



*On Why Christians Have  
Difficulty Living By Faith*

By

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Teaching Notes are Bible studies we taught before GraceLife Ministries began publishing articles online in 1995. Some were presented as sermons, others as group studies.

Our hope is that these older studies will be a blessing to you in your life and ministry. Please use them in any way God leads you.

These teaching notes are from a series of broadcast studies about faith.

[These notes are from a radio broadcast study taught more than 40 years ago.]

Last week I promised that we'd share four reasons why Christians have difficulty living by faith. I've found in talking with Christians that most want to live by faith, but many say they can't.

First, let me dispel the idea that you can't live by faith. You can live by faith because God's Word tells you too and you can do anything God asks of you. A better way to state it would be to say that we may not know how or won't live by faith.

## **Fear**

One of the most stated reasons for not walking by faith is FEAR. Many Christians are afraid to live by faith. They are afraid of what might or might not happen. If you are afraid to live by faith, then you have alerted a friend or counselor to a basic problem in your life - immaturity in love.

1 John 4:18 reads - "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

The word "perfect" used in 1 John 4:18 means "complete, mature." An amplification of the verse might be - "There is no fear in love [dread does not exist]. But perfect (complete, full-grown) love drives out fear, because fear involves [the expectation of divine] punishment, so the one who is afraid [of God's judgment] is not perfected in love [has not grown into a sufficient understanding of God's love]." (AMP)

There is a great need in our lives to have a deep understanding of what Christ's love really is and how it operates. The Apostle Paul prayed in Ephesians 3 -

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephesians 3:16-19

Paul first prayed in verse 16 that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit. That would lead to their making a home that Christ could finally settle down into and feel at home in their hearts. We are to be rooted and grounded in love. In other words, that we would have a foundation of love so we would be able to comprehend and grasp with other saints the experience of that love.

The love of Jesus Christ is experiential and can be known. The knowing of this love day after day will mature us to the point that the foundation and building of love will cast out all our fears.

- You won't fear death because you know God loves you.
- You won't fear hurt because you know God loves you.
- You won't fear loneliness because you know God loves you and is always with you.

- You won't fear persecution because you know that God loves you.
- You won't fear the new day because you know God made it for you. God loves you.
- You won't fear the night because you know God made it for you. He loves you.
- You won't fear separation from a loved one because you know God will pour out His infinite love upon you and give you the strength you need.
- You won't fear troubled times because you know God loves you and is working everything for your good.

In other words - perfect, complete, mature love casts out every fear and gives lasting peace.

## **Worry/Anxiety**

Another reason Christians do not walk and live by faith is worry and anxiety. The root problem is often living by temporal values. Instead of living by an eternal value system, we often opt for the temporal - those things we can see but last for only a short time.

Many times the inner tension of worry shows up on the outside through self-criticism, a complaining attitude, open hostility, argumentation, underachievement, and an excess concern about material things. This worry can be caused by a belief of being inferior which leads to insecurity and fear. Of course, there are those who live temporally simply because they don't care about God and His Word, but I'm speaking primarily to those Christians who really want to live by faith but have difficulty doing that.

First of all, let me say you cannot "get up enough faith" in God. The Scripture teaches that faith is a gift from God. The faith to believe in God is placed into you by God for salvation and there for you now to use in the process of living by faith. I cannot "get up the faith" to believe in God for salvation because prior to salvation I had a reprobate and disobedient mind. If God didn't call me through His grace and give me the faith to believe in Him, I would never have been saved.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."  
Ephesians 2:8-9

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Romans 3:27-28

God gives us faith to believe Him. What we need to do now is yield ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit and He will give us the faith to live by faith. All credit goes to God.

## Rocks in Springs

There are nine things we cannot "get up" in the flesh. They are listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

This is the "fruit" of the Spirit of God, not the fruit of our flesh.

When we are lost and alive in the flesh, we are spiritually dead in sin. Our works are these:

- adultery
- fornication
- uncleanness
- lasciviousness
- idolatry
- witchcraft
- hatred
- variance
- emulations
- wrath
- strife
- seditions
- heresies

- envyings
- murders
- drunkenness
- revellings
- and such like

But when we are saved we become brand new individuals. We die to the flesh and come alive in and to the Spirit.

The fruit Christians see in their life should be -

- love
- joy
- peace
- longsuffering
- gentleness
- goodness
- faith
- meekness
- temperance

Notice that "faith" is listed as one of the things the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian's life.

If you're a child of God, you can love .. you can have peace .. you can have joy .. you can suffer long .. you can be gentle .. you can be good .. you can be meek .. you can be temperate .. and you can have faith.

You can have faith!

How often have we heard Christians say, "I just cannot believe that this or that will happen." Why would you think that way? Because you've thrown a rock over the spring. Let me illustrate.

