

How to Live a Life of Faith

Listed Scriptures

Acts 1-3, 16

Lesson Aim

- 1) That the students will know what activities a Christian should engage in as a fundamental aspect of their lives
- 2) That the students will examine their hearts and life-styles to see if they have been leading lives true to Christian values

Memory Verse

“That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Col 1:10)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Acts 1-6, 16

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The book of the Acts of the Apostles is probably the best account of what life was like for early Christians. Many of the believers then, such as the apostles, had personally been with the Lord Jesus Christ. For those who came to believe after the day of Pentecost, their faith and beliefs were in sync with their life-style.

For instance, in Acts 2:42 – 47, we read how they kept to the doctrines taught by the apostles and lived together as one community. In fact, the early believers’ life-style was so unique and they were such a closely-knit community that the label “Christians” was created for them (Acts 11:26). It is therefore important that students be instilled with a sense of “separateness” as children of God. They need to understand that in many ways, they cannot conform to the ways of their non-believing peers and the rest of the world.



Do you have any heroes of faith from the Bible? Who are your heroes of faith? Think of at least two great people of faith in the Bible. What do you think characterized their daily lives? How did they maintain their faith and walk with God?

Many great people of God are not always full time workers of God. In the Old Testament, God called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We know that these men had herds and servants to attend to. There are also men like Joseph, Daniel and Nehemiah who had positions in the palace, which probably meant their jobs were pretty challenging. Yet, these men managed to sustain lives of faith and walk closely with God. Today, we shall look into what a "life of faith" should entail.



Part 1

Great Men of Faith in the Old Testament

True faith is about walking with God all throughout one's lifetime. It is not just a moment of conversion or an occasion such as baptism or receipt of the Holy Spirit. A Christian is characterized by the way he leads his life and the things he does in his daily life. Let us now look at some biblical examples of Christian living. Read the following biblical sections concerning some great men of faith and then summarize what these saints of old did in their lives of faith. What would be the modern-day equivalent for you to emulate?

A . Jacob (Gen 28:17-22)

This event happened when Jacob was running away from the rage of his brother Esau, after having snatched the blessings for the firstborn from him. Empty-handed,

Jacob could not find any resting place when night fell. So, he simply slept in the open wilderness, with a rock as his pillow. That night, he dreamed of a ladder leading up to heaven and angels going up and down on that ladder. God was standing at the top of the ladder, and gave him a great promise: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

When Jacob awoke, he was full of awe, realizing that God was with him at this lonely place, throughout the night. In his gratitude, he set up an altar with the stone he had slept on during the night and poured oil over it as a form of offering. He also made a vow to offer a tenth of all that he would have if God allowed him to come back safely to this place, which he named Bethel, meaning "House of God."

This event is a very important lesson for us believers today. We should rely on God anytime and anywhere, like Jacob did. Walking with God means to always be sensitive to His presence and to always be ready to offer thanks to Him.

B . David (1 Sam 30:7-8)

This is one of the tumultuous events David had to go through before he became king. This time, the Amalekites came to one of his cities, burnt it down and abducted all the children and women. Even David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, were among those captured. The people were in great sorrow and in their distress, wanted to stone David to death. It was definitely a very gloomy situation for David. He must have felt afraid, lost and anxious.

Instead of despairing, David "strengthened himself in the Lord" (1 Sam 30:6). He then asked the priest to bring the ephod to him and he consulted the Lord, whether he should fight back. God's assurance came to him when he sought Him, and finally, David and his men had victory over the Amalekites.

The lesson to be learned here is to never despair even when things look really dark and pessimistic. We should always turn to the Lord for guidance as to how to move on and always seek His help. As God had helped David when he called out to Him, surely God will do the same for His children today.

C. Daniel (Dan 6:4, 5, 10)

This is one of the famous stories about Daniel. Being excellent in his work, and with God's blessings, Daniel had risen to become the most trusted man of the king of Persia, King Darius. This drew the jealousy of the other officials at court. They conspired to find some fault in Daniel so they could oust him from the king's presence, thereby giving them a chance to rise in power. They could find no fault in Daniel. But they found out that Daniel, unlike them, worshiped the God of Israel. They devised a scheme to get rid of Daniel, even causing him to lose his life! They went to the king to ask him to approve of a decree "that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions."

