

House On The Rock Life Group Study outline 2023

June: Great Faith

Outlines for the month

Week 1: Foundational Faith ✓

Week 2: Strengthened Faith

Week 3: Courageous Faith

Introduction

Christian author, Steven Cole, was one of ten seminary students who in 1969 spent the summer in West Los Angeles, working at the Jesus Christ Light and Power House, a ministry centre near the UCLA campus. In the evenings, they often walked around the streets of Westwood where they encountered hordes of enthusiastic young people who invited them to meetings with the promise that their lives would be changed. They would give miraculous-sounding testimonies of ways that their lives had been changed. One young woman told about how she needed a car. She pointed to a brand new Corvette and said, "There it is!" Another told of how she had been alienated from her mother for years, but now they had become close friends.

Was Jesus Christ the key to these changed lives? No, not at all. Rather, these enthusiastic witnesses had all begun to chant a Buddhist chant. Those Christians who did attend said it reminded them of a Campus Crusade College Life meeting, where glowing testimony after testimony told of how lives had been dramatically changed – only this time not by Jesus Christ, but rather by chanting this Buddhist chant.

This leads to an important question, "How do you know that your faith in Christ is true?" If someone says that chanting a Buddhist mantra works for him, is that equally true? In other words, what is the foundation of our faith? Does it rest on personal experience: "Jesus changed my life"?

While it is wonderful that Jesus has changed your life, you need to realise that your faith needs a more substantial foundation than that. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, and many with other belief systems can point to changed lives. How do we know that biblical Christianity is the only truth that will get us right with God and give us eternal life?

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Pilot text

2 Pet 2:16-18[TPT] 16We were not retelling some masterfully crafted legend when we informed you of the power and appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we saw his magnificence and splendour unveiled before our very eyes. 17Yes, Father God lavished upon him radiant glory and honour when his distinct voice spoke out of the

realm of majestic glory, endorsing him with these words: This is my cherished Son, marked by my love. All my delight is found in him! 18And we ourselves heard that voice resound from the heavens while we were with him on the holy mountain.

- What does the pilot scripture say about the foundation of our faith?
 - Our faith is based on **events that really happened** and are attested by multiple eye witnesses; not masterfully crafted stories or legends (v.16, v18)
 - Our faith centres exclusively on **the person of Jesus Christ** as the glorious, majestic Son of God, equal with the Father (v.17).
 - Our faith lives with the daily expectation that **Jesus Christ is coming again** in power and glory (v.16). The word translated 'coming' or 'appearing' (parousia) is always used elsewhere in the New Testament in reference to Christ to refer to His second coming. Since Peter was dealing with false teachers who scoffed at the idea of Christ's second coming (2 Pet. 3:4), almost all commentators understand "the power and coming" of 1:16 to refer to His second coming.
- For more reading on the subject, see [here](#) (provided by bible.org).
- Questions for discussion (use scriptures to support your position):
 1. Why must our faith be in objective truth, not in subjective feelings or ideas? If it's in objective truth, then how is it faith? [Tip: Heb 11:1)
 2. Is the deity of Jesus Christ essential to the gospel? Can a person be saved who denies His deity? Why not?
 3. Why is the bodily second coming of Christ a vital part of the gospel? What are the implications if He is not coming again?
 4. What part do spiritual experiences have in the life of faith? Should we seek such experiences?

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Scripture calls Abraham the father of those who believe (Gal 3:7). He is our father of faith. Yet through Abraham's walk with God we see many instances where he struggled with doubt.

In Genesis 12, Abraham left Haran for Canaan to inherit the land as God had promised. But when he got there, ten tribes were dwelling in it. How was God going to fulfil His promise? In fact, Abraham honestly asks God the question. He says, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" (v. 8). In Gen 15, Abraham again says to God "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir". In considering his own mortality, Abraham started to think about his future heir. At that time, Abraham's chief servant was his heir because he had no son, and Lot had left him. God comforts Abraham by saying that he would have his own son and his descendants would be numerous, like the stars (Gen 15:4–5).

Have you ever struggled with doubt? Have you ever doubted God's love for you? Have you ever doubted whether the Christian life was even worth living? Many great saints struggled with doubt. Asaph, in Psalm 73, looked at the prosperity of the wicked and said, "Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence" (v. 13). He doubted and wavered in his faith.

