COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 13

Foundations *of* Discipleship

STUDY GUIDE 2 OF 7:

The Word and Faith

An overview of God's Word and faith in discipleship.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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Website: cogma.com.au

Email: admin@cogma.org.au

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PREFACE

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The Foundations of Discipleship module has established that the life of a disciple begins with the new birth. Jesus Christ comes to dwell within the born-again believer, giving new spiritual life. That life must now be nourished, strengthened and established.

Just as the natural body requires food each day, the spiritual life of the disciple needs the continual nourishment of God's Word. Jesus made this clear when He answered temptation in the wilderness.

Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4**:

> *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

The Word of God is therefore not simply something we read to gain information. It gives direction, strengthens understanding, corrects our thinking and reveals the truth by which we are to live.

However, hearing or reading the Word is not enough. The disciple must also believe God, resting confidently upon what He has spoken even when circumstances appear uncertain.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:6**:

> *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

The Word and faith therefore belong together. The Word reveals the truth of God, and faith believes and lives according to that truth.

In this Study Guide, we will consider how the Word of God nourishes the disciple and why it should be read and meditated upon. We will also consider how the Word becomes established in the heart and how faith enables the believer to walk with confidence in Jesus Christ.

The disciple grows by receiving God's Word, believing it and living by faith in Jesus Christ. The Word nourishes the spiritual life already received, while faith enables the disciple to walk according to the truth God has revealed.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do God's Word and faith work together in the life Christ has given?

Personal Reflection

Have you approached Bible reading mainly as a way to gain knowledge? How has that affected the way you believe and live what you read?

Action Step

Identify a truth from God's Word that you know but have not lived. What has prevented your response, and how will you act upon it in faith through Christ's life within?

INTRODUCTION: GROWING THROUGH THE WORD AND FAITH

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The new birth is the beginning of spiritual life, but God does not intend His children to remain spiritual babies. A disciple must grow, become established in Jesus Christ and learn to walk faithfully with Him.

Natural life requires nourishment, and without food and water the body becomes weak. In the same way, the spiritual life of a disciple must be continually nourished. God has given us His Word as spiritual food for the life He has placed within us.

Job understood the importance of God's Word. He said in **Job 23:12**:

> *"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."*

Job valued God's Word more highly than the food required to sustain his natural body. This gives us an important picture of the place the Word should have in the life of a disciple.

Jesus expressed the same truth when He was tempted in the wilderness. He said in **Matthew 4:4**:

> *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

Natural food sustains the body, but the disciple also needs the Word of God. Through the Word, we learn God's truth, understand His will and receive direction for the way we should live.

However, reading the Word alone is not enough. The disciple must believe what God has spoken and learn to depend upon Him.

Faith is not simply agreeing that the Bible is true. Faith means trusting God and depending upon His Word even when circumstances cannot yet be understood. The disciple learns to rest upon what God has said rather than upon what can be seen naturally.

Faith Comes by the Word of God

Paul explained how closely faith is connected with the Word. He wrote in **Romans 10:17**:

> *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

The Word strengthens faith because it continually brings our attention back to God, His character and His promises. As we hear, read and receive His Word, our confidence becomes increasingly established in Him.

Faith must then continue throughout the disciple's life. It is not something exercised only when we are born again, but must remain part of our daily walk with Jesus Christ.

Paul could say near the end of his life in **2 Timothy 4:7**:

> *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Paul began in faith, walked in faith and finished in faith. This is also the calling of every disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Word and Faith Belong Together

The Word and faith therefore work together. The Word reveals what God has spoken, while faith receives, trusts and lives according to that Word.

As we continue through this Study Guide, we will consider the importance of reading, studying and meditating upon God's Word. We will also consider the importance of hiding it within the heart and allowing it to guide our daily lives.

We will then consider what biblical faith is, how faith grows and how it responds during trials. The disciple must learn to continue walking by faith even when circumstances are difficult or cannot be fully understood.

The purpose is not simply to know more Scripture or understand more about faith. The purpose is to become increasingly established in Jesus Christ and learn to walk faithfully according to His truth.

The Word nourishes the disciple, and faith trusts God and responds to what He has spoken. Together, the Word and faith help us continue growing and walking faithfully in Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do God's Word and trust in Him belong together as a disciple grows?

Personal Reflection

When have feelings or expectations had more influence on you than God's Word? What needs correcting?

Action Step

Recall a time when feelings determined your decision more than God's Word. Which belief or response needs correcting, and what will you do differently when that situation returns?

THE WORD GIVES SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

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The new birth gives spiritual life, but that life must be nourished. Just as the natural body cannot remain strong without food, the disciple cannot remain spiritually healthy without continually receiving the Word of God.

Jesus made this principle clear when He answered temptation in the wilderness. He said in **Matthew 4:4**:

> *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

Natural food sustains the body, but the Word of God nourishes the spiritual life. The disciple therefore needs more than occasional contact with Scripture because God's Word must become a regular and necessary part of daily life.

The Word Is Spiritual Food

Job understood the value of God's Word and placed it above his natural food. He recognised that what God had spoken was necessary to his life.

Job said in **Job 23:12**:

> *"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."*

The words *"necessary food"* show how seriously Job regarded what God had spoken. He understood that the Word of God was not something to consider only when convenient, but something necessary to his life.

The same principle applies to every disciple. When the Word is neglected, spiritual weakness follows, but when the Word is received consistently, it strengthens the heart and helps establish the believer in Jesus Christ.

The Word Gives Light and Direction

The Word of God not only nourishes the disciple, but also provides direction. A disciple lives in a world filled with competing voices, opinions and pressures, and God's Word provides a clear standard by which the believer can recognise the right way.

David wrote in **Psalm 119:105**:

> *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

A lamp gives light for the next step, while a light upon the path helps us see the direction ahead. In the same way, the Word of God gives practical guidance for daily decisions and reveals the way in which the disciple should walk.

David also wrote in **Psalm 119:104**:

> *"Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."*

The Word gives understanding because it teaches us to recognise both truth and error. The more firmly a disciple knows the truth of God, the easier it becomes to recognise a false way.

