



START ING POINT

STUDENT EDITION

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Making Disciples

**THE
KEY
TO
A
SUCCESSFUL
LIFE**

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

HERE WE GO

Throughout our mentoring study, we will spend a great deal of time exploring the Bible and consistently referring to it; therefore, it is imperative that we spend some time discussing a very important truth about the Bible.

We will also address the concept of faith throughout this study. The Bible defines faith like this:

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.* Hebrews 11:1

Although we may not be able to comprehend all the circumstances in our lives, we can feel certain that our Lord constantly has our well-being in mind.

MEMORIZE *Romans 10:17*

Copy the words, draw pictures, do whatever you need to memorize the Scripture.

For the purpose of this study, we will define faith this way:

**FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE AS THOUGH GOD'S WORD IS TRUE
REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS
AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.**

“And without *faith* it is impossible to please him (God)...” - Hebrews 11:6

“...whatever does not proceed from *faith* is sin.” - Romans 14:23

“for we walk by *faith*, not by sight.” - 2 Corinthians 5:7

CONSIDER THIS

You've probably been part of a team in one way or another - maybe you made your school's baseball team, or you joined the school band, or you were required to work with other students on a group project. On a team, every single individual shares a piece of the responsibility. Everyone must work together in order for the end product (the double play, the final piece of the spring musical, the rollercoaster model for physics class) to come out the way it's supposed to. And if we were to examine any one person's responsibilities, we might not be able to tell how that end product would turn out. Furthermore, if you were to try to pull off the responsibilities of everyone on the team, you would most likely fail. Therefore, you must have faith that everyone will complete his or her responsibility and that the end result will be great.

Similarly, when the Christian learns to live by faith, he or she learns to trust that, even though each day, each circumstance, and each trial may not make sense individually, God has a great, amazing plan in mind - an end product that will accomplish the goal. Learning to live by faith is learning to play your part on God's team and choosing to believe that the Bible is true. When you learn to live by faith, you learn to choose what God says in His Word over all else, and you are then able to pull your weight on the team.

For example, look up Jeremiah 31:3, and answer the question: "Does God love you?"

As you contribute to a team, the process of working toward your end goal becomes much easier when you are all on the same page regarding what the end goal is and how to get there, even if you're not involved in every step. In life, the Bible is the playbook for your team. It's the play-by-play instructions for the double play. It's the full copy of the entire piece of music with everyone's part listed. It's the instruction manual for building the world's biggest rollercoaster. If you read and know the playbook, then you know exactly how to accomplish your team's end goal.

The Internet is full of information. Between the opinions of millions of people on social media and the ability to Google almost anything, there is an endless amount of information on any given topic.

There are tons of websites, apps and social media accounts devoted to encourage and help the Christian guy or girl develop a deeper relationship with Christ. While many Christians are familiar with these venues of information and encouragement, it is no secret that the lives of many who engage with these look no different than the lives of those who have no relationship with Christ.



TALK IT OUT

With all the help that is available to this generation, why do you think people still struggle with living a successful Christian life? ***Write your answer below.***

Many begin their Christian walk with great enthusiasm, yet often find that they are struggling to live by faith (which means to choose to live as though the Bible is true). By applying God's Word to our daily lives, we can walk by faith rather than be tossed about by our emotions, circumstances or the perception of those around us.

List some circumstances in your own life with which you are struggling. For example, perhaps you are having problems in your friend group; maybe you're giving in to the popular way rather than the right way; or maybe you're having conflicts with your family members.

CIRCUMSTANCES

Even though most of us recognize the role that faith plays at the moment of conversion, we seem to forget that faith is also essential to living the Christian life. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). God also makes this clear in Hebrews: "but my righteous one shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38). These passages clearly state that faith is critical to living the Christian life, but what does it mean to "walk by faith?"

We discover in Ephesians 2:8 that we enter the Christian life by grace through faith. This means that it is because of God's kindness that we become rightly related to Christ through faith. It is through believing in the promises of God that we become His children. "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him" (Colossians 2:6).

Ask yourself: How did you begin your Christian life? How do you live your Christian life?

We walk with Jesus day-by-day, moment-by-moment by grace through faith. Just as we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior by grace through faith, we also need to learn to live our lives as Christians by grace through faith. This will become clear as you discover the **Faith Formation** in the following pages.

