

WWWN

WE WRESTLE NOT

SERIES DEVOTIONAL
SHIELD OF FAITH | JULY 12, 2020

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter #1: What do we mean when we use the term “faith in God”?

Discussion Starter #2: What are some common misperceptions people have about faith? Where do these unbiblical ideas about faith come from?

Key Passage: “In all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph.6:17).

TEACHING POINT

#1

The shield of faith helps us recognize the deceptiveness of Satan’s attacks and quickly extinguish his flaming arrows of deceit.

The Roman shield of the time was almost as large as a door and would cover the soldier entirely. This shield was not just defensive but could also be used offensively to push opponents. When fighting as a unit, a group of soldiers could arrange their shields so as to form an enclosure around themselves, called a *testudo* (“tortoise”). This was especially helpful to protect against arrows launched from the atop walls of cities they were attacking. Shields were made of wood and covered in hide which, when wet, could extinguish flaming arrows. A shield is indispensable to a soldier. It is meant to be taken up in all circumstances since it provides a blanket of protection. It is the first barrier against the enemy’s attack.

Satan’s attacks can sometimes cause us to doubt God, but faith prompts us to believe God. We give in to temptation when we believe what it has to offer is better than what God has promised. Faith reminds us that, though fulfillment of God’s promise may not be readily visible to us, God is true to His Word. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:6 stresses the importance of faith: “Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

Faith is a protective barrier between us and the schemes of Satan. When we believe God and take Him at His word, we remain grounded in truth, the lies of the enemy lose their power, and we become overcomers. In that way, faith is our shield. All believers have this promise: “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4).

TALK ABOUT IT:

- Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus is the Founder and Perfecter of our faith. What do you think this means?
- Why do you think many people struggle with having a strong faith in God?

TEACHING POINT

#2

Our shield of faith is strengthened when we remember who God is and all that He has done, and it is weakened when we forget who God is and what He has done.

Let's learn a lesson about the importance of remembering who God is and all that He has done from the example of the Israelites in the Old Testament. God had performed great miracles in rescuing His chosen people from slavery in Egypt—the Ten Plagues, the pillar of smoke and fire, and the crossing of the Red Sea. God brings His people to the foot of Mount Sinai, gives them the Law and makes a covenant with them. But as soon as He does this, the people begin to grumble and lose faith. With Moses gone up on the mountain, the people convince Aaron, Moses' brother, to construct an idol (against God's clear prohibition) for them to worship (Ex.32:1–6). They were no longer walking by faith, but by sight. Despite all the clear miracles God did in their redemption, they lost faith and began to go on their perception.

That is why God instructed the new generation of Israelites before going into the Promised Land to continually remind themselves of what God had done for them: *"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise"* (Deut.6:6–7). God knows that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mk.14:38), and so He commands His people to be in constant remembrance of these things.

Remembering God's past blessings is necessary to fuel our faith in God's future blessings for us. In fact, Scripture warns us that if we fail to remember, we will be condemned to submit again to sin's enslavement (Hebrews 6:4–8).

TALK ABOUT IT:

- What are some blessings of the past in your own life that, when you reflect upon them, strengthen your faith?

- What steps would you encourage a new believer to take to strengthen his / her faith in God?

#3

God tells us to take up the shield of faith in all circumstances – including fearful situations.

Because we are fallen people living in a broken, sin-cursed world, we are all guaranteed to experience some measure of trouble in this life. Sometimes trouble blindsides us when we least expect it, and sometimes trouble slowly sneaks up on us. However it reaches us, trouble causes pain and hardship, and can force us to make difficult decisions, sometimes without all the information and answers we think we need. Fear and discouragement also try to get to us during these tough times.

Whatever the trouble we're facing, we must make a choice: either we will move toward God in faith, or we will move away from God in disbelief. Trouble has a way of forcing our path to split before us: one way allows us to walk with God, and the other way is a lonely road without Him.

In Ephesians 6:16, God commands us to take up the shield of faith "*in all circumstances.*" While God is patient and understanding toward our weaknesses, but He still requires us to go forward in faith no matter the circumstance. Why? Because the Bible is clear that faith does not mature and strengthen without trials: "*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*" (James 1:2-4). Adversity is God's most effective tool to develop a strong faith in us. God allows each one of us to go through fearful situations, but as we learn to focus on God and His promises, we discover that each trial actually becomes a stepping stone to an even stronger and deeper faith.

Expressing and acting upon faith in all circumstances is a way of holding up the shield of faith to quench the devil's fiery arrows of doubt and discouragement. Romans 10:17 says, "*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*" God's Word is rich with promises for us to take hold of and claim for ourselves. For example:

- If we face financial trouble, Philippians 4:19 tells us: "*My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*"
- If we are anxious about a future decision, Psalm 32:8 tells that God will "*instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*"
- If we are worried, God assures us that we can know a calm peace through every situation: "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:6-7).

TALK ABOUT IT:

- What are some of your favorite promises in God's Word that strengthen your faith?
- What is something helpful you've learned about the shield of faith in this lesson?