In John 7:38-39, Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

We know that Jesus was speaking figuratively here about what the Spirit of God would do in a believer's life. "... rivers of living water" will flow from us as we live for God by the power of God that lives in us (the Holy Spirit).

In John 4 we learn that Jesus is the source of this living water -

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst;

but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:10-14

A friend of mine once shared with me that when he was a little boy he lived in the country. Near to his house was a large spring of water and every day he would go to drink from that bountiful flow of crystal clear, ice cold water. His family eventually moved away and it was more than 20 years before the boy, now a man, returned to the old homestead to see what had become of it.

As he was walking around the property he remembered that wonderful spring and thought to himself, "what a treat to drink from that ice cold spring on this hot summer day." He walked to where the spring had been, but it wasn't there. It was all dry ground. He wondered to himself, "what happened to the spring? Where did it go? Did the water stop flowing? Did it dry up?"

Sometimes that's how we feel about our life as Christians. We remember the power that we once had with God. We remember the blessed fellowship that we had with Jesus. We remember the times we used to drink from the spiritual fountain of blessing. We remember how refreshed we were after a season of precious prayer and fellowship with our Lord and Savior. But things changed through the years. The joy doesn't flow any longer. We can't seem to love the way we used to love. We don't know the peace we once knew. We struggle to be gentle and kind. We don't suffer long. We don't live by faith. We ask ourselves, "what happened? Did I lose my salvation? Did God forsake me? Is there any hope?"

My friend told me that as he looked at the dry ground where the spring had once flowed, he decided to dig into the ground to see what may have caused the problem. As my friend dug through the dirt he found that rocks, limbs and leaves had fallen into the spring through the years since he had moved away. He remembered how he used to clean out the spring regularly so nothing would stop the flow of the cold, pure water.

As my friend removed all of the debris, he came to a large rock that had fallen over the hole of the spring. He lifted the large rock from the hole and immediately cold clear, refreshing water began to flow like it had before. The water had always been there, but the rock and debris had kept it from coming to the surface where the water would be available for drinking.

As I listened to my friend's story, I thought about how that is what often happens in our lives. We allow the the debris of sin to cover the flow of spiritual water we have available to us in Christ. We allow disobedience, worry, anxiety, and temporal living to choke out the life of Christ from within to flow to the surface of our lives where we can be strengthened and refreshed for spiritual service. We need to dig deep and clean out sin from our hearts and remove the stones and sins that so easily beset us and once again receive "refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

Why can't we live by faith? Because of sin. We've disobeyed God. We've let the cares of this world take over our minds and hearts and rule us. We've become greedy for temporal blessings and have forgotten about that which is eternal.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3

Jesus wants to be Lord of every area of our life. He can be, but we need to cooperate with Him. God's Word tells us how we can and should live. We need to realize that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). We need to stop being insecure in ourselves and find our security in Christ. Why worry when we can pray and see the hand of God on our life?

God has called us to live by faith and He will give us the faith to do that.

"I care not today what the morrow may bring, If shadow or sunshine or rain,  
The Lord I know ruleth o'er everything, And all of my worries are vain."

Living by faith in Jesus above, Trusting, confiding in His great love;  
From all harm safe in His sheltering arm, I'm living by faith and feel no alarm.

Though tempests may blow and the storm clouds arise, Obscuring the  
brightness of life, I'm never alarmed at the overcast skies— The Master  
looks on at the strife.

I know that He safely will carry me through, No matter what evils  
betide; Why should I then care though the tempest may blow, If Jesus  
walks close to my side.

Our Lord will return for His loved ones some day, Our troubles will then  
all be o'er; The Master so gently will lead us away, Beyond that blest  
heavenly shore." Wells / Winsett

During the past couple of weeks we've been sharing with you about the subject of faith. Last week we started giving four reasons why Christians don't live by faith. The first two were fear and worry.

Today, I'd like to get into the third reason why Christians don't live by faith. It's a little word called PRIDE.

## Pride

A person's pride can cause them to think they don't really need God for everything. It's the characteristic of an independent spirit.

It's interesting how we look to God in a totally dependent way for salvation, but then become independent in how we live.

We say, "Oh, God, I'm a sinner. I'm lost and ask for your forgiveness. Oh, Lord, give me eternal life. I repent of my sins. I believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. Amen."

And then a few months later it's, "Uh, sorry Lord. I'd really like to help you out at church or with my family or with lost people, but I'm really busy right now and just don't have the time. Please call again later and maybe I can do something for you then."

Or, "Thanks a lot Lord for giving me eternal life and as soon as I get to Heaven I promise that I'll do everything you say. But right now I've got a life to live, so let's not talk about obedience to your Word."

Or, "Lord, I'm young right now and have a whole life ahead of me. I promise that when I get older and am about ready to die I'll give you what time and energy I have left (if there's any left)."

