

12 – LIVING BY FAITH OR BELIEVING A LIE

Imagine you are shopping in a mall and a stranger asks, “Could you give me the keys to your car? My car won’t start and I need to jumpstart it using jumper cables. By the way, do you have any jumper cables?”

“I don’t have any jumper cables in my car,” you respond. “They are at home in the garage.”

Boldly the stranger says, “I don’t want to keep you from shopping. If you give me the keys to your house I can go get the jumper cables and come back and start my car. Then I can bring your keys back to you.”

Would you give the stranger the keys to your car and house? Of course not! Before you are willing to trust someone, you have to get to know them in order to learn if they are trustworthy.

If God is a stranger to us, or worse, we have believed many lies about Him, it will be very difficult for us to give Him the “key” to our lives. If we don’t believe that He loves us or if we believe that He will make our lives miserable, we will want to maintain control of our own lives. However, there is a problem with wanting to maintain control.

- “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” Proverbs 14:12.
- “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” Jeremiah 17:9.

When we are in charge, we will make the best choices we can make. The problem is, our perspective is limited. God is able to see “the end from the beginning” Isaiah 46:10. He knows what is best for us and for those around us.

Everyone must ask themselves: Can I trust God with my life? Do I believe He is telling me the truth? Do I want to follow His will? All of these questions relate to faith and how we live.

UNDERSTANDING FAITH

1. What is the healthy response to the gospel? Romans 1:16,17

The gospel is the power of God. It is the only answer God has for the sin problem. Jesus' faith enabled Him to live a perfect life and then take us and our sin to the cross. This enabled Him to:

- Be the Savior of the world from the wages of sin (1 John 4:14),
- Qualify everyone for eternal life (Colossians 1:12-14),
- Restore our individual freedom of choice (John 3:16-20).

Those who believe the truth and choose to surrender their lives to Jesus will receive the Holy Spirit. He will then save believers from slavery to sin (John 1:9-13; 3:1-7). Our response from beginning to end is faith, for "the just shall live by faith." Since living by faith is the way of life for the Christian, it is crucial that we understand what this means.

2. How is faith defined? Hebrews 11:1

The word substance came from Latin. Sub means under, like in subway or submarine. Stance refers to the way a person is standing physically. It can also refer to an intellectual stand a person takes on a particular issue. The Greek word that is translated substance, hupostasis, has the same meaning. Hupo means under; stasis means to stand.

In other words, faith is what we "under – stand" is true based on the evidence we are given. The truth that we believe "stands – under" us, providing the foundation for what we hope for and build our lives on.

3. What evidence reveals that God exists? Heb. 11:3; Rom. 1:19, 20

True faith is based on evidence we honestly observe in nature, history, archeology, and life in the light of what God has revealed in the Bible.

A new car gives evidence that there is a designer and manufacturer. We know it could not have accidentally fallen into place. In the same way, the existence of complex life on earth gives evidence there is an Intelligent Designer who created life on this world. Even though we don't see the car manufacturer or the Divine Creator, we can know they exist.

This leads Paul to conclude: "Since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they [human beings] are without excuse." Romans 1:20.

Humans are without excuse, for there is no "scientific" evidence that:

- Non-living matter in the universe could exist without a Creator;
- Life could spontaneously come from non-living matter;
- One species can evolve into a different species (macro-evolution);

As humans, we have the ability to rationalize and convince ourselves of something in order to believe what we want to believe (2 Timothy 4:3,4; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). When we do this, we are building our lives on sand, rather than on a solid foundation (Matthew 7:24-27).

Faith is not a "blind leap in the dark" as some describe it. It is a "leap in the light," for it is based upon evidence. For example:

- God's ability to know the future is evidence He is God (Is. 46:9,10).
- Fulfilled prophecy is evidence the Bible is trustworthy (2 Pet. 1:19).
- All the evil in the world is evidence that we need a Savior.
- The evidence that Jesus is the Savior of the world is abundant when we honestly evaluate history, archeology, and the Bible.

While the complexity of life affirms there must be a God, it is impossible for us to reason out on our own what God is like. This had to be revealed to us by God (2Timothy 3:16,17).

Since the Bible is a trustworthy revelation of God, our faith will grow as we study the Bible and understand God’s perspective of life and the plan of salvation (Romans 10:17).