The Word Strengthens Against Sin

The Word of God also strengthens the believer against sin by bringing truth into the heart. God's Word must become part of the disciple's thinking so that it can guide the response to temptation.

David wrote in **Psalm 119:11**:

> *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*

David did not simply read God's Word and forget it. He hid it in his heart, allowing the Word to become part of his thinking and influence the way he responded to temptation.

This principle is also seen in the life of Jesus. When He was tempted, His response was repeatedly *"It is written,"* showing the place of God's Word in answering temptation.

Jesus answered temptation with the Word of God, and the disciple must learn to do the same. The Word gives us truth with which to resist lies, temptation and wrong thinking.

The Word Must Be Received

Simply owning a Bible is not enough because the Word must be read, heard, believed and received into the heart. The disciple must allow God's truth to become established within.

James wrote in **James 1:21**:

> *"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."*

The word *"engrafted"* gives the picture of something planted within. God's Word must not remain outside us as information only, but must be received with meekness and allowed to take root in the heart.

This is why the attitude of the disciple matters when approaching Scripture. We do not come to the Word simply to confirm what we already want to believe, but to hear what God says and allow His truth to teach and correct us.

The Word of God is therefore essential to spiritual growth. It nourishes the disciple, gives light and direction, strengthens against sin, corrects wrong thinking and establishes truth within the heart.

The disciple who continually receives the Word of God is being nourished for a life of faith and obedience in Jesus Christ. As the Word becomes established within, the disciple is strengthened to walk faithfully according to the life already received in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does God's Word nourish and direct a disciple and give strength against temptation?

Personal Reflection

Whose opinion tends to carry most weight in your decisions? Are you willing to test it by what the Bible teaches?

Action Step

Consider whose advice or opinion most often directs you. What will you test by the Bible this week, and how will the truth you discover govern a practical choice?

READING THE WORD DAILY

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If the Word of God is spiritual nourishment, then the disciple must receive that nourishment regularly. Natural food cannot strengthen the body if it is eaten only occasionally, and the same principle applies spiritually. The Word of God should have a regular place in the daily life of every disciple.

The believers at Berea were commended because they did not treat the Scriptures casually. They listened to what was being taught and then examined the Scriptures for themselves.

Luke wrote in **Acts 17:11**:

> *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."*

Notice the word *"daily."* The Bereans were not satisfied simply to hear Paul teach, but returned to the Scriptures for themselves and examined what they had heard.

This is a valuable pattern for every disciple. We should hear the Word when it is preached and taught, but we should also read it personally and regularly.

Make Time for the Word

One of the greatest difficulties in daily Bible reading is not usually access to the Scriptures, but making time to read them. Life can quickly become filled with work, family responsibilities, communication, entertainment and many other demands.

The disciple must therefore make the Word of God a priority. If we continually wait until nothing else requires our attention, Bible reading can easily be pushed aside.

David wrote in **Psalm 63:1**:

> *"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;"*

David's words reveal desire. He was not simply fulfilling a religious duty, but seeking God because his soul thirsted for Him.

The best time for Bible reading may differ from one person to another. Some may read early in the morning, while others may have a quieter period later in the day.

The important point is not the exact hour. What matters is that time is deliberately given to the Word of God.

Read With a Desire to Hear God

Bible reading should never become an empty routine. The purpose is not simply to complete a certain number of chapters or maintain a reading schedule.

The disciple reads because the Scriptures reveal the truth of God and direct us towards Jesus Christ. We come to the Word desiring to understand what God has revealed.

Jesus said in **John 5:39**:

> *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."*

The Scriptures testify of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as we read, our desire should be to understand what the Word reveals about Him, His will and the way He would have us live.

This attitude changes Bible reading from a religious duty into an opportunity to receive spiritual nourishment. We are not simply reading words on a page, but receiving truth that should become established within us.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why should daily Bible reading be a time to hear God instead of only finishing a schedule?

Personal Reflection

What makes it difficult for you to give the Bible regular attention? What do those choices reveal about your priorities?

Action Step

What regularly competes with time in God's Word? Examine your priority honestly, then choose a realistic time to read so that you can hear and respond to what He teaches.

Read With an Open and Teachable Heart

The Word of God may sometimes correct our thinking or expose something in our lives that needs to change. A true disciple must therefore approach Scripture with humility and a willingness to receive what God says.

James wrote in **James 1:21**:

> *"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."*

The words *"receive with meekness"* describe the right attitude. We do not come to the Bible demanding that it agree with us, but come willing to allow our thoughts, beliefs and conduct to be brought into agreement with God's Word.

Daily reading keeps the truth before us and helps prevent our thinking from gradually being shaped by the world around us. The Word continually brings our attention back to God's truth.

Read Even When Some Things Are Difficult

Not every verse of Scripture is immediately easy to understand. A disciple should not become discouraged when encountering difficult verses or unfamiliar subjects.

Some verses may require further study, prayer or comparison with other Scriptures. Other truths become clearer as spiritual understanding grows.

God has promised to give wisdom to those who ask. James wrote in **James 1:5**:

> *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."*

When something is difficult, we should continue reading and ask God for understanding. We can return to the verse later, compare it with other Scriptures and continue learning as our understanding grows.

Spiritual growth takes time, and we should not expect to understand everything immediately. The important thing is to continue reading, studying and allowing Scripture to build upon Scripture.

Develop Consistency

The strength of daily Bible reading is found in consistency. One long period of reading followed by weeks of neglect is not the best way to nourish spiritual life.

A steady habit keeps the Word before the heart and mind. Over time, Scripture becomes increasingly familiar and its truths become more firmly established within us.

Job said in **Job 23:12**:

> *"Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."*

If God's Word is truly necessary food, we should treat it as something needed continually. The disciple should develop a regular pattern of receiving the spiritual nourishment God has provided.

Daily Bible reading does not earn God's favour and does not make a person more saved. It nourishes the life already received through the new birth.

As the disciple reads consistently, the Word becomes increasingly familiar, truth becomes established in the heart and spiritual understanding begins to grow. The believer becomes better prepared to recognise truth, resist error and walk according to the Word of God.

Make room for the Word of God each day, and approach it with hunger, humility and a desire to know Jesus Christ more clearly. As the Word becomes established within, the disciple is nourished and strengthened to walk faithfully in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can steady reading nourish the life already received from Christ?