That may sound funny or silly, but that's how many Christians live. It's like saying, "Now, God, I know you're the Creator of the universe and in charge and everything, but let's admit it .. I do know how to run my life better than you do. I'll tell you what, God, you just keep me safe from hell and reserve a place in Heaven for me and I'll stop by your house every once in awhile and make sure things are going alright."

Pride and the independent spirit are the cause for many Christians living by sight and not by faith. The Scripture has much to say about pride and an independent spirit.

"When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." Proverbs 11:2

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."  
Proverbs 16:18

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1  
John 2:16

Jesus hit the whole thing right on the head when He said, speaking to one of the early churches -

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Revelation 3:17-18

Notice that Jesus said the people in this church thought they were rich and in need of nothing when, in reality, they were poor and in need of everything.

They were rich in goods and material things because that was their focus of attention and personal intent, but they were poor in spiritual things and in desperate need of God in their lives. Some of them were saved, but just barely it seemed - by the skin of their teeth we might say.

So many Christians think they know it all. Just ask them. "Well, I've been to such and such college or seminary and there isn't anything more God could possibly teach me."

We hear this often as we hold crusades across the country -

"Who? Me need revival? Pish-tosh! If there's anybody in this country who's revived, it's certainly me."

"What? Our church need revival? Why we're the most revived people in this whole city."

That attitude reminds me of the Pharisee who stood and prayed, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." (Luke 18:11)

Many Christians believe they're good with God because they don't do the things on their DO NOT DO list. It doesn't work that way. There is a lot more to being a dynamic follower of Jesus Christ than following a Do and Do Not list.

On this radio program, week after week, we've shared scores of testimonies from church members who said they did all the right things and looked like good Christians, when all the while they were vile and wretched inside.

Unfortunately, we've heard the terrible stories of deacons and youth directors having sex with teenage girls from the church. We've heard about pastors who have been caught having affairs with married women in their churches. On and on we could go with everything from fornication to

adultery to incest to dishonesty to outright stealing and embezzling by church leaders.

We as American Christians have little to be proud about. It's been the pride and independent spirit that's caused our eyes to be blinded to the will of God in the first place. We get all puffed up in our own abilities and that's just about the time we fall flat on our face.

We're familiar with churches where the pastor "stepped out on faith," only to get his church into deep debt because of unscriptural borrowing. What causes that? Is God squelching on deals He made with pastors? Does God call church leaders to step out on faith to do a particular thing, then not live up to His promises? That's what it looks like to many unsaved people.

"Hey, did you hear about such and such church? They said God was going to provide a miracle, so they borrowed money to buy property and build a big building on it and now they can't make the payments. What a laugh!"

Shame on us.

Why do Christian leaders do that? Why do we want things and tack on "it's God will" or "God told me" to try to make our sinful pride and greed look respectable?

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Revelation 3:15-16

It would seem that Jesus gets sick of our pride and conceit .. sick of the games we play with His Church.

It seems to me that unless Christians respond to God in humility and repent as Jesus said, He is going to spue out the American church and allow us to be controlled by an atheistic form of government. That's just my personal belief, but I am concerned our days as a nation of free people are numbered. We need to do as Jesus said and repent of our sin of pride.

I'll share more tomorrow about pride and how it affects our Christian walk, but here's an important reminder as we leave you today -

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Revelation 3:19



On yesterday's broadcast I shared with you the third reason why Christians don't walk and live by faith. The reason is pride and an independent spirit.

How many times do we have a problem and do everything in our power to solve it and when we fail miserably we run to God and cry out for His help. It's like the parents who spend 15 years trying to raise their children their way and when they can't do anything about their child's rebellious attitude they run to a pastor or Christian counselor for help. Why didn't the parents ask for help years earlier when they were struggling with the early signs of rebellion in their child? Often the answer is pride.

We often don't want to humble ourselves to God or anyone else and admit we need help. We often struggle saying those simple words - "I was wrong. I need help." Many of us think incorrectly that if we admit we're wrong about something and ask for help we're a failure as a parent, as a person. That's not true, but pride often stands in our way.

I've attended enough crusades to know that this principle of admitting our failures works and is powerful. I know from my own personal relationships with family and friends that this principle is powerful. Its a very humbling thing to clear our conscience with another person ... to say, "I've wronged you. Will you forgive me?" That's humbling! But it's also where revival can begin in a relationship, in a family, in a church.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Proverbs 16:18

Pride does go before destruction! One of the major reasons why families and churches are failing today is because dads and pastors and deacons and church members are proud. That pride is destroying relationships, families and churches across our country. It will be humility that brings power and peace to us.

Pride is indicative of an independent spirit. So many Christians want to be eternally safe, but that's as far as they want the relationship to go with God. "Save me, but nothing more!" "Give to me, but don't take anything from me!" That's often our response to our loving and gracious God.

