking by faith is a similar experience for us as well! We may not hear God audibly speak to us, but we can undoubtedly experience His presence and His faithfulness in our lives. Through the witness of the Bible, the community of other believers, the beauty of creation, and our personal experiences of God being faithful, we can know the reality of God's presence. We may not be able to see our way to the end, but we can have a confident expectation in Jesus' return, in life after death, and in the resurrection, because of the ways that we have already seen God move in our lives. Of course, we do not see things fully yet. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:12, *"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known."* Walking by faith looks like moving forward in obedience even when we cannot see exactly how the result will look, trusting that what is currently foggy will one day become clear.

Since our faith is not 'blind faith,' it is worthwhile to use our minds and hearts to understand God's Truth as fully and completely as possible. Walking by faith does not mean living an intellectually lazy life. It means using every gift, talent, and resource that God has given us to understand His nature and the nature of the world He has placed us in. We may not see everything clearly, but we are not walking blind.

## + Conclusion

At the beginning of this lesson, we talked about walking through a pitch-black room. Fortunately, a life of faith is not the same as walking in complete darkness. We may not be able to see everything clearly, but belief, obedience, and the experience of God's presence allow us to see enough to move forward. A life of faith helps us understand that we are not alone, that God loves us, and that our future is secure in Jesus Christ. We have hope and security in our Savior, and walking by faith leads to a full, rich life of love and meaning.

In John 8:12, Jesus says, *'I am the Light of the World.'* Though our culture is dark and seemingly getting darker by the day, Jesus is our light. The morals and ethics our children face each day in school are overwhelming and completely out of focus when considering a biblical worldview, but Jesus is our light. When we grieve the loss of a friend or loved one, emotionally, we can find ourselves in a dark place; but Jesus is our light.

It is our faith in Jesus that allows us to walk with confidence in this dark world with an unseen future. When we focus on the One who knows the future, we are able to walk by faith.

We have never been expected to walk in the darkness. In fact, we are to walk in the light.

**1 JOHN 1:5-7** *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/believe>

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, Intersity Press, 1999, p.308.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon\\_charles/sermons/2195.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon_charles/sermons/2195.cfm)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/blind-faith.html>