Personal Reflection

How consistently have you received God's Word as spiritual nourishment? What has helped or hindered you?

Action Step

When has Bible reading become an occasional task rather than spiritual nourishment? What needs to change in your desire and habits, and what consistent beginning will you make this week?

STUDYING AND MEDITATING ON THE WORD

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Daily Bible reading gives the disciple regular spiritual nourishment, but there are times when we need to slow down and examine the Word more carefully. Reading helps us become familiar with Scripture, while study and meditation help us understand what we have read, consider its meaning and allow the truth to become established within us.

The disciple should therefore develop all three practices: reading, studying and meditating upon the Word of God. They are connected, but each has a different purpose.

Studying the Word of God

Paul instructed Timothy to give careful attention to the Word. He wrote in **2 Timothy 2:15**:

> *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

Bible study requires diligence. We do not simply read a verse quickly and assume that our first impression must be correct. We take time to understand what the verse says, what it means within its context and how it agrees with the rest of Scripture.

The purpose is not to become impressed with our own knowledge. We study because we desire to know the truth of God and live according to it.

The Bereans provide an excellent example. They listened carefully to what Paul taught, but they also examined his teaching according to the Scriptures.

Luke wrote in **Acts 17:11**:

> *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."*

They listened carefully to what Paul taught, but they also searched the Scriptures for themselves. This is an important responsibility for every disciple.

A teaching should not be accepted simply because it comes from a pastor, teacher, church tradition or respected person. The Word of God must remain the final standard by which all teaching is examined.

However, Bible study is not an exercise of human reasoning alone. Jesus Christ dwells within the born-again believer as the Holy Spirit, and we depend upon Him to give spiritual understanding as we study His Word. The Spirit of Christ does not replace careful study, context or comparison of Scripture with Scripture, but He is the Teacher who opens our understanding to the truth.

As we study, we learn to compare Scripture with Scripture, recognise the setting of a verse, identify who is speaking and to whom the words were spoken, and consider the wider context.

These principles help protect us from misunderstanding the Bible or building a belief upon an isolated verse.

The aim is always to understand what God has actually said. Careful study helps us handle the Word faithfully rather than making Scripture say what we want it to say.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must careful Bible study consider a teaching's context and other the Bible?

Personal Reflection

Have you accepted a teaching mainly because a trusted person said it? How willing are you to examine the Bible for yourself?

Action Step

Think about a teaching you accepted because someone respected said it. How will you check its meaning in the Bible and respond if your present understanding needs to change?

Study Builds Personal Conviction

Careful study also helps the disciple develop personal conviction. There is a difference between repeating what someone else believes and knowing from Scripture why we believe something ourselves.

When truth has been carefully examined in the Word, the disciple becomes more stable. Belief is no longer resting only upon another person's explanation, but becomes established through personal understanding of Scripture.

This is especially important when questions arise or when someone challenges what we believe. Peter instructed believers to be ready to explain their hope.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 3:15**:

> *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"*

Study helps us become prepared to give that answer. It equips the disciple not only to understand truth personally, but eventually to help others understand it.

Meditating Upon the Word

Study examines the Word carefully, while meditation continues thinking upon what has been read or studied. The purpose is for the truth to become established in the heart and influence the way we live.

God instructed Joshua to meditate continually upon His Word. The LORD said in **Joshua 1:8**:

> *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."*

Notice that meditation is directly connected with obedience through the words *"that thou mayest observe to do."* Biblical meditation therefore has a practical purpose because the truth we think upon should affect the way we live.

Biblical meditation is not about emptying the mind or entering some altered state. It is the opposite because biblical meditation fills the mind with the Word of God.

It means thinking carefully about what God has said and considering how that truth should affect our lives. The Word remains before the mind rather than being quickly forgotten.

David also spoke about meditation. He wrote in **Psalm 63:6**:

> *"When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."*

Meditation does not require a particular place or time. A verse read in the morning may remain in our thoughts throughout the day, while a truth heard in teaching may return to our mind while travelling, working or resting.

The important point is that the Word is not quickly forgotten. We continue thinking upon it so that its truth becomes increasingly established within us.

Tasting and Absorbing the Word

Meditation can be compared with taking time to digest food. Reading places the food before us, study helps us understand what we are receiving, and meditation gives time for the truth to sink deeply into the heart.

David wrote in **Psalm 34:8**:

> *"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."*

To taste something is personal. We do not simply look at food or talk about it because we take it in and experience it.

The same principle applies to the Word of God. The disciple should not be satisfied simply to know that a verse exists, but should consider what it reveals about God, what it teaches and how it applies to daily life.

Paul encouraged Timothy to give himself fully to the truths he had received. He wrote in **1 Timothy 4:15**:

> *"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."*

Meditation allows the Word to move from the page into our thoughts, attitudes and conduct. The truth becomes something we carry with us and apply to the way we live.

Questions That Help Us Meditate

When considering a verse of Scripture, it can be helpful to ask questions that direct our attention towards its meaning and application. These questions help us move beyond surface reading and think carefully about what God has said:

- What does this verse reveal about Jesus Christ?
- What does it teach me about God's will?
- Is there something in my thinking that needs to change?
- Is there something I need to obey?
- How should this truth affect my decisions or behaviour?
- Is there another Scripture that helps explain this verse?

These questions help the disciple apply the Word personally. They also encourage us to compare Scripture with Scripture rather than building our understanding upon one verse in isolation.

Meditation should always lead towards obedience. If we understand a truth but refuse to live according to it, our study has not reached its proper purpose.

From Reading to Living

Reading, study and meditation should work together. Each has an important place in helping the disciple receive, understand and live according to the Word of God.

We read the Word so that we become familiar with it, and we study the Word so that we understand it correctly. We meditate upon the Word so that its truth becomes established within us, and then we live according to what we have received.

God did not give His Word simply to increase our knowledge. He gave it to teach, guide, correct and shape the lives of His people.

The disciple therefore approaches the Bible with more than curiosity. We come with a desire to know Jesus Christ, understand His truth and allow that truth to govern our lives.