Listen, Christian. We owe God everything. If it hadn't been for God's grace, we would have never heard about salvation. We would have never been able to place our faith and trust in His salvation. In fact, if it hadn't been for God's grace there would never have been a Savior. Not only that, but the Bible teaches that we have been bought with a price and are not our own. We don't belong to self .. we belong to God. We are His property now. We should gladly and willingly be dependent on Him, but we so often are totally independent of Him. It really doesn't matter what God thinks .. it's what we think.

I heard a recent illustration that might help us see what I'm saying. In a recent crusade in Memphis, Tennessee, a young man walked up to one of our counselors and asked if he would pray with him. After praying about a specific problem, the young man began to weep and for something that was totally unscriptural. The counselor spent a half-hour showing the young man from the Bible, verse after verse, that his desire was not what

God wanted for him. After all of that time, the young man looked at the counselor and said, "I don't care what the Bible says, I still want to do it!"

That is the attitude of so many Christians "I know what God's Word says, but I don't care. I want to do what I want to do." However, contrary to this line of thinking let me share with you what God says about having a dependent spirit.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it:  
except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."  
Psalm 127:1

That's a good principle for pastors. Only God can build His Church.

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of

every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:11-16

God calls pastors to equip Christians for the work (service) God has called them to do for Him. If pastors try to do that in their own power, they labor in vain. The pastor and staff and congregation are trying to build the church with their ideas, their methods, their programs, their gimmicks, their fleshly know-how .. but it's all in vain.

In John 3, there had arose a question between the disciples of John the Baptist and the Jews about the subject of purification -

" And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." John 3:26-27

Jesus taught His disciples saying -

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5

Without Christ we can do nothing! How silly of us to think that anything would ever be accomplished for eternity without Jesus, and yet many of us live that way. We act without Christ .. we react without Christ .. we go to church without Christ .. we raise our children without Christ .. we pastor churches without Christ .. we even pray without Christ .. we try to win souls without Christ .. we try to build marriages and families without Christ. Jesus said that "without me ye can do nothing."

The Apostle Paul put it very well in 2 Corinthians 3 when he wrote -

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

We are helpless without God in everything we do.

King David presented this principle of total dependence on Christ when he said -

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me." Psalm 116:6

Why doesn't God help many of us? Because we have not been brought low.

So often we don't receive help from the Lord until we've been humbled. Why? In 1 Peter 5:5, the Apostle wrote -

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

How about that? God resists the proud! He gives grace to the humble! Could this be why so many of us are experiencing the trials and sorrows and heartaches of our present circumstances? Could it be that God is resisting us because of our pride? Could it be that He is withholding grace until we humble ourselves before Him?

God has promised much to the humble Christian .. to the child with a dependent spirit -

"Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." Psalm 138:6

Isaiah 66:2 reads -

"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Luke 14:11 reads -

"For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

I'm sure that everyone of us wants to please God and be exalted in His sight as obedient children. The secret is humility! There is no other way. Only through humility in life and purpose can we know the blessings of God.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Have I been proud in my life and attitude toward others?
- Have I tried to exalt myself in the family of God?
- Is my pride really a coverup for my failures as a person .. as a Christian?

If you answer "yes" to those questions, let me suggest that we bow before the Lord right now and ask God to forgive us for the sin of pride and an independent spirit. Let's seek His face this day for the power to turn from the wickedness of pride to the righteousness of a humble spirit and contrite heart.

"These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Proverbs 6:16-19



In previous broadcasts we've looked at living by faith. I mentioned that there are basically four reasons why Christians don't live by faith.

- Fear
- Worry
- Pride

## Relationship to Father

When someone asks why they can't seem to trust God and live by faith or why they fear God in certain situations, I often ask them about their relationship to their father as they were growing up. In most cases, people who had problems with trusting their father as children also had problems trusting God. Some people look at God in similar ways to how they looked to their fathers.

Christians raised in homes where the father was consistent in his walk with God and lived up to his promises usually had little problem living by faith. However, Christians raised in homes where the father was inconsistent in his walk with God and often did not live up to his promises often had problems living by faith. Trust is act of habit and experience. After we were born we either learned the habit of trust or distrust.

What was your relationship with your father when you were growing up? Did he instill in you an ability and habit of trusting or did you grow up having difficulty trusting? If your answer is that you had trouble trusting during your

growing up years, you may have discovered one reason why you struggle living by faith now.

So, what now? What do you do if that's what you discovered? You need to work on the habit of trust. Begin developing projects that take a definite step of faith to accomplish and don't do it alone. Talk with your husband or wife, your pastor or a close friend whose walk with God you respect. Share with them your struggle and ask for their help as you change the spiritual habit of trust.

The "faith life" needs to be continual - like a good habit.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

[Thank you for reading these teaching notes from more than 40 years ago. My prayer is they will be a blessing to you and your ministry.]