What follows is called the Faith Formation. Romans 10:17 tells us: “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Once we begin to renew our minds with what God says in the Bible, then we can learn to trust the Lord in every area of our lives with all our heart, rather than leaning on our own understanding. The Faith Formation involves three simple yet profound steps that will radically transform the way you live your life. As you apply this process to different areas of your life, you will find that the promises of God are rich and liberating, that the life of faith is indeed a wonderful journey, and that our God, whom we serve, is a faithful Father.



TALK IT OUT

Leo has had the same close friend group for seven years. As they're starting their freshman year of high school, tensions are high as they're trying out for different sports and feeling the pressure of grades and their social status at school. All of the guys, including Leo, are constantly comparing each other and trying to convince themselves and each other that they are the best at whatever. As a result, they're constantly putting each other down in an attempt to maintain their own confidence. Leo and his friends need to apply God's Word to their situation and live by faith rather than by what each one feels or only what he sees or thinks.

Can you relate with him? Does any aspect of his life seem similar to yours?

**TAKE A QUICK BREAK...
THEN KEEP GOING!**

THE FAITH FORMATION

STEP ONE: KNOW THE TERM

Faith, as defined by Easton's Bible Dictionary, is the "persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true."^[1] Genuine faith, though, never stops with the mind. **If faith is genuine, it always affects HOW the believer lives his or her life.** James writes that, "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). In other words, faith is never merely an intellectual experience; it always changes one's life. The first step is to internalize what is meant by the word *faith*. Living by faith is meaningless unless the believer truly understands what faith means. A good way to begin the process of internalizing and understanding the life lived by faith is to memorize the definition of faith.

*Copy the words, draw pictures, do whatever you need to memorize the term.
Remember we already defined this on page 2.*

What does it mean to live as though the Bible is true?

Regardless of the **circumstances** you may be facing, regardless of the **emotions** you may be feeling, and regardless of the **cultural trends** that may be influencing your life, you choose to live as though the Bible is true **by faith**.

¹Easton, M.G., M.A.D.D., Easton's Bible Dictionary, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996



THE FAITH FORMATION

STEP TWO: ASK THE FAITH QUESTIONS

The next step in the faith process will help you turn to the Bible as the object of your faith and begin living as though it is true, regardless of your circumstances, your emotions, or the cultural trends that surround you. In order to live this way, you should begin asking the Faith Question in every situation in your life:

If I lived as though the Bible is true,
what would that look like in my life?

In Romans 12:2, Paul tells the believers: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” Notice how Paul connects *how a person thinks to how a person lives*. In other words, Paul is exhorting us to reject living life according to the world and its standards. The way you reject living life by the world and its standards is by renewing your mind, or changing the way you think. Continually asking the “faith question” will help you to not only renew your mind, but it will also help you in your effort to reject conformity to this world and its trends. Read Romans 12:2 and answer the questions on the next page.



TALK IT OUT

Should we let the world shape us to how it thinks?

What does that mean?

Should we renew our mind?

What does it mean to renew our mind?

Now ask yourself: *If I lived as though Romans 12:2 is true, what would that look like in my life?* Record your answer.

More specifically, think back to when you experienced a time of intense uncertainty. Look up Isaiah 26:3. If you had been living as though Isaiah 26:3 is true, how would you have lived during that time of great uncertainty? Write your answer below.



THE FAITH FORMATION

STEP THREE: ASK FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP

John's letter contains one of Scripture's most wonderful promises. He writes, "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him." (1 John 5:14-15). Since God is more concerned with our obedience than we are, we should have the confidence that He will hear us when we ask Him to help us live according to His Word, rather than by our circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. The third step is simply to ask the Holy Spirit of God to help you live as though the Bible is true. Just as Jesus reached out His hand and took hold of Peter when his faith was weak, He is ready and willing to do the same for you.

Let's consider the example of Peter when he walked on the water. Read Matthew 14:22-33, and answer the following questions:

What miracle had Jesus just completed?

Why did Jesus send His disciples ahead of Him?

How did Jesus approach His disciples?

How did the disciples respond to Jesus?

What did Jesus tell Peter to do?

This story is a perfect illustration of what happens when we live by our circumstances and our own understanding instead of what God says in the Bible. After feeding 5,000 people, Jesus sent His disciples ahead of Him in a boat so He could pray. When He finished praying, He walked to His disciples on the water. As He approached, the disciples saw Him and were understandably afraid of what they were seeing. As Peter started walking on the water, he was a perfect example of living by faith. Jesus had given Peter the command to come to Him, and even though his circumstances seemed unusual and even difficult, he chose to believe Jesus' words were true by walking to Him.