How do we deal with doubt? In Ephesians 6:16, as Paul talks about spiritual warfare, he says that we must take up the shield of faith to quench the enemy's fiery darts. If we don't have strong faith, we are vulnerable to the lies and attacks of the enemy.

Pilot text

Gen 15: 7-[NKJV] 7 Then He said to him, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." 8 And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11 And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

- What principles can we learn about strengthening our faith from a doubting Abraham?
 - **We must be transparent with God.** We must understand that it is ok to struggle before God. It is ok to tell Him our fears and worries. When we humbly share our struggles and pains with Him, we allow Him to strengthen our faith and encourage our hearts.
 - **We must respond to God in faith.** If we are going to strengthen our faith, we must first have faith. Now this may seem strange because it looks like Abraham has no faith at all and in fact doubts God. However, even though Abraham asks for confirmation, his question comes from belief. Abraham wants to believe God and more fully understand God's promises and, therefore, asks for confirmation.
 - **We must be obedient to God.** In response to his question, God commands Abraham to *do something*. Abraham immediately obeys God, even though struggling with his faith.
 - **We must stand our ground in the face of adversity.** While Abraham was waiting for God, vultures (adversity) came down to distract, steal and otherwise detract from what God was going to do in Abraham's life. Abraham drove them away. There is a place for spiritual warfare to stand our ground in the place where we are waiting for God.
 - **We must know God's character.** God started His conversation with Abraham by introducing Himself as "The Lord, who brought you out...". In order to know God's character, we must experience Him.
 - For more reading on the subject, see [here](#) (provided by bible.org).
- Questions for discussion (use scriptures to support your position):
 1. How can we know if God is telling us to do something, or whether it is coming from some other source?
 2. Does faith mean putting our brains in neutral? How can we know when to stop trying to understand and just to trust?
 3. How can we overcome the fear that God may take that which is most precious from us? How do we process this mentally?

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As a leader in Israel after Moses' death, Joshua had a pile of disguised opportunities. He had to lead this fledgling nation of refugee slaves out of 40 years in the wilderness, across the Jordan River, and into the promised land that happened to be filled with evil, violent giants. The first disguised opportunity was to conquer the fortified city of Jericho. God gave Joshua the plan for victory. By faith, the walls of that fortress crumbled.

Meanwhile, inside the city, a prostitute had a huge disguised opportunity. She had heard of how God had miraculously delivered this people from Egypt 40 years before. She heard how they had defeated two powerful kings across the river. She knew that her city was next and that she and all of her family would perish, unless somehow the God of the Jews—the God of heaven and earth—intervened on their behalf. Then the impossible happened—two spies from that feared people came to lodge with her. She hid them from the authorities and they promised to spare her family and her, if she followed their directions. By faith, she and her family did not perish when her city was destroyed.

One thing that is common to these two examples is the level of risk involved. Jericho was unconquerable, by most measures. Rahab's situation was hopeless, by most measures. In order to overcome great risk, great courage is required. How did they find the courage they needed? While we don't have much insight into Rahab's life, we know how Joshua found the courage to act in faith.

Pilot text

Josh 1:1,3,5,6,9[NKJV] 1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: ...

3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses...

5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them....

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”.

- What do the pilot scriptures tell us about the source of Joshua’s courageous faith?
 - **Joshua heard God’s voice clearly (v1).** The introduction to the book of Joshua starts with God speaking to Joshua. We will only have the courage to take ‘risks’ if we are certain that we have heard God clearly.
 - **Joshua heard God’s Word for himself (v2-5).** God had made certain promises to Moses, but this did not automatically mean that they applied to Joshua. Sometimes we want to ‘act courageously in faith’ based on God’s word to someone else. That’s not being courageous, it’s being unwise.
 - **God had guaranteed Joshua’s success (v6-7).** If Joshua was willing to take the risk of obeying God, and walk in courageous faith, then success was guaranteed. This also means that reverse is true, that there would be no guarantee of success if Joshua wasn’t willing to bet on God.
 - **Joshua was confident that God would back him up (v9).** It’s that simple – if God is with us, who can be against us? This recognition of God’s presence with him granted Joshua the boldness to take action.
 - For more reading on the subject, see [here](#) (provided by bible.org).
- Questions for discussion (use scriptures to support your position):
 1. How can we know that God is speaking specifically to us, rather than someone else?
 2. Is there a difference between God’s promise to be with Joshua wherever he went (Josh 1:9), and our new testament experience of God’s continual presence with us?
 3. How can we get courage when we lack courage?