

## 1 John – God is Love: Week Five

### What it Means to Have Faith

#### Day One: How to Identify Genuine Faith

Wow! How can it possibly be Week Five already? Where does the time go? Well, I hope you can set aside some time for this final week, because 1 John just keeps getting better! We are going to uncover some hidden gems this week – and you are going to be glad you stuck around for the finale!

Faith is a word that Christians hear a lot. Today we are going to focus on what exactly genuine faith is.

#### Read 1 John 5:1-5

The Greek word for faith is “pistis”. (W.E. Vine Expository Dictionary) It means “a firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing.” It is used in the New Testament always of faith in God or Christ or spiritual things. “Pistis” is also translated as “trust or trustworthy, or assurance”. In John’s Gospel, the word, “pistis” is used 98 times! The full definition for “pistis”, includes the following three parts:

- A firm conviction producing a full acknowledgment of God’s revelation or truth
- A personal surrender to God
- Conduct inspired by such surrender

According to 1 John 5:4-5, having faith to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (and therefore accomplished the Father’s will) is the way to overcome the world and the prince of this world. That means faith is pretty important. Faith gives us the victory! If the devil tries to deceive me into believing a lie - whatever it may be - I can overcome that deception by my faith in Jesus Christ. God has given me overcoming power - and it is tied to my faith. Faith is our shield from the enemies flaming arrows. (Ephesians 6:16)

It’s not about me trying to have faith, because I might get discouraged and think I am lacking in faith. It’s all about the One that I am placing my faith in. Because I know that Jesus Christ is “*able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think*” (Ephesians 3:20) I can walk in victory. My faith and my focus is on Jesus Christ. We each have enough faith to overcome the world - if we want to.

## Read Ephesians 3:17-21

“So that Christ may dwell in your hearts \_\_\_\_\_; and that you being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the \_\_\_\_\_ which \_\_\_\_\_, that you may be filled up to all the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.”

What was it that caused us to be “filled up to all the fullness of God?” The answer is found in verse 17. How do we get “rooted and grounded in love”? (v.17)  
Through \_\_\_\_\_.

### What I grew up believing about Christianity:

I was a typical young American girl growing up in several lower-middle class neighborhoods in Michigan. I observed people setting time aside on Sunday to go to church services. I saw people attend church on Sunday, then as soon as the service was over, they would seem to put all “holiness aside”, and blend in with the non-believers, those who didn’t attend church. I thought of Christians as people who went to church, but aside from an occasional prayer before meals, they were no different than anyone else. They used vulgar language, treated each other badly, were selfish, and basically committed every imaginable sin. I thought Christianity was only for Sundays.

If someone really took their religion seriously – they would become pastors, or priests or nuns. Everyone else was told that it was not socially acceptable to talk about politics or religion. And in my home – we didn’t talk about either one. I never observed my parents read a bible, pray, or discuss any spiritual matters. The exception, of course, was if someone died. Then suddenly, everyone would talk about this place called, “Heaven”, and the Bible was quoted as though it was the authority. As a child, I thought all dead people would go to Heaven – I never heard that it was a matter of faith. It wasn’t until I was 21 years old, and my best friend, Joanne, told me I was going to hell because I didn’t know Jesus, that I learned some people had different views about how we receive eternal life. I thought she was crazy! But thankfully, I read the Scripture verses that she gave me to read.

What I read, caused such a stir in me, that after many tears and reading of the Scriptures, I became aware that Jesus not only died, but He also came back to life, and that His Presence was in the room with me right then. I was very aware of His Presence. In fact, I now believe His Holy Spirit was entering my heart right then, through my faith. I believed, and repented of my sins, and at that moment I knew that Jesus had

become my Savior. Jesus had come to dwell in my heart, through my faith. All glory to God! (That was the short, condensed version of my testimony!!)

The Scripture verse that had a huge impact on me that day is John 20:31:

*“These have been written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** you may have life in His name.”*

As I began reading my first Bible (given to Jim and me as a wedding gift from Joanne), I discovered that I had a wrong understanding of Biblical Christianity. The version of Christianity that my family and friends were experiencing was not even close to what Jesus taught to those who followed Him. What I had been taught was a mixture of the truth in the Bible, and the traditions and ideas of men. Since then I have learned that there are many people who have learned a version of Christianity that is far from what Jesus intended for His followers.