We read the Word, we study the Word and we meditate upon the Word so that its truth becomes established within us. Then we live according to that truth as we continue following Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does thinking carefully about a verse help you act on what it teaches?

Personal Reflection

Have you forgotten a verse soon after reading it? What could help you remember it and act on it?

Action Step

Choose a verse that challenges the way you think or live. What attitude does it expose, and how will you return to that truth during the day before acting on it?

HIDING THE WORD IN THE HEART

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Reading, studying and meditating upon the Word of God should lead to something deeper. The truth must become established within the heart of the disciple.

It is possible to read many chapters, hear many sermons and remember many facts without allowing the Word to shape the way we think and live. David understood that the Word needed to be more than something written on a page.

David wrote in **Psalm 119:11**:

> *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*

David did not simply read the Word because he hid it in his heart. The truth became something he carried within.

To hide the Word in the heart means to receive it so deeply that it becomes part of our thinking, our decisions and our response to temptation. The truth is no longer only something we can find in a Bible because it has become established within us.

Remembering the Word

One important way of hiding the Word in the heart is remembering Scripture. The disciple should become familiar with verses that bring direction, correction and encouragement.

This does not mean that every believer must be able to memorise large portions of Scripture. The purpose is not to impress others with how many verses we can quote, but to have the truth of God available within the heart when it is needed.

Jesus showed the importance of this when He was tempted. Matthew recorded His response in **Matthew 4:10**:

> *"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."*

Jesus answered temptation with the Word when He said, *"It is written."* The truth of Scripture provided the answer to the temptation placed before Him.

The disciple should also become familiar enough with Scripture that truth can come to mind when wrong thoughts, temptation or difficult circumstances arise. Remembering the Word allows its truth to remain with us even when the Bible is not physically open before us.

The Word Shapes Our Thinking

What fills the mind eventually affects the way we live. If our thinking is constantly shaped by the values, fears and opinions of the world, those things will begin to influence our conduct.

God's Word provides another way of thinking. It directs our attention towards what is true, right and pleasing to God.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:8**:

> *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."*

The disciple must learn to direct the mind towards what is true and right before God. The Word gives us the truth upon which our thoughts should rest.

This is why meditation is so valuable. When we continue thinking upon Scripture, its truth begins to replace wrong thinking and strengthen godly understanding.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can remembering God's Word shape your thoughts when temptation comes?

Personal Reflection

Where have you let a repeated thought go untested by the Bible? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

When a familiar temptation or wrong thought returns, what truth from the Bible will you remember, and how will you allow that truth to change your response?

Guarding the Heart

Solomon gave an important instruction concerning the heart. He showed that the inner life must be guarded carefully because it affects the direction of the whole life.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 4:23**:

> *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."*

The heart must be guarded because the direction of life flows from within. What we continually allow into our thoughts and desires will eventually influence our words, choices and conduct.

Hiding the Word in the heart helps guard that inner life. God's truth gives us a standard by which other thoughts can be judged.

When a thought contradicts Scripture, the disciple should reject it. When a choice is clearly opposed to the Word of God, the disciple already has an answer.

The Word therefore becomes a spiritual measure within. It helps the disciple recognise what agrees with God's truth and what must be rejected.

The Word Helps Us Resist Sin

David directly connected hiding the Word in his heart with resisting sin. His purpose was *"that I might not sin against thee."*

The Word does not protect us simply because we have read it. It strengthens us when it has been received, believed and obeyed.

As the disciple becomes familiar with God's truth, temptation can be recognised more quickly. The Word exposes the lie behind the temptation and reminds us of the right way.

This is especially important because temptation often begins in the thoughts before it becomes an outward action. When the Word has been established within, truth is present at the place where the battle begins.

Carrying the Word Through the Day

The Word of God should not remain behind when the Bible is closed. A verse read during morning devotions can remain in the mind throughout the day, while a verse studied during the week can continue to guide decisions long after the study has ended.

This is part of what it means to hide the Word in the heart. God's truth becomes something the disciple carries into the ordinary circumstances of daily life.

The disciple reads the Word, studies it, meditates upon it and remembers it so that God's truth becomes established within. The purpose is not simply to remember words, but to allow those words to influence thoughts, choices and conduct.

The Word hidden in the heart gives direction to our thoughts, strengthens us against temptation and helps us walk faithfully with Jesus Christ. As the truth becomes established within, it increasingly shapes the daily life of the disciple.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can the Bible guide a choice after you have closed the Bible?

Personal Reflection

Where have you allowed a habit or desire to overrule a known truth? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Identify a repeated choice or habit that you already know needs correction. Which words from the Bible will you keep before you, and what will you do differently next time?

FAITH IN GOD

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The Word of God gives the disciple truth to receive and live by, but that truth must be joined with faith. Faith is confidence in God and in what He has spoken. It looks beyond natural circumstances and rests upon the character, faithfulness and promises of God.

Faith was necessary when we were born again, but it does not end at salvation. The disciple must continue to live by faith throughout the Christian life.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:6**:

> *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

The verse is very clear because *"without faith it is impossible to please him."* Faith is therefore not an optional part of discipleship.

We cannot walk faithfully with God while continually doubting His character, His Word or His promises. The disciple must learn to trust Him.

What Is Faith?

The Bible gives us a clear description of faith. It shows us that faith reaches beyond what can presently be seen with natural eyes.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:1**:

> *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Faith deals with realities that cannot always be seen naturally. It gives the disciple confidence in what God has spoken even when the physical evidence has not yet appeared.

This does not mean that faith is imagination or wishful thinking. Biblical faith has an object, and faith is in God.

Jesus said in **Mark 11:22**:

> *"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God."*

The disciple's confidence is therefore not in faith itself. We do not place faith in our own ability to believe, nor do we try to produce confidence through positive thinking.

Our faith rests in Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word. He is the One upon whom our confidence depends.

Faith Is More Than Mental Agreement

A person may agree that God exists and still not live by faith. Biblical faith goes beyond accepting certain facts as true because faith trusts God personally and places confidence in Him.

Paul expressed this confidence in **2 Timothy 1:12**:

> *"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."*

Notice that Paul did not simply say, *"I know what I believe."* He said, *"I know whom I have believed."*

Paul's faith was centred in a Person. He knew Jesus Christ and was persuaded that He was able to keep what had been committed to Him.