4. Read Hebrews 11:5,6

A. Why is faith necessary in order to please God?

B. Who are the ones He rewards?

God is pleased when people come to Him and walk with Him through life. However, we will not want to come to Him if we believe:

- He does not exist;
- He would hurt us if we came to Him.

It is important that we believe the truth about God. When we know He loves us and wants what is best for us, we will “diligently seek Him.”

While God loves everyone unconditionally, He is not pleased with our sinful actions. For He knows our sin will always hurt us and those around us.

Enoch pleased God because he wanted to be with God. He wanted to walk with God.

“After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” Genesis 5:22-24.

5. What do we receive when we seek God?

A. Jer. 29:11-13 _____

B. John 14:23 _____

C. Luke 11:13 _____

The “reward” we receive when we seek God is a living relationship with Him! He is waiting for us to open our lives to Him so He can fellowship with us (Revelation 3:20). God is not hard to find. He is not playing “hide and seek” and trying to avoid anyone. We are the ones who make Him hard to find when we fill our lives with all kinds of activities and distractions in an attempt to satisfy the emptiness within.

Our natural tendency is to look to:

- People to satisfy our need for love.
- Possessions to make us feel secure.
- Positions in life to make us feel more important.
- Pleasure of the world to make us happiness.

However, these do not provide lasting security, belonging, and meaning in life. They provide temporary satisfaction, then leave us empty and thirsty. However, when we seek Jesus, we will find Him and experience the living water that never runs dry (Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:10,14).

FAITH ALWAYS LEADS TO ACTION

6. Read Hebrews 11:13-16

A. How did Abraham and others see themselves on earth? (13)

B. What was their heart’s desire? (14-16)

C. What was God’s attitude toward them? (16)

People who love God will never feel at home in a world of sin. They long for the new heaven and earth where there will be no more sin, pain or death (Revelation 21:1-8). God is happy to be called their God, for He enjoys their fellowship and the joy they receive from being with Him.

7. Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the “Faith Chapter.” It reveals the choices people made based upon their faith in God. List the belief and action that relate to these individuals in Hebrews 11.

Heb 11	People	Belief	Choices/Action
4	Abel Gen. 3:21-4:6		
7	Noah Genesis 6-9		
8-10	Abraham Gen. 12:1-4		
17-19	Abraham Gen. 22; 17:19; 21:12		
24-29	Moses Exodus 2:1-22; Acts 7:20-36		

Our actions will always flow out of what we truly believe. While some profess to follow Jesus, their actions reveal that they do not believe in Him as their Savior and Lord. (Matthew 7:20-23). Those who choose to follow Jesus will confess their sin and repent, choosing to turn away from their sin. Those who want to follow their own desires will

rationalize and make excuses for the behavior. If they persist in that path, they will eventually believe a lie and approve of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Romans 1:32).

8. Compare Hebrews 11:32-35a with Hebrews 11:35b-38

A. Did one group have more faith than the other group? Yes No

B. Did God love one group more than the other group? Yes No

Some think faith is a way to twist God's arm to get Him to act. When they don't get what they ask for, many get discouraged and give up on God. Others try to figure out some other way to manipulate Him. Faith is trusting God, not manipulating Him. The more we know Him, the more we will love and trust Him. The Bible portrays God as one Who knows us intimately, loves us fully, knows the future, and has all power and authority (Psalm 139; Rom. 8:31-29; Isaiah 46:9,10; Matt. 28:18).

True faith is trusting God and surrendering to His will, knowing He will always provide whatever we need. Since God knows what is best, there is peace and security in trusting His plan for our lives (Phil. 4:6-19).

Jesus did this when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemene: "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*." Matthew 26:39.

Paul prayed three times to be delivered from a "thorn in the flesh." When God said no, He promised, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" 2 Corinthians 12:9.

THE OPPOSITE OF FAITH

9. In the Bible, what is the opposite of faith? Hebrews 3:12-4:2

_____Ignorance _____Rational Thinking _____Rebellion

The Israelites had plenty of evidence of God's power and love. However, they hardened their hearts and departed from God through an

“evil heart of unbelief.” When God wanted to lead them into Canaan, they rebelled and refused to go in.

