

 **Managing  
GOD's Money**

**Theme for June: Walking the Walk**

*During an intensive two-year period when I set out to prove Christianity was for “weak-minded losers,” faith preoccupied me. I realized subconsciously I put faith in many objects and people daily. Still I thought, “Why would anyone become a follower of Jesus, accepting ‘blindly,’ assumptions about Him?” I learned He died, rose, is alive today. But did I have faith enough to believe?*

*Later, with open eyes, I found out I didn't have faith enough to disbelieve Jesus is Messiah! This month as we look at how we practice our faith, we will review these faith-related topics:*



*June 1-7 - Faith and Hope*

*June 8-14 - Command and Assurances*

*June 15-21 - Forgiveness and Restoration*

*June 22-30 - Happiness is ...*

**Topic for June 1-7: Faith and Hope**



**Galatians 5:5**

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

**A**s I searched for answers to many questions about God, I accepted that I applied faith daily — just to survive. Have you ever flown in an airplane, driven in a car, or stood in a multi-storey building's basement?

Everyday living needs faith, usually unconsciously, in something or somebody. We assume the plane will stay in the air, the car will go where we steer it, and the building won't collapse. Each time we

place our faith in these inanimate objects.

Soon, I realized faith itself was not an issue for me; I had much faith. But in what or in whom? Normally, I had confidence in objects. Certainly, my faith decisions had risks I didn't think about; but I accepted them.

As I applied this human logic to faith in God, I asked, “What is the faith needed to follow Jesus?” Should I believe in God with reservations?” Was there no uncertainty with God? After awhile, unconsciously I started to focus on Jesus, not on people, objects, or religions. Meanwhile, Jesus' words in John 14:6 disturbed me:

Jesus said to him [Thomas], “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

He said He is not one way, but the only way! This got me thinking, “Jesus says He is it. The buck stops here. Not all roads lead to the same destination.” Was I ready for this? Before I recovered from this self-examination, His comments in John 10:27 grabbed my attention. Jesus remarked:

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my

Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

Surprisingly, I found comfort in **Mark 11:22-24** that in hindsight, I realized appealed to my selfishness. I misunderstood the message. I thought merely by asking I would get what I wanted. I didn't understand reference to answered prayers meant I should seek God's will always. Read these verses prayerfully:

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

The Bible's cohesiveness overwhelmed me. From Genesis to Malachi in the Old Covenant, writers pointed to Jesus as the Messiah to come. To top it all, my eyes were "opening." I started to see His creation for the first time: birds, forests, trees, mountains, snow, a child's birth and much, much more.

"What was happening to me?", I thought. Worldly faith preoccupied me. How could I believe everything came from nothing? That didn't make sense. I started to look at the



## Memory Verse

1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

logic behind becoming a follower of Jesus. After all, I used logic daily in every area of life. But in **Ephesians 2:8**, the Apostle Paul explains why we can't enter God's kingdom through logic:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Unknowingly along the way, my heart had been softening; I got the gift of "biblical faith" from God. The books I read earlier, the Bible, and my previous knowledge about Messiah Jesus, came alive. With this precious "biblical faith" gift, the reality of a personal relationship with Jesus faced me. Further, my softer heart caused me to think differently.

Unlike faith in objects or people, the gift of faith from God freed me. It allowed me to take my eyes away from me and turn them to Messiah Jesus. It allowed me to hear a compelling, irresistible call to which I responded by surrendering my life to Messiah Jesus.

Later, I realized I reached this point in my journey based on overwhelming evidence favoring Messiah. Unwittingly, this was an intellectual decision. Several months later, God's as God's continued to soft my heart, I saw my sinful nature and my need for my Savior. This was the first time I acknowledged I needed to repent for my sins; it was the moment I *believed* in my heart, Jesus was the promised Messiah, and surrendered my life to Him.

What does it mean to have faith in Jesus? In **Hebrews 11:1**, the writer describes faith "as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It means we can take God at His Word even though we have not seen Him.

God told Joshua, "...as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD — the Lord of all the earth — set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap." The Jordan was at high tide and the priests had to place the

soles of their feet in the water before it parted — this is different from what God did to get the Israelites across the Red Sea. To cross the Jordan, the priests had to commit irrevocably to entering the water, before it would part. That needed faith in God: knowing when they stepped in the water, God would part it.