After Peter began to walk on the water, he soon started to look at his circumstances, and he chose to listen to his emotions and other pressures. To better understand what made Peter sink, identify the following:

What were the circumstances that Peter experienced?

What were the emotions that Peter experienced?

What were the cultural pressures that Peter experienced?

The text remains silent on how the other disciples (who were Peter's culture) were responding to Peter's actions, but it is clear that they did not follow him. The other disciples, many fishermen, understood the danger and death the sea could bring. In a previous situation, similar to this one, the disciples feared that they might drown because of the strong winds and waves (Matthew 8:23-26). They may even have been telling him to get back in the boat. This peer pressure could represent Peter's cultural circumstance, which would be counter to what Jesus was saying to him. As long as Peter chose to walk by faith, he could walk on water. The very moment he began

to let his circumstances (he saw the water), his emotions (he was afraid) and cultural pressures (the peer pressure from the other disciples) become more significant than what Jesus said to him, *he began to sink*.

Any time we take our eyes off Jesus Christ and put them on our circumstances, our faith will waver, and we will begin to sink. Notice Jesus’ response to Peter in Matthew 14:31. He took Peter’s hand and said, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” According to Jesus, why did Peter begin to sink in the water?

Remember that faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. Jesus said that Peter began to sink because he had “little faith.” Peter did not begin to sink because the wind was blowing or because of what the disciples might have been saying.

Based on the verses in Matthew 14:29–31, fill in the following blanks: Jesus told Peter to _____. Peter began to let his circumstances consume him, and he began to _____.

Consider the following chart that illustrates the difference between the reality of Peter’s circumstance and what Jesus said to him:

Peter’s Circumstances	What Jesus Says in Matthew 14:27–29
Wind was blowing.	Take courage.
Asked to do the impossible	Do not be afraid.
Fear was overwhelming.	Come to Me.
Discouragement was huge.	

We are asked to live out the impossible every day. The only way this can be done is by faith.

Peter's circumstance was that he was asked to do the impossible. Peter's fear and discouragement were overwhelming. Despite what Peter was experiencing, Jesus told him to take courage and not to be afraid. Then Jesus told Peter to come to Him.

In this lesson, as we have discussed the faith definition, we have laid a necessary foundation for the other biblical principles that we will discuss in the coming lessons. Throughout this study, you will discover how your relationship with God affects your relationship with others. Then, you will be able to apply these principles in your own life as you learn to make the decision to choose faith in every situation and circumstance of your life. Instead of acting on what your emotions, circumstances or cultural influences tell you, you are going to learn to trust God and to act on the truth of His Word.

The Faith Formation and the Certainty of Heaven

Let us look at some examples of how to work out this process in the reality of life. There may be times in your life when you are fearful of what will happen to you when you die. What should you do when you feel fearful about your own death? First, you should recall the faith definition:

**FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE AS THOUGH GOD'S WORD IS TRUE
REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS
AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.**

Secondly, you should ask the faith question:

**If I lived as though the Bible is true,
what would that look like in my life?**

Lastly, **you should ask God to help you live as though this is true and to take hold of you**, as He did with Peter, when the circumstances of your life are causing you to sink. For example, you could pray something like this:

“Father, since you have promised me in 1 John 5:11-13 that I can live forever with You in heaven, I am choosing to live as though that is true. Would You help me make the choice to rest in the assurance of Your Word? Please remind me several times a day that I have a promised place in heaven because of Your Word.”

BEFORE YOU FINISH

The Faith Process starts now. Living by faith is a life-changing process; it is a process of taking the Bible and choosing of your own will to live as though it is true regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. Faith is vitally dependent upon the Bible; therefore, you should make spending time studying God’s Word a priority in your life, if it is not already. Start memorizing verses of Scripture that will help you in the Faith Process. Most importantly, begin the process today by asking God to show you areas where you are not already living as though the Bible is true. Start the Faith Process now. Do it for the rest of your life.

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

Today, I am making a new commitment to choose to live as though the Bible is true regardless of my circumstances, my emotions and the cultural trends in my life. I know that I can do this by the power of God’s Holy Spirit.

Signed _____

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972-820-5000
prestonwoodstudents.org