Rebellion is the opposite of faith, for it is rejecting the light and truth that has been given. Unbelief is also used to describe this, but it is helpful to understand that this unbelief is a result of rejection and not ignorance.

No one will be condemned out of ignorance, for everyone is given light (John 1:9; 9:41; Romans 1:20). People will be lost because they refuse to believe the light they have been given. They reject the truth because they love darkness rather than light. (John 3:18-20,36; 2 Thess. 2:12).

Since faith is based on evidence, rational thinking helps us understand the truth when we honestly seek to know God’s will for our lives (Isaiah 1:18; John 7:17; Romans 12:2). When people receive light from God, they will choose to believe and surrender to the light or resist and reject it. Everyone will move toward a life of faith or a life of rebellion.

THE WRATH OF GOD

10. Who experiences the wrath of God? Romans 1:18-20

11. When people suppress the truth, how do they begin to think of God? Romans 1:23

12. Who do they begin to worship when they do this? Romans 1:25

13. What do people try to avoid doing? Romans 1:28a

14. How is the wrath of God revealed? Romans 1:18,24,26,28

24 “God also _____ . . .”

26 “God _____.”

28 “God _____ them over to a _____ mind, to do those things which are not _____.”

The wrath of God is revealed against those who suppress the truth and believe lies. The only thing God does is “give people up” to suffer the consequences of their choices. Since God loves everyone, it hurts Him to see people suffer. But He will never force anyone to follow Him. You can feel God’s emotion when He had to give Israel up earlier.

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son... I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love. . . . My people are bent on backsliding from Me. . . . How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? . . . My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred” Hosea 11:1-8.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate.” Matthew 23:37,38.

When God gives people up to suffer the consequences of their choices, He is always hoping that they will recognize their need for a Savior and turn to Him for help and healing (2 Peter 3:9; Psalm 107).

15. What will people think and how will they live if they continue to resist and reject the truth? Romans 1:32; Isaiah 5:20

When people call evil good and good evil, they will reject the conviction the Holy Spirit brings related to sin and righteousness (John 16:8-10). Jesus referred to this as the sin that would “not be forgiven” Matt. 12:31,32. People won’t confess something is wrong if they approve of it.

RECEIVING A LOVE OF THE TRUTH

16. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Compare with 2 Timothy 4:3,4

A. Why will people perish in the end? 10

B. What will we believe if we don't receive a love of the truth? 11

C. Why will anyone be condemned in then end? 12

Satan is working hard to deceive everyone. However, there is good news. He is only able to deceive those who want to believe a lie. Some people will choose to surround themselves with “teachers” who “will turn their ears away from the truth” 2 Timothy 4:3,4. They want to believe a lie so they can justify themselves and feel comfortable pursuing the temporary pleasures of sin.

When Paul says, “God will send them strong delusion,” it makes it sound like He is responsible for people believing lies. However, it is clear they do not want to believe the truth, for they have “pleasure in unrighteousness.” When God honors their choice and “gives them up,” Satan is ready with clever lies to deceive them. (See John 8:44).

The phrase, “receive the love of the truth,” implies we cannot create a love for the truth within ourselves. Since we are selfish by nature, it is natural for us to put ourselves first, rather than focus on serving others.

Knowing we can't create a love for the truth within ourselves is good news. It gives us permission to stop trying to change ourselves and freedom to stop pretending to be something we are not.

When we understand the everlasting gospel, we realize we are truly free to come to God just as we are. We can come to Him with all our fears and failures, our addictions and discouragements, our brokenness and

bitterness, and our guilt and shame. When we offer ourselves as a “living sacrifice” to God, He receives us as “holy and acceptable” because of Jesus (Romans 12:1).

Then the Holy Spirit begins the work of transforming us by leading us into the truth that sets us free from our guilt, shame and slavery to sin (John 8:31,32; 16:13). The truth will help us understand more clearly the “good and acceptable and perfect will of God” Romans 12:2.

God promises to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you” Ezekiel 36:26,27.

“I will put My laws in [your] mind and write them on [your] hearts; and I will be [your] God, and [you] shall be My people” Hebrews 8:10

A commentary on the life of Christ communicates very well what God will do in the lives of all who give Him permission to live in them.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.”