This is an important distinction because the disciple does not simply have faith in biblical principles. Our faith is in Jesus Christ as He is revealed through His Word.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must faith rest in God and what He has spoken instead of in faith itself or a desired result?

Personal Reflection

Where have you confused sincere desire with a promise God has spoken? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Consider whether your confidence rests upon what you want to happen or what God has actually promised. What expectation needs correcting, and how will you express faith in Him?

Faith Trusts God Without Seeing

Natural thinking often wants proof before believing, but faith operates differently. Faith believes God because He is trustworthy, even before the promised result can be seen.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:7**:

> *"For we walk by faith, not by sight:"*

There will be many times when the disciple cannot see what God is doing. Circumstances may appear uncertain, prayers may not be answered immediately and the way ahead may not be clear.

Faith does not require us to pretend that difficulties do not exist. It means that we trust God more than we trust what our circumstances appear to say.

Abraham provides a clear example of this confidence. Paul wrote in **Romans 4:20-21**:

> *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."*

Abraham was *"fully persuaded."* His confidence rested upon the ability and faithfulness of the One who had made the promise.

This is the heart of biblical faith. We trust God because we know that He is faithful and able to perform what He has spoken.

Faith and the Word of God

Faith is closely connected with hearing and receiving God's Word. The Word gives the disciple a firm foundation upon which faith can rest.

Paul wrote in **Romans 10:17**:

> *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

Through Scripture, we learn who God is, what He has done and what He has spoken. The Word therefore continually directs our confidence away from ourselves and towards Him.

This also protects the disciple from confusing faith with personal desire. We cannot simply decide what we want and then call our confidence faith because biblical faith rests upon the truth of God.

The more we know His Word, the more clearly we understand the One in whom we trust. Faith becomes increasingly established as God's truth becomes established within us.

Living Faith Continues

Faith is not something we exercise once and then leave behind. It must continue throughout the disciple's life.

Paul testified near the end of his course in **2 Timothy 4:7**:

> *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Paul began in faith, continued in faith and finished in faith. The disciple must also continue trusting Jesus Christ throughout the whole Christian life.

There will be times when faith is tested and circumstances are difficult. Yet the foundation remains unchanged because God is faithful, His Word is true and Jesus Christ remains worthy of our trust.

Faith therefore becomes the continuing attitude of the disciple. We believe God, trust His Word and continue walking with Jesus Christ even when we cannot yet see the outcome.

Faith rests upon Jesus Christ and continues trusting Him through every circumstance. This is the faith by which the disciple lives.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How did Paul's trust in Jesus Christ continue through hardship?

Personal Reflection

Where have you looked for certainty about circumstances before trusting Jesus? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

What uncertain situation has led you to demand an answer before trusting Christ? Explain what you must surrender and the faithful decision you can make without seeing the outcome.

LIVING BY FAITH

BACK TO CONTENTS

Faith is not something the disciple exercises only at the beginning of salvation. It becomes the continuing way in which the believer lives. The Christian life is a life of trusting Jesus Christ day by day.

Paul expressed this clearly when describing his own life. He wrote in **Galatians 2:20**:

> *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

Paul's life was centred in Jesus Christ. His confidence was not in his own strength, wisdom or ability because he lived by faith in the One who loved him and gave Himself for him.

This is also the calling of every disciple. The life we have received in Jesus Christ must now be lived by continuing faith in Him.

We Walk by Faith

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:7**:

> *"For we walk by faith, not by sight:"*

To walk by faith means that our decisions and confidence are not governed only by what we can naturally see. There will be times when circumstances appear confusing, difficult or even contrary to what we expected.

Faith does not deny those circumstances or pretend that difficulties are not real. Faith simply refuses to allow circumstances to become greater than our confidence in Jesus Christ.

The disciple may not always understand what God is doing, but can still trust Him. Faith rests upon God even when our own understanding cannot explain the circumstances around us.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 3:5-6**:

> *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*

There will be times when our own understanding cannot explain what is happening. Faith then chooses to trust the Lord rather than becoming dependent upon natural reasoning alone.

Faith Trusts the Person

Living by faith is not simply believing that everything will turn out the way we want. Faith is confidence in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Paul said in **2 Timothy 1:12**:

> *"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."*

Paul's confidence remained strong even while he was suffering. He did not say that he understood every circumstance because his confidence rested upon something greater than understanding the circumstances.

Paul said, *"I know whom I have believed."* His faith was centred in the Person he knew and trusted.

This is one of the strongest foundations of living faith. The disciple's security is not found in always understanding the path ahead, but in knowing Jesus Christ and trusting His faithfulness.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can you trust Jesus Christ when the way ahead is unclear?

Personal Reflection

Where have you allowed uncertain circumstances to govern a decision instead of trusting Christ? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Recall a situation where fear of an uncertain outcome held you back. What clear teaching of Jesus will govern your next decision, and how will you follow it in faith?

Faith Continues When Answers Are Not Immediate

There will also be times when prayers are not answered immediately or when the answer is different from what we expected. Living by faith means continuing to trust God during those periods.

Job provides a powerful example. He continued trusting God even while experiencing circumstances he could not understand.

Job said in **Job 13:15**:

> *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."*

Job's circumstances were extremely difficult. He had lost much and did not understand why these things had happened, yet his confidence in God remained.

This is not a faith based upon favourable circumstances. It is faith that continues to say, *"Even when I do not understand, I will continue to trust God."*

A disciple whose faith depends only upon answered prayers, financial provision, good health or comfortable circumstances will become unstable when those things change. Living faith must rest upon something deeper because it rests upon Jesus Christ Himself.

Faith Produces Obedience

Faith is also seen in the way a disciple responds to God's Word. If we truly believe God, that faith should influence the way we respond to what He says.

The writer of Hebrews described Abraham's response when God called him. He wrote in **Hebrews 11:8**:

> *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."*

Abraham did not know every detail of the journey, but he obeyed because he trusted the One who had called him. His faith became visible through his response.

Faith therefore produces action. It is possible to say that we believe God while refusing to obey what He has spoken, but biblical faith does not remain only in the mind.