As a subject of the king, Daniel was bound by this decree. That meant that he could not bow down to his God, the true and living God. As the second most powerful man in the kingdom, second only to the king, Daniel's life was inevitably under much scrutiny. What was he to do? Should he continue to worship God and defy the king's decree, and risk losing his life? Or, should he obey the decree and hope that God would understand his predicament? Of course, we all know what Daniel did. He went home immediately to pray to God, as was his custom. He was found out and then thrown into the lions' den. We also know that God delivered him from the lions and the king was thereby convinced of the greatness of God.

Daniel's situation may be similar to some of the situations we face today: dilemmas that sometimes force us to choose between God and other things on earth. What do we do? Daniel has set us a good example.

Another lesson to learn from Daniel is how he relied on God. No matter how pressing and urgent the situation was, the first thing he did was still to kneel down and pray. This gives us a good example of how we can deal with the emergencies or troubles in our lives – put God first.

D. Ezra (7:10)

Ezra was one of the leaders of the Israelites when they returned to Jerusalem, during the Persian rule, to rebuild the city. After years of exile, many of the Israelites had been assimilated into foreign culture. They had not held fast to the words of God. Many of them had forgotten the laws of God. Ezra was a scribe, and can be seen as a religious leader. He knew that he had to be equipped with the word of

God himself before he could lead the people back to worshipping and keeping God's commandments. Hence, he "prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel."

This attitude is surely worthy of our emulation. In order to effectively serve God, we must be well versed with the words of God. We should also be practicing God's words in our lives, before we can go on to help others.



Part 2

Great Men of Faith in the New Testament

A. The Early Believers (Acts 2:44-47, 9:4, 17:11)

These verses describe to us what some of the believers and truth-seekers during the time of the apostles were like:

Earliest believers right after the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2:44-47): They continued in the words of God and the teachings of the apostles. They had a lot of fellowship with one another, eating together and sharing their possessions. This is the true spirit of being one family in the Lord Jesus.

When persecution against the Christians began, the believers at Jerusalem had no choice but to flee to other cities. However, they were not abandoning the words of God nor their faith. In fact, wherever they were scattered, they went about preaching the gospel to people in those new areas (Acts 8:4). Do we preach the gospel today, even when times are peaceful and we do not face any persecution?

Truth-seekers in Berea (Acts 17:11): "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

Teaching Tips

Read these biblical references carefully and familiarize yourself with the contexts of these verses. Then, elaborate on these characters' motivations and actions to your students after they have written down their own summaries.

B. Peter and John (Acts 3:1-9)

Peter and John (Acts 3:1-9)

This is the miracle that Peter performed at the gate named Beautiful. He cured a crippled man and made him walk, although this man had been lame from birth. This event serves as a reminder to us of the power of God. This power should be the same today as it was back then. We often lose sight of this fact. We are so afraid to tell people around us about God and His power. We should learn to be like Peter and John, spreading the blessings of God to people anywhere and everywhere we go.

D. Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25)

Paul and Silas were in Philippi when they met a girl who was possessed, controlled by sorcerers. They cast the demon out of that girl. Since the girl had been healed, the masters of this girl lost their source of income. These men then turned Paul and Silas in to the authorities who then put them into prison.

Instead of being worried about whether they were to be released from prison, Paul and Silas sang hymns, while other prisoners listened. This is a very good testimony of complete trust in God. Do we do the same in our daily lives, whatever our circumstances are?

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1

What does it mean to build altars to God?

2

What do you think Daniel's prayer was about in Daniel 6:10? The Bible records that he gave thanks in his prayer. How could he give thanks when his life was in danger?

3

What were some of the admirable deeds of the early believers during the time of the apostles?

4

What do you think were the main reasons why the early apostolic church grew as quickly as it did?

5

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned, they were able to sing hymns. What do you think was in their minds when they were singing hymns in their prison cells?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



When and How to Pray

Part A- The following excerpt is adapted from page 44 of "A New Life in Christ" (part of the Discipleship Series © 2000 True Jesus Church).