The Bible abounds with people acting on faith in God. Daniel disobeyed King Darius, prayed to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and trusted God to look after him in the lion's den (**Daniel 6:11-22**).

When David fought Goliath, his goal was to uphold the honor of his God. Again, he acted and left results to God. That's faith in God. Listen to David in **1 Samuel 17:45**:

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.

Another graphic, dramatic example of walking by faith is Abraham's obedience and willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Let's read the writer of Hebrew's description in **Hebrews 11: 17-19**:

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a

sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Abraham made Isaac available to God who provided the sacrifice; God "returned" Isaac to Abraham. Abraham's action shows faith in God. In these examples, God showed He does the impossible.

Beware; there is a fine line between faith and folly. Today, many folks don't thirst after and follow Jesus' teachings. When they get into a rut by so-called faith decisions, they run to God as if He is a slot machine; they expect Him to rescue them. I have seen many individuals and couples "max-out" their credit cards and then decide to "believe" God to provide a miracle to repay these debts.

When these folks don't get their answers, they cry foul saying, "God deserted me." Then again, many believers expect God will always provide *their* answers. When events don't go as they expect, rather than look for lessons, they too, complain God deserted them.

By staying close to Jesus, we will get to know His best for us and we will be able to step in His direction with certainty. But we must remember what the Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 119:105**: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." He shows His plans to us, one step, one day at a time — be patient.

After we put our faith in Jesus, trusting Him to guide our lives, our *hope* is the confidence we have in His unchanging nature. **Hebrews 13:8** says He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Paul tells us in **Galatians 5:5** the *hope* that *faith* in Messiah produces is the final victory of eternal life that Jesus gives each believer. It has no parallel.

Through the Holy Spirit's power, *hope* is the basis for us to live victorious lives with eternal emphases. We ought to view each "significant" worldly issue we face daily from an eternal view.

Without this *hope*, "fear of man" will create stress as believers deal with eternally insignificant everyday issues. Only the Holy Spirit will help you set and do godly priorities daily. Ask Jesus' to help you daily to *seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and to store treasures in heaven*.

## Application



1 Peter 1 : 15-21

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." ... For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your fore-fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ... Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

**T**oday, how would you respond if God asked you: "Are you prepared, like Abraham, to give up everything to follow Him by faith?" Think about this seriously, because it is what the faith walk with Jesus needs. Our journey with Jesus is not a smooth, predictable walk. Continually, each of us must reassess his or her needs compared to wants, and look to Jesus to guide us.

Faith in Messiah entails surrendering every area of our lives to Him. That's why He tells us in **Luke 14:25-33** to "count the cost" before becoming His disciple. The good news is we don't have to wait until we are ready, before starting. Jesus wants us to come as we are. He has the rest of our lives to transform us into His image. Are you ready?

As you reflect on *faith* and *hope* in Jesus, write one sentence to Him telling Him where you are on your faith journey, and ask Him to do the following:

- Give you the gift of faith to start, or continue the journey.
- Search your heart to show you hindrances preventing you from opening your eyes, ears, and heart.
- Remove your unbelief.
- Help you "walk the walk" daily.

Dare to start walking by faith, not by sight! When you put your *faith* in Jesus, your *hope* is in His unchanging nature. Remember, if you can see the solution to your challenge, you don't need *faith*. So rejoice when the solution isn't there; trust Jesus, depend on Him and He will make your path straight.

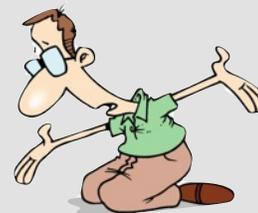
To close, though *faith*, not works, saves us, faith without works is dead:

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:26)

**C**onsidering this month's theme, *Walking the Walk*, this period's topic, *Faith and Hope*, daily, reflect on the specific verses in the *Daily Reflection* section below. These questions might help:

1. Who is talking to whom, about what, and in what context?
2. How do these verses apply to me today?
3. What lessons from these verses can I start to do today?

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# Daily Reflections

**June 1:**

Galatians 5:5;  
Ephesians 2:8;  
Hebrews 13:8

**June 2:**

John 14:6; John  
10:27

**June 3:**

Mark 11:22-24;  
1 Peter 3:15-16

**June 4:**

Hebrews 11

**June 5:**

Daniel 6:11-22

**June 6:**

1 Samuel 17:45;  
Luke 14:25-33

**June 7:**

Psalms 119:105;  
James 2:26