Faith moves the disciple to walk according to the Word of God. Trust in God and obedience to His Word belong together.

Faith Must Remain Steadfast

The Christian journey requires continuing faith. The writer of Hebrews warned believers about the importance of holding firmly to their confidence.

He wrote in **Hebrews 10:23**:

> *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"*

The reason we can hold fast is given in the verse itself: *"for he is faithful that promised."* Our confidence rests upon God's faithfulness rather than upon our own ability to remain naturally strong.

Our faith does not remain strong because we are always strong. It remains centred upon the One in whom we trust because He is faithful.

Paul could therefore say near the end of his life in **2 Timothy 4:7**:

> *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"*

Paul had experienced hardship, opposition, persecution and imprisonment, yet he continued trusting Jesus Christ. He could look back upon his course and say, *"I have kept the faith."*

This is the testimony every disciple should desire. Living by faith means trusting Jesus Christ when the way is clear and when it is uncertain, when prayers are answered quickly and when we must wait, and when life is comfortable or difficulties come.

Faith keeps walking because Jesus Christ remains faithful. The disciple may not always understand what can be seen, but can continue trusting the One who never changes.

The disciple therefore learns to trust Jesus Christ, obey His Word and continue walking by faith through every circumstance. We know whom we have believed, and therefore we can continue to walk faithfully with Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why can faith remain obedient when circumstances are difficult?

Personal Reflection

Where have you said you trusted God while resisting a clear instruction? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Are you postponing an act of obedience because you cannot see what will happen? What is the next faithful step, and how will you depend upon Christ to take it?

BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING FAITH

BACK TO CONTENTS

Faith is received from God, but the disciple must learn to live in that faith and allow it to become stronger through continued trust and obedience. Faith does not begin with human determination or our ability to persuade ourselves to believe. Its foundation is Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 12:2**:

> *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. The disciple therefore does not look within to manufacture stronger faith, but continues looking to Him.

Paul explained the close relationship between faith and the Word. He wrote in **Romans 10:17**:

> *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

As we hear, read, study and meditate upon Scripture, we come to know Jesus Christ and His truth more clearly. Faith grows as our knowledge of Him deepens, and the more clearly we know Him, the more confidently we can rest upon what He has spoken.

Faith Is Strengthened by the Word

The disciple cannot expect strong faith while neglecting the Word of God. Faith needs truth upon which to rest.

When Scripture continually reminds us that God is faithful, our confidence in Him is strengthened. When the Word shows us how God has worked in the lives of others, we learn that He can also be trusted in our own circumstances.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:9**:

> *"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."*

Notice the word *"do."* Faith is strengthened when the Word moves from hearing into practice.

The disciple learns truth, receives it and then begins to live according to it. What God has spoken becomes part of the disciple's daily walk.

Give Earnest Heed to the Word

The writer of Hebrews warned believers about the danger of allowing truth to slip away. What God has spoken requires our continuing attention.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 2:1**:

> *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."*

The words *"give the more earnest heed"* show that spiritual attention is necessary. Truth that is continually neglected can gradually lose its influence upon our thinking.

The disciple should therefore return often to the Word, remembering what God has said. We must refuse to allow fear, circumstances or contrary opinions to replace that truth.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does receiving and acting on God's Word strengthen faith?

Personal Reflection

Where have you neglected the Word while asking for stronger faith? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

When you seek stronger faith, where do you place your attention first? Choose a promise from God's Word and explain how it will change your trust and conduct this week.

Faith Grows Through Obedience

Faith becomes stronger when the disciple acts upon what God has spoken. It is one thing to say that we trust God, but another to obey Him when obedience requires sacrifice or when the outcome is uncertain.

Abraham provides a clear example. The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:8**:

> *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."*

Abraham's faith became visible through obedience. He did not know where the journey would lead, but he trusted the One who had called him.

As the disciple obeys God and experiences His faithfulness, confidence grows. Every act of obedience becomes another opportunity to learn that Jesus Christ can be trusted.

Faith therefore becomes stronger as we live according to the truth already received. Trust in God increasingly becomes part of the way the disciple lives.

Remember God's Faithfulness

Faith is also strengthened by remembering how God has already helped us. When facing uncertainty, it is helpful to remember prayers God has answered, times He has given direction,

occasions when He has provided strength, truths from His Word that have already proved dependable and ways in which He has carried us through previous trials.

The God who has been faithful before has not changed. His character remains the same even when our circumstances change.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:13**:

> *"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."*

Our confidence does not rest upon changing circumstances. It rests upon the unchanging character of God.

Asking God for Help

There are times when the disciple recognises weakness in faith. We should not hide this from God because we can ask Him for help.

Luke recorded in **Luke 17:5-6**:

> *"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."*

Their request was simple: *"Increase our faith."* They recognised their need and brought it directly to the Lord.

There is nothing wrong with recognising that we need to trust God more deeply. Faith is not strengthened by pretending to be stronger than we are, but by continuing to seek Jesus Christ, receive His Word and depend upon Him.

Faith Is Exercised in Daily Life

Faith grows through use. A disciple learns to trust God in ordinary decisions as well as in great trials.

We seek His guidance, obey His Word, pray about our needs and then act with confidence that He is faithful. Daily life therefore provides continual opportunities to exercise faith.

As faith is exercised in smaller matters, the disciple becomes better prepared to trust God when greater challenges arise. The life of faith is built day by day through dependence upon Jesus Christ.

Feed Your Faith

An old saying expresses an important principle: *"Feed your faith and your doubts will starve to death."* The thought is simple because what we continually feed becomes stronger.

If our minds are constantly filled with fear, uncertainty and the opinions of the world, our confidence can become weak. If we continually receive the Word of God, remember His faithfulness and walk in obedience, faith is strengthened.

The disciple therefore builds faith by receiving the Word of God, obeying the truth already understood and remembering God's faithfulness. We also ask Jesus Christ for help when faith feels weak and continue trusting Him through every circumstance.

Faith grows as it is exercised. The more we know Jesus Christ, receive His Word and prove His faithfulness through obedience, the stronger our confidence in Him becomes.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can trust in Jesus Christ grow through ordinary daily choices?

