

Imagine how different your outlook on life would be if your **FAITH** was so big that you had absolute confidence that God was with you? Imagine how differently you would respond to difficulties, temptations, and even good things if your **FAITH** were big enough to make you certain God was leveraging all of it for good? In this series we want to look at **5 things God uses to move us forward** so we can be people of **BIG FAITH**.

“When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, **“I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel!”**” *Matthew 8:10*

Big Faith

BIG FAITH

Practical Teaching

Providential Relationships

Private Disciplines

Personal Ministry

Pivotal Circumstances

Week 1 - Practical Teaching

Weekend of September 6th

Knowing the Bible is important, but our faith grows big by acting on what we have learned.

Practical teaching **Leads Us To Action**

Pay Attention to
what God says

Trust
what God says

Obey
what God says

“Unapplied truth is like paint. It doesn’t do anybody any good until it is applied.”

– Andy Stanley

From the Bible:

“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.” When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.”

Matthew 7:24–29, NLT

Discussion questions

1. When Bible truth is communicated clearly, do you expect it to be soothing or disturbing?
2. Read Matthew 7:24–28. This parable refers back to Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Why do you think Jesus used this parable at the end of his sermon? What does this tell us about Jesus’ expectations regarding those listening to his teaching?
3. According to this parable, why is it important to put Jesus’ words into practice? How would that be rejected in your life?
4. Have you ever applied a specific teaching of Scripture that, looking back, prepared you for an unexpected storm? How does this relate to the “ultimate storm” of God’s final judgement?
5. How different do you think your financial situation would be today if for the past five years you’d consistently applied what the Scriptures teach about finances? How about if you had consistently applied scriptural teaching on relationships during that time? What would be different today in your marriage, family, or friendships?

Week 2
Providential Relationships

Weekend of September 13th

**The primary way God grows our faith
is by relationships.**

**God uses relationships
to grow my faith
*when I choose to:***

Discern my relationships.

Take next steps.

Love enough to get 'listed'.

From the Bible:

“Walk with the wise and become wise;
associate with fools and get in trouble.”

Proverbs 13:20, NLT

“Don't be fooled by those who say such
things, for “bad company corrupts good
character.””

1 Corinthians 15:33, NLT

Discussion questions

1. Looking back, are there people you feel God providentially brought into your life at crucial times? Who are they, and how did God use them? Also, how have you seen God do this in the lives of your family members or your friends?
2. Can you recall a time when it seemed God brought someone across your path who could have helped you, but you resisted the relationship?
3. Are there people who would say God providentially dropped you into their lives?
4. In Proverbs 13:20, what's the promise to those who “walk with the wise”? What is the consequence of “being a companion of fools”?
5. Why do you think Proverbs 13:20 does NOT say: “He who walks with the wise becomes wise, but a companion of fools becomes a fool”?
6. Respond to the statement: “Your friends will determine the direction and quality of your life.” Why do you think this is true or false.

Week 3 Private Disciplines

Weekend of September 20th

The routine of private disciplines deepens our trust in God

Private disciplines

1. **allow me to relinquish my grip on wealth, time, and appetites.**
2. **means doing now what you don't like so that you can later have the results that you do like.**
3. **show that we believe what Jesus said.**

From the Bible:

1 "Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. 2 When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. 3 But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

4 Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. 16 "And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. 17 But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. 18 Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. Mt 6:1-18 (NLT)

Discussion questions

1. When it comes to discipline, in what areas of life do you struggle most?
2. Growing up, were you encouraged to develop habits similar to private spiritual disciplines —such as prayer, devotions, giving, fasting, confession? Which of these have you carried into adulthood, and which did you not? Why did they or didn't they "stick"?
3. Were you raised in a home where generosity was practiced and talked about? Were you raised to give? Was the giving in your home triggered more by occasions of need and crisis, or did your family regularly and systematically provide financial support to a church or to others?
4. How easy is it for you to be generous when confronted with a specific need? Why?
5. How easy is it for you to commit to giving a certain percentage of your income to your church?
6. When you give to your local church do you see it as giving to God through the church? What difference does it make?
7. Jesus promises that those who give according to his instruction will be rewarded. Do you feel you've been rewarded for your generosity in the past? If so, how?
8. Why do you think Jesus instructs us (Matthew 6:5-6) to pray privately on a regular basis?
9. Jesus promises a reward to those who pray privately (Matthew 6:6). What do you think this reward includes?

Personal ministry enables us to experience God's power in our weaknesses.

God builds our faith through challenging opportunities:

Those times when we feel unprepared and inadequate:

We will do what we can do - trust God to do what only He can do.

From the Bible:

19 Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave the bread to the disciples, who distributed it to the people. 20 They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers. 21 About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!

Matthew 14:19–21 (NLT)

Discussion questions

1. Can you think of a situation when you were given a responsibility for something that you felt inadequate and unprepared to do? How did it turn out? What did you learn about yourself?
2. When you are asked to serve in a church or ministry-related context what was your initial response to that request?
3. Have you ever sensed God urging you to do something, yet you failed to do it? Why did you hold back?
4. Read Matthew 14:13–17. The disciples used their lack of resources as an excuse to question what Jesus asked them to do. What excuses have you used?
5. As you consider the disciples' initial response, what were they forgetting to factor into the equation?
6. Read Matthew 14:17–21. We see Jesus taking what little the disciples had available and going on to use it in a miraculous way. What talent, skill, experience, expertise, or ability do you have that God could use in a significant way? (even though they may seem like the fishes and loaves of this story)
7. Who has chosen to serve you and invest in you in spite of the fact that he or she was busy, unprepared, or unsure of how things would turn out?
8. What would you say are the overall lessons of faith that we can learn from what happened on the day and night described in Matthew 14:13–31?

Week 5 Pivotal Circumstances

Weekend of October 4th

God uses our troubles to grow a big faith when we accept that He is doing something in us rather than allowing something to happen to us.

Three anchor points to help us trust God in pivotal circumstances:



God cares.



Character matters more than comfort.



Joy is found in God not in circumstances.

From the Bible:

“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”

(James 1:2-4, NLT)

““Where have you put him?” He asked them. They told Him, “Lord, come and see.” Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing

nearby said, “See how much He loved him!” But some said, “This Man healed a blind man. Couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?””

(John 11:34-37, NLT)

Discussion questions

1. Read James 1:2-4. James writes that trials test our faith making us lose confidence in God. What relationship do you see between tough times and a stronger faith?
2. James says that the goal of these tests is “perseverance.” The implication is that trials can create persevering faith in God. But why trials? How else could God create persevering faith?
3. As you look at John 11:1-6, how does it make you feel to read that Jesus loved Lazarus, but didn’t go to him in his time of need?
4. Look again at John 11:4. Is the idea of God using human pain for his glory disturbing to you? Is this a new concept for you?
5. As Jesus speaks with Martha (11:21-27), what do we learn that she already believes about Jesus? What more does Jesus want her to believe?
6. In John 11:41-42, what reason does Jesus give for pausing to pray before performing this miracle? What is the significance of that?
7. If God uses pivotal circumstances to build our faith in him, what should our response be the next time life takes us by surprise?