**Genuine faith is built on the sure foundation of the teachings of Jesus Christ Himself (found in the Bible), not the traditions of men.**

This letter (1 John) that John wrote to all who claim to follow Jesus, was written with these types of mis-guided environments in mind. People say they believe in Jesus, and think of themselves as Christians, yet don't have a clue that they are living in darkness. John wants to clear up any misunderstandings we may have and help us understand what His good friend and Savior, Jesus – the Word of Life - taught him about being a disciple.

**Here are 6 essential things we need to understand about faith:**

### **I. Believe that Jesus is the Christ. (1 John 5:1)**

To believe that Jesus is the Christ means you believe that He accomplished or fulfilled everything that the Father had commanded Him. The title, “Christ”, means “Anointed One or Messiah”, and refers to the One that was promised to come and would sit on the throne of David and be the Savior of the world.

The prophets had promised that God would send a Messiah who would have a 3-fold Ministry. He would be a:

- Prophet (Moses said that a prophet would come, see Deut. 18:18. The Prophet Isaiah said that the “Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, etc. Isaiah 11:1-2) Jesus was a true prophet. He spoke about details of His own death, about the future, and more. See Luke 19:41-44.

- Priest (Hebrews 5:6 tells us Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek) Jesus fulfilled the role of a priest in every way. He not only became a sacrifice for the sins of the world by offering Himself as a Lamb, He has now become our Intercessor and Advocate with the Father. See 1 John 2:1 and Romans 8:34.
- King (Jeremiah 30:9 tells us that God would raise up for the people the Lord their God, and David their king. Zechariah 6:12-13 tells us that Jesus “the Branch” will be a priest who sits and rules on His throne.) Jesus is the “only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light.” 1 Timothy 6:15-16. King Jesus is coming back to reign on the earth, and to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem ruling over all the nations. See Rev. 3:21, 4:9-11, 11:15

To genuinely believe that Jesus is the Christ is not only to give assent to this truth or to acknowledge it as truth. All those who believe Jesus is the Christ will recognize His great love and sacrifice for us and will love Him and all those who bear His image and likeness. Genuine faith works through love. (Galatians 5:6)

**Read 1 John 3:2, 16 & 4:9**

The first thing genuine faith has is an understanding of who Jesus is and why we follow Him. Can you summarize what you believe about Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

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**II. All Genuine Disciples of Jesus will Walk as He Walked.**

**Read 1 John 2:6**

Those who have genuine faith will walk as Jesus walked. That means they are in the world but not of the world. This doesn't mean that we need to be walking around praying out loud (obnoxiously) and quoting Scripture just to look super spiritual or complaining about the ungodliness around us. Just read about the daily life of Christ in the Gospels.

**Read John 4:5-10**

Jesus seemed pretty normal at times! He got tired from his long journey and the disciples went to buy food because they were all hungry. No one there would have known that Jesus was the Messiah, until He started a conversation with a local woman.

Jesus was always looking for an opportunity to bring light into darkness. To walk as Jesus walked means that we will respond to our own circumstances with faith, remembering our identity as followers of Christ. Jesus always put His Father's will before His own, and He never tried to please people. He loved them too much to do that. Jesus loved the people in the world, but not the wickedness that was in their hearts. He loved God's creation, but not the idols that were made by human hands. He rejoiced over someone's faith and mourned over their sin.

Disciples of Jesus are willing to endure persecution for the Lord's sake. They would even lay down their lives for Him if they could. Many still do in other nations.

### **Read Matthew 16:24**

What three things did Jesus say His disciples would do?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*"Now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light." Ephesians 5:8*

*"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise." Ephesians 5:15*

### **III. Genuine Faith is based on evidence.**

#### **Read 1 John 3:10 & James 2:19-26**

In his letter, James uses Abraham in his illustration of faith. Abraham is called the father of our faith, because it is said, "*Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.*" *Galatians 3:6* and, "*So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.*" *Galatians 3.*

But how do we know Abraham believed God? What was the evidence that He believed and trusted God?

