

Lifting Up Jesus

#5

FAITH—WHAT IS IT?

How do we get to know God? The same way we get to know anybody else. In order to be acquainted with anyone three things are necessary. First, talk to them. Second, listen to them. Third, go places and do things together. Those are the ingredients of communication. However, how do I know God is there?

We take advantage of many things we cannot see. How long has it been since you saw electricity? You can't see the wind. We can't see this mysterious thing called "life". Nevertheless, we can see the results of all of the above.

Even though we cannot see God or hear His voice with our human equipment we can still see the working of His power; and by taking advantage of the avenues of communication that He has given to us, we can come to know Him. It's knowing Him that we learn to trust Him.

1. How important is the experience of faith? *Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 10:38*

2. What can be misunderstood concerning faith? *Luke 17:5, 6*

Note: Faith is not measured by how much. A little faith, if it is genuine, does the impossible.

3. What is genuine faith? *Matthew 15:21–28*

Note: This Gentile woman had great faith, but Jesus seemingly ignored, spurned and even insulted her. Yet she continues to TRUST Him. The best definition of faith is TRUST. It is depending upon another!

A tightrope walker was crossing Niagara Falls. After he had held the crowds spellbound with his daring, he asked, "How many of you believe I could cross the tightrope again, this time pushing a wheelbarrow with someone riding in it?" The crowds applauded. They were sure he could do it. Then he said, "Who will volunteer to ride the wheelbarrow?" There was a vast

silence. The audience had just been reminded of the vital difference between belief and trust. It is one thing to believe that the wheelbarrow would make it safely across the chasm. It is quite another thing to put your life on the line. That's the kind of faith that is truly genuine!

4. How do we learn to trust someone? 2 Timothy 1:12

5. How do we get to know God?

- a. Listening to—*Romans 10:17, John 20:31*
- b. Talking to—*Philippians 4:6, Luke 11:9–13*
- c. Working with—*Matthew 11:29*

6. Is faith something we work on or work up? Romans 12:3, Hebrews 12:2

Note: Faith is a gift from God. It becomes more genuine as we spend time with Jesus.

7. How does God help us to be certain of His will? Isaiah 30:21

Note: God promises to guide us in His will.

There are three ways that God reveals His will to us.

A. Through His word (Psalm 119:105, Joshua 1:8)

Note: The Scriptures are a very reliable source of finding God's will on any given subject. Much wisdom can be obtained regarding finances, parenting, or any number of moral issues. If you need guidance on a matter, always consult the Bible for guidance first.

B. Through providence or circumstances (Proverbs 3:5, 6; Psalm 37:23)

Note: God will often bring circumstances into one's life in order to reveal His will to us. When we are in prayer regarding life decisions such as a job or a residence we need to look for open or closed doors.

C. Direct communication to the heart (Acts 8:26–40)

Note: Sometimes the Holy Spirit will impress upon your heart His will to you. Often times it is helpful to pray very specifically to the Lord regarding certain matters that we are unclear about. For instance, you might pray that if such and such is Your will, then I pray that you will continue to impress me strongly regarding this but if this is not Your will, then I pray that you will take this idea from me.

An example of this is one who prayed about an offered job opportunity. They prayed that if this job opportunity were in God's will for them, their excitement would continue to grow stronger and stronger. And if this were not God's will, that He would take this idea away.

*As soon as that prayer was uttered, the person couldn't even remember the name of the company. They knew instantly that it **was not** God's will for them. Six months later, the company folded! God knows the end from the beginning! By being in the very center of His will we have peace in our lives.*

8. Do we need faith in order for God to work in our lives? Matthew 9:22, 28, 29

Note: Faith is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit transacts God's power in our lives. Without faith, it is impossible for God to impart His forgiveness and transformation. "Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say," I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised." Steps to Christ p. 24.

9. What if you don't have the faith required for God to be able to work in your life? (Mark 9:20–27)

Note: We have only to ask God for the faith we need since faith ultimately comes from Him anyway. We shall never be at place for which God cannot make provision in our lives. "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." He is faithful to help us at any time in our need of Him.

Conclusion: The spiritual promises (for forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, etc.) are always available. But the promises for temporal blessings, even for life itself, are given on occasion and withheld, on occasion, as God's will sees best.

Faith still trusts God even when things don't work out the way we want them to. It is easy to trust God when life is going smoothly. The real test of faith comes when our prayers seem unanswered.

The truth is that we don't work on our righteousness nor do we work on faith. Both are gifts. Both come as a result of knowing Jesus. Moreover, knowing Jesus comes as a result of spending time in prayer and communion with Him. If we will come to Him, He will supply to us the genuine faith that we need.¹

¹ Lewis, K. A. (2010). *Lifting up Jesus: Bible Study Lessons*. Walla Walla, WA: Karen Ann Lewis.