Personal Reflection

Where have you reserved trust for crises while relying on yourself in ordinary choices? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Consider an occasion when remembering God's faithfulness would have changed your response. What will you remember and how will you rely on Jesus Christ when a similar trial comes?

FAITH UNDER TESTING

BACK TO CONTENTS

Faith is strengthened through the Word of God and through daily obedience, but there will also be times when faith is tested. Difficulties, disappointments and unanswered questions do not necessarily mean that something has gone wrong. Testing is part of the life of faith.

Peter warned believers not to be surprised when trials came. He wrote in **1 Peter 4:12-13**:

> *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."*

Peter described trials as something that would *"try you."* Faith that has never been tested has never had the opportunity to prove its strength. Trials reveal whether our confidence is truly in Jesus Christ or whether it depends upon favourable circumstances.

Testing Does Not Mean God Has Abandoned You

When difficulties arise, the disciple may begin asking questions. Why has God allowed this? Why has the situation not changed? Why has prayer not been answered as expected?

These questions do not necessarily mean that faith has disappeared. They often arise because we are facing circumstances we do not understand.

The danger comes when we allow circumstances to determine what we believe about God. Faith continues to trust Him even when the way forward is not clear.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:1**:

> *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Faith does not require us to understand everything before we continue trusting. The disciple can remain confident in Jesus Christ even when the purpose of a trial is not yet clear.

Faith Is Proved Through Trials

James explained that the testing of faith produces patience and endurance. He wrote in **James 1:2-4**:

> *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

James did not say that trials themselves are pleasant. He taught that God can use them to produce something valuable in the disciple.

The *"trying of your faith"* develops patience and teaches the disciple to endure. A disciple who has never learned to endure can become easily discouraged when difficulties arise.

Testing teaches us to remain steady when immediate answers are not available. The disciple learns to continue trusting Jesus Christ while waiting for greater understanding.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does a trial not mean that God has abandoned His disciple?

Personal Reflection

Where have you judged God's faithfulness only by favourable circumstances? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Think of a current trial that has affected your confidence. What does God's Word say about trusting Him, and how will you respond rather than be governed by fear?

Examples of Tested Faith

The Bible gives many examples of people whose faith was tested before they saw God's purpose fulfilled. Their circumstances often appeared difficult or impossible, yet God had not ceased to work.

Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery and later imprisoned after being falsely accused. For many years, his circumstances appeared to contradict the purpose God had revealed for his life. Yet Joseph continued faithfully until God's purpose became clear.

Israel came to the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army behind them and no visible way forward. Their circumstances appeared impossible, but God opened a way where none could be seen.

Elijah experienced God's power on Mount Carmel, yet later found himself discouraged and fleeing from Jezebel. God did not abandon him, but provided what Elijah needed and continued to direct his life.

These examples remind us that difficult circumstances are not proof that God has ceased to work. What we can see at one moment does not reveal everything God is doing.

Faith Must Not Depend Upon Results

There is a danger of developing a faith that is strong only when everything appears to be going well. If our confidence depends upon favourable circumstances, that confidence can quickly weaken when circumstances change.

If prayers are answered quickly, provision comes easily and circumstances remain comfortable, faith may appear strong. Faith is truly tested when the answer is delayed or when events do not unfold as expected.

Job expressed a faith that reached beyond circumstances. He said in **Job 13:15**:

> *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."*

Job did not understand everything that was happening, but he continued to trust God. His confidence was not dependent upon receiving an immediate explanation.

True faith is not confidence that God must always do what we expect. It is confidence that Jesus Christ remains faithful even when we do not understand what He is doing.

Trials Can Strengthen Faith

Testing can expose areas where our confidence has been weak. It can show us where we have depended too much upon circumstances, other people or our own understanding.

When those supports are shaken, the disciple is brought back to the true foundation. We learn more deeply that our confidence must remain in Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 1:6-7**:

> *"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"*

Peter compared tested faith with gold being tried by fire. The fire does not create the gold, but it proves what is already there.

In the same way, trials can strengthen the disciple by removing misplaced confidence and teaching deeper dependence upon Jesus Christ. Faith that has passed through testing can become stronger and more firmly established in Him.

Hold Fast to Jesus Christ

When faith is tested, the answer is not to abandon what God has spoken. The disciple must continue in the Word, continue praying and continue trusting Jesus Christ.

We may not always know why a trial has come or how long it will last. However, we can know the One in whom we have believed and remain confident in His faithfulness.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:23**:

> *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"*

The reason we can hold fast is found in the verse itself: *"He is faithful that promised."* Our confidence does not rest upon our ability to understand every circumstance, but upon the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

Faith under testing says, *"I may not understand everything that is happening, but I know Jesus Christ is faithful, and I will continue to trust Him."* The trial may remain for a time, but the foundation of our faith does not need to change.

Testing does not have to destroy faith. When the disciple remains steadfast in Jesus Christ, tested faith can become stronger, deeper and more firmly established in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can faith remain steady when relief from a trial does not come quickly?

Personal Reflection

Where have you demanded an explanation before continuing to trust Christ? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Have you tried to measure faith by the absence of difficulty? What belief must change, and how will you continue trusting Jesus Christ while the difficulty remains?

THE WORD AND FAITH WORK TOGETHER

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Word of God and faith cannot be separated in the life of a disciple. The Word reveals what God has spoken, while faith receives, believes and acts upon that truth. The Word gives faith its foundation, and faith gives the Word a living response in the heart of the believer.

Paul explained that faith comes through hearing the Word of God. He wrote in **Romans 10:17**:

> *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

Faith is therefore not based upon imagination, emotion or personal desire. It is built upon what God has spoken. The disciple hears the Word, receives it, believes it and learns to live according to it.

The Word Gives Faith Its Foundation

Without the Word, faith can easily become confidence in our own thoughts, wishes or expectations. A person may strongly believe something and still be wrong. Biblical faith must rest upon the truth of God.

The Word shows us who God is, what He has promised and how He would have us live. Faith then responds by trusting Him.

David wrote in **Psalm 119:105**:

> *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

The Word gives light and direction, and faith then walks according to that light. This keeps the disciple from being governed only by personal opinion, changing emotions or the pressure of present circumstances.