Well, that's easy. It's because Abraham actually obeyed God and placed his only son (the one he had waited a very long time for) on the altar of sacrifice. He humbled himself before His Creator, and said, (my paraphrase) "Lord, your will, not mine, be done." And he prepared to kill his own son in obedience to God's command. Even though obedience was going to cost him the life of his beloved son, Abraham chose to obey God. He proved what He believed.

Abraham's willing obedience teaches us that faith requires our personal surrender to the will of God. We must learn to deny our selfish nature (the flesh), and choose His way, which is not the way the popular crowd is going. Our obedience and humble self-denial for the sake of others will set us apart from the unbelievers. God will see the genuineness of our faith - which is precious to Him, and the world will know we are Christians by our love.

**Read Acts 16:27-34**

How did the jailer and his household give evidence of their new faith in Jesus Christ?

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#### **IV. Genuine faith is in Christ Alone.**

**Read Acts 4:10-12**

If we say we have faith in Jesus Christ, then we need to understand that it is Jesus Christ alone. We can't add other things to our faith. Salvation is found in Christ alone. Period.

**Read Isaiah 45:5-7,18, 21-25**

When the devil realizes that we are firmly in the Lord's camp, then he will change his strategy with us. He will try to convince us that we can keep our faith in Christ but enjoy the benefits of all the other false religions as well. If the devil can convince us to pollute our faith in Christ with worldly things and philosophies, we will not have the genuine faith that will overcome the world. We need pure faith in Christ alone. Here are some examples of polluted faith:

- I say I have faith in Christ – but I also believe it is possible to be saved through other faiths such as Islam, New Age Humanism, Buddhism, or a man-made variation of Christianity.

- I say I have faith in Christ – but when I need help I first run for assistance to worldly approaches such as astrology, psychic readings, self-help methods, transcendental meditation, yoga, other Hindu religious practices, etc. (This does not mean we should stop seeking medical advice from doctors for an illness. God works through doctors to bring healing. The other approaches cause us to place our trust in them rather than in God. We need to know that God alone is the healer. Isaiah 53:5 tells us that it was by His scourging that we are healed.)
- I say I have faith in Christ – but my heart still longs after worldly things to fulfill my need for love or acceptance, etc. Things such as flirtations with married men or people that you meet on the internet chat rooms or romance novels and vices such as drugs, alcohol, food addictions, and many other unhealthy or immoral activities.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-2 & 10** Fill in the blanks.

(v.2) “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you \_\_\_\_\_ according to the course of \_\_\_\_\_, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of \_\_\_\_\_.”

(v.10) For \_\_\_\_\_ are His workmanship, created in \_\_\_\_\_ for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that \_\_\_\_\_.

## V. Genuine Faith Determines our Destiny.

**Read John 5:21-29**

In this passage, Jesus explains what happens to those who believe and those who don't.

(v.24) “He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has \_\_\_\_\_ and does not come into \_\_\_\_\_, but has passed \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_.”

## VI. Genuine Faith is Precious to God.

### Read 1 Peter 1:7

(v.7) “So that the proof of your faith, being \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ which is perishable, even though tested by fire may be found  
to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Today we have looked at six essential things that will help us identify genuine faith.

- I. Believe that Jesus is the Christ.
- II. A genuine believer will walk as Jesus walked.
- III. There will be evidence to prove our faith.
- IV. Our faith is in Christ alone - no add-ons.
- V. Our faith will determine our destiny.
- VI. Our faith is precious to God.

The writer of Hebrews tells us in the Hebrews “Hall of Faith” (Chapter 11), that *“faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”* And, *“without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him”.*

My hope is that one day when we are standing before the Lord Jesus and He is passing out rewards to all those who remained firm in their faith, that you and I will be there.....together. Wouldn't that be so great? I hope I get to see you receive your reward. I'll be the one cheering for you!!! What a great day that will be!

*“I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live **BY FAITH in the Son of God,** who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20*

*“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on **Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...**” Hebrews 12:1-2a*