“The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.” Desire of Ages, page 668.

17. How do God’s people overcome Satan’s lies? Revelation 12:11

A. “The _____ of the _____.”

B. “The _____ of their _____.”

C. “They _____ not _____ their _____ to the death.”

All of Satan’s lies could be summarized into three areas: We need not, should not, or cannot obey God (See lesson 1). Notice how the three ways that we overcome Satan counteract his three main lies.

<p style="text-align: center;">Satan’s Lies See Lesson 1, pages 19-21</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">We Overcome Satan By: See Revelation 12:11</p>
<p>We need not obey God, for the consequences that God says are going to happen, will not happen.</p>	<p>The blood of the Lamb - The wages of sin is death. God’s people recognize the death of Jesus is the only reason they are alive now and have the gift of eternal life.</p>
<p>We should not obey God, for we will miss out on so much pleasure if we do.</p>	<p>The word of our testimony - God’s people testify that obeying God through the power of the Holy Spirit is the best way to live.</p>
<p>We cannot obey God, for we have a sinful nature that automatically sins.</p>	<p>Being willing to die rather than hurt God or anyone else. Satan hates those who keep the commandments of God, for they prove that he truly is a liar (Revelation 12:17).</p>

THE BE-ATTITUDES VS. THE ME-ATTITUDES

In Matthew 5:3-12, Jesus describes the path people take as they grow and mature in the Christian life. Each step prepares them for other steps. Notice that a hunger and thirst for righteousness comes after the first three steps. There is no shortcut. In other words, this is the pathway that enables us to “receive the love of the truth” 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

These statements of blessing from Jesus are sometimes referred to as the beatitudes. We could refer to them as the Be-Attitudes, for they reveal the attitudes people will experience who live by faith and grow into maturity in their walk with Jesus.

On the other hand, those who persistently rebel against the Holy Spirit’s leading will reveal selfish attitudes. We could refer to their pathway as the Me-Attitudes. “Lawlessness will abound” in their lives and their “love . . . will grow cold” Matthew 24:12.

THE BE-ATTITUDES

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus gives a wonderful promise to those who feel helpless, empty, broken, and without hope. “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Even when we were helpless, ungodly, sinners and enemies, Jesus loved us, died for us, justified us and reconciled us to God (Romans 5:6-10). Having legally transferred the human race into the kingdom of heaven (Colossians 1:13), Jesus invites us to come to Him just as we are (Romans 12:1). At every stage of growth we can have *peace* with God and the assurance of eternal life.

2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The love and grace given by God frees us to be honest with Him, ourselves, and others. The pain that sin has caused leads us to mourn and repent, developing a hatred for sin. The assurance of God’s forgiveness and presence brings *comfort* and enables us to *experience* reconciliation with God. His comfort also encourages us to seek to be reconciled with others.

3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Having experienced security in Christ through His unconditional love, Jesus invites us to love others as He has loved us (John 13:34). True love is being humble and meek – serving others (John 13; Mark 10:45). Love leads us to look beyond the faults of others and minister to their needs. Those who are meek give because there is a need, not in order to get something in return. They serve out of strength, rather than weakness; out of fullness, rather than emptiness. Freely they have received from God; they freely give to others (Matthew 10:8). While people may take advantage of those who are meek, Jesus promises that they will inherit the earth in the end.

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

The desire to serve and help others will always lead people to hunger and thirst for more of Jesus. They long to represent Him correctly so that others will be drawn to Him. They long to receive more from Him so they have more to give. They love righteousness, for it leads to healing, joy, and peace. They learn to hate sin and evil, for it brings pain to everyone.

5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

These next three are ongoing, instead of progressive. The Christian wants to be merciful to others, for Jesus has been merciful to them. Mercy and forgiveness are never “deserved.” They are given because there is a need. Love awakens love. Forgiveness and mercy often lead others to be forgiving and merciful. This is why those who are merciful obtain mercy.

6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The pure in heart are open and honest. They have nothing to hide. They long for truth and justice. When Jesus comes again, they will look up into the clouds and say, “This is our God; we have waited for Him and He will save us” Isaiah 25:9. But even on this earth, the pure in heart have their spiritual eyes opened and see the truth about God more clearly (John 8:31-36; 9:39-41; 16:13; 2 Corinthians 4:15-18; Hebrews 11:27; Revelation 3:18).