A Piece of Advice Concerning Prayer

One brother, John, thus advises: "You should try to pray every day. Prayer is essential for every Christian. When you wake up in the morning, make sure you have a quick prayer before you leave the house. Before bedtime, you should kneel down and pray for at least one minute. I try to squeeze in at least 1 minute of prayer when I wake up and about 5 minutes before I go to bed. Sometimes, I'm really tired out and don't know what I'm praying about, but I feel prayer is a part of my Christian duty. Anyway, I think having a consistent prayer life makes God happy. So, regardless of how busy you are, you should always remember to pray."

Questions to think about:

1. Analyze this piece of advice. Is it good advice? What are the good points about this piece of advice?
2. What do you think John's prayer life is like? What do you think his prayer content is about?
3. What is your prayer life like? What is your ideal life of prayer? How well-matched are the two?
4. What changes would you make to improve on this piece of advice given by John?

Part B- Most, if not all, of us are familiar with "The Lord's Prayer." We have learnt it by heart and can rattle it off without any problem. Yet, how many of us truly look into the content of the prayer? Have we ever cared to examine what the prayer is all about?

The Lord's Prayer is the prayer that the Lord Jesus used to teach His disciples when they asked Him to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1). Hence, it is surely more than something for us to simply memorize and recite. It is an outline teaching us what we should pray about. More importantly, it is a guideline for us in the way we lead our lives.

Let us now look more closely at this prayer. Here is a poem written as a reflection on the Lord's Prayer.

*I cannot say "Our Father,"
if I do not demonstrate the relationship in my daily life.
I cannot say, "in Heaven,"
if I am so occupied with the earth that I am laying up no treasure there.
I cannot say, "Hallowed be Your Name,"
if I, who am called by His name, am not holy.
I cannot say, "Your will be done,"
if I am questioning, resentful of or disobedient to His will for me.
I cannot say, "On earth as it is in Heaven,"
if I am not prepared to devote my life here to His service.
I cannot say, "Give us this day our daily bread,"
if I am worrying about my livelihood.
I cannot say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,"
if I harbor a grudge against anyone.
I cannot say, "Do not lead us into temptation,"
if I deliberately place myself, or remain in a position where I am likely to be tempted.
I cannot say, "But deliver us from the evil one,"
if I am not prepared to fight the spiritual battle with the weapon of prayer.
I cannot say, "Yours is the Kingdom,"
if I do not accord the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.
I cannot say, "and the power,"
if I fear what men may do, or what my neighbor may think.
I cannot say, "and the glory,"
if I am seeking glory for myself.
I cannot say, "Forever,"
if my horizon is bounded by the things of time.
(Author unknown)*

This poem has given us merely one perspective to what the Lord's Prayer is about. The author applies the Lord's Prayer to what one ought to think and do in one's life.

The Lord's Prayer also teaches us the content of our prayers. For instance, in our prayers, we can pray and meditate upon how to have God's will done on earth as it is in Heaven. We could pray about church progress. We could pray about our own decision-making. We can also pray about our own weaknesses in our character and life-style.

Now, let's attempt a similar reflection on the Lord's Prayer as the author of the poem did. Complete the sentence for each line of the prayer below. As we write, think about what we should be praying about in our prayers, and what our lives should be like.

*I cannot say "Our Father,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "in Heaven,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "Hallowed be Your Name,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "Your will be done,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "On earth as it is in Heaven,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "Give us this day our daily bread,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "Do not lead us into temptation,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "But deliver us from the evil one,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "Yours is the Kingdom,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "and the power,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "and the glory,"
if I _____.
I cannot say, "Forever,"
if I _____.*

Author: _____ (student's name)



Let us sing Hymn 399 as a conclusion. As we sing, let us meditate upon the words. Think about how we can truly be what the words depict in these four verses:

- 1. Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.*
- 2. Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.*
- 3. Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.*
- 4. Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart..*

The words mention only "in my heart," But, we know that a true Christian must have acts to accompany his inner faith. Actually, the heart is the starting point of all our actions. Proverbs 4:23 is a good reminder to us, as to why the heart is so important: "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life." Let us start with our hearts, and then show our faith through our actions, that we may live victorious lives as Christians living out the teachings of God, thus glorifying His name.