7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Since the gospel leads us to see everyone as loved and redeemed by God, Christians seek harmony and peace in all their relationships with others. Paul wrote, “Repay no one evil for evil. . . If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” Romans 12:17,18. Peacemakers also maintain healthy boundaries. They choose not to compromise their convictions. They also recognize where their responsibility begins and ends. They understand that saying “no” can be healthy. Even God says “no” if we ask for something that would not be the best for us.

8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, & say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

Those who continue to embrace the love and truth of God will grow into maturity (Ephesians 4:11-16). The promise that the kingdom of heaven is theirs is repeated to reassure them when they are faced with persecution. They trust God with their lives and are willing to suffer persecution and die rather than hurt God or anyone else. They rejoice, knowing that their influence will lead others to surrender their lives to God and be in heaven also. This is the great reward that they will have in heaven (See Daniel 12:3).

THE ME-ATTITUDES

1. How miserable it is for those who do not recognize their need for help and healing, for they continue to live in the kingdom of darkness.

Those who do not recognize their need for help will continue to seek for life, happiness and peace through their own wisdom and strength. They'll look to:

- People to satisfy their need for love and acceptance.
- Money to satisfy their need for comfort and security.
- Status symbols to satisfy their need for value and importance.
- Pleasure and entertainment to make them feel good.

Then they turn to “pain-relievers” to numb the pain of disappointments, failures, guilt, and shame.

2. How miserable are the unrepentant, for they will continue to hurt.

Those who refuse to repent of their sin will continue to repeat the same mistakes. They may experience temporary pleasure, but in the end, they will experience more emptiness. Sin never satisfies. It always leads to more pain.

3. How miserable it is for those who are proud and selfish, for in the end, they will be left with nothing.

Instead of seeking to serve and bless others, proud and selfish people are focused on serving themselves. They tend to blame others for their problems so they won't have to admit their need for help. They also tend to manipulate others to get what they want. (A selfish person can appear very kind in order to get something in return.) In the end, they will inherit nothing.

4. How miserable it is for those who continue to crave unhealthy things, for they will never be satisfied.

Satan makes sin and selfishness look attractive so people will pursue the wrong thing and then experience more sickness and pain. It leads to a cycle of addiction: sin → guilt → shame → pain → unhealthy pain-reliever → guilt. In order to satisfy their cravings, people will often take advantage of others by lying, stealing, or being abusive in order to get what they desire. This creates more guilt, shame, and pain and the cycle continues.

5. How painful it is when people refuse to be merciful and forgiving to others because they choose to hold onto bitterness and resentment. They won't experience mercy or forgiveness for they don't want it.

Hurt people will hurt other people as long as they refuse to see their own need for healing. Healing will begin when they are honest and choose to surrender their lives to Jesus as their Savior from sin. Until they do so, they will try to make themselves look better by criticizing and condemning others.

6. How painful it is for those who are deceptive, for they will want to hide from God and from others.

Those who are deceptive are trying to take advantage of others; therefore they hide their true motives. The truth would reveal their manipulation, so they stay away from anyone who could expose them. They hate the light (John 3:19,20). They will run from God, for they don't want to see Him.

7. How painful it is for those who create division & strife, for they will be called the children of Satan.

Those who persistently cling onto their selfish lifestyles will be willing to argue and fight rather than admit their failure or need to change. They will do whatever it takes to satisfy their selfish cravings.

8. How painful it is for those who are so desperate to hold onto their sin that they will make fun of those who are trying to do right. They will attempt to ruin their reputation. They will get to the point of wanting to hurt them emotionally and physically and even try to kill them. Be very sad, for great is the emptiness and destruction that awaits them.

Holding onto selfish cravings and desires will lead people to develop the mature fruit of hate and revenge toward those who love the truth. It will also lead to increased emptiness, shame, guilt, and pain. In order to numb the pain, they increase the use of their "pain-reliever." Eventually they will come to the point that they would rather die than live, for a life of sin becomes more and more miserable. They would rather cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on them than come face to face with God (Rev. 6:14-17).

*Everyone will follow one path or the other:
Jesus and the Be-Attitudes or Satan and the Me-Attitudes.*