This is why the disciple must remain close to Scripture. The more clearly we understand the Word, the more securely our faith can rest upon truth rather than upon feelings or circumstances.

Faith Must Receive the Word

The Word may be heard, read or studied, but it must be received with faith before it benefits the hearer. Hearing truth without believing it will not produce the response God desires.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 4:2**:

> *"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."*

The problem was not that the Word lacked power. The problem was that those who heard it did not receive it with faith.

This gives us an important principle: Hearing the Word is not enough because the Word must be believed. The truth must be personally received and trusted.

A person may know many Scriptures and hear much teaching, yet gain little spiritual benefit if the truth is not personally received. The disciple must believe what God has spoken and allow that truth to become part of life.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does God's Word give faith a foundation and correct a personal wish?

Personal Reflection

Where have you called a strong preference faith without testing it against the Bible? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

When have you heard God's Word but delayed doing what it says? Identify one clear truth and explain the personal change and action that will demonstrate obedience.

True Faith Leads to Obedience

Faith does more than agree with the Word. It produces a response in the life of the disciple.

James wrote in **James 1:22**:

> *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."*

A disciple who truly believes God will desire to obey Him. Faith moves truth from the mind into the life.

Abraham gives us a clear example. The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:8**:

> *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."*

Abraham did not have every detail explained to him. He trusted God enough to obey.

Faith believes the Word, and obedience shows that the Word has been believed. What we truly believe should become visible in the way we live.

The Word Corrects Our Faith

There are times when a person may sincerely believe something that is not supported by Scripture. Sincerity alone does not make a belief true, which is why the Word must continually examine and correct what we believe.

The Bereans provide a good example. They received teaching with an open mind, but they also examined what they heard according to Scripture.

Luke wrote in **Acts 17:11**:

> *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."*

They did not reject teaching simply because it was new to them, but neither did they accept it without examination. They searched the Scriptures to see whether what they heard was true.

Faith should never require us to ignore Scripture. True faith welcomes the light of the Word because it desires to stand upon truth.

Faith Holds to the Word in Difficulty

When circumstances become difficult, the disciple must continue to hold to what God has spoken. Feelings, circumstances and other people may change, but God remains faithful and His Word remains true.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:23**:

> *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"*

The reason we can hold fast is not because circumstances are always easy. We hold fast because God is faithful.

There may be times when the disciple cannot see how a situation will be resolved. Faith does not invent an answer, but continues to trust Jesus Christ and refuses to abandon what God has made clear in His Word.

The Word and Faith Produce Stability

When the Word and faith work together, the disciple becomes spiritually stable. The Word prevents faith from becoming emotional or imaginary, while faith prevents the Word from remaining only information.

The Word tells us what is true, and faith responds by believing God. Obedience then brings that truth into the way we live.

This movement can be remembered simply: The Word reveals the truth, faith believes the truth, and obedience puts the truth into practice. Together they establish the disciple more firmly in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:6-7**:

> *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."*

The disciple is to be rooted, built up and established in Jesus Christ. This happens as the Word is received, believed and lived.

The Word and faith therefore belong together throughout the Christian life. The Word reveals the truth, faith believes the truth, and obedience puts the truth into practice.

When these work together, the disciple becomes increasingly established in Jesus Christ. The believer is then able to continue walking faithfully in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must hearing God's Word be joined with faith for it to help you?

Personal Reflection

Where have you listened to a truth without personally receiving it? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

What excuse has made you put off living a known truth? How will you respond now, and what will help you continue walking in that truth beyond this week?

HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Word of God is given to be received, believed and lived. A disciple does not study Scripture simply to increase knowledge or become familiar with biblical teaching. God gives His Word so that it will shape the way we think, choose and live.

James warned believers against hearing the Word without putting it into practice. He wrote in **James 1:22-25**:

> *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*

James makes a clear distinction between the hearer and the doer. Both hear the Word, but only one allows what has been heard to influence the way that person lives.

The Word Reveals What Needs to Change

James compares the Word to a mirror. A mirror shows us what we cannot easily see for ourselves, and in the same way Scripture reveals our thoughts, attitudes, motives and conduct in the light of God's truth.

The purpose of looking into a mirror is not simply to discover what we look like. If something needs attention, we respond to what we have seen.

The same principle applies to the Word of God. When Scripture reveals something that needs to change, the disciple should respond.

The Word may expose:

- An attitude that does not agree with the life of Christ within;
- A wrong way of thinking;
- Something that must be forgiven;
- A habit that needs correction;
- An area in which greater obedience is required;
- A truth that must become part of daily life.

The blessing is not simply in seeing the truth. James says that the person who becomes *"a doer of the work"* will be blessed in what is done.

Hearing Must Lead to Obedience

Jesus also taught that hearing His words without obeying them produces an unstable life. He compared two people who heard the same words but responded very differently.

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:24-27**:

> *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."*

Both men heard the words of Jesus. The difference was not in what they heard, but in what they did with what they had heard.

One heard and obeyed, while the other heard and did nothing. Jesus therefore connected spiritual stability with hearing His Word and living according to it.

The person who hears His Word and obeys is building upon a firm foundation. When difficulties come, that life has been established upon truth that has been received and lived.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must a hearer of God's Word also do what it says?

Personal Reflection

Where have you recognised a needed change in the Bible but postponed it? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Identify a choice where convenience has been stronger than obedience. What does the Bible call you to change, and how will you act through the life of Christ within?

Knowledge Alone Is Not Enough

Bible knowledge is valuable, but knowledge by itself is not the goal of discipleship. A person may be able to explain many doctrines and quote many Scriptures while failing to live according to what is known.

Paul reminded the Philippians that truth must move from learning into action. He wrote in **Philippians 4:9**:

> *"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."*

Again, the important word is *"do."* The disciple learns, receives and hears, but then puts that truth into practice.

The purpose of God's Word is not simply to fill the mind. It is to shape the life of the disciple.

Obedience Flows From Love

Obedience should never be understood as an attempt to earn salvation. The born-again believer is already complete in Jesus Christ, and obedience flows from the new life already received in Him.

Jesus said in **John 14:15**:

> *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."*

Love and obedience belong together. The disciple does not obey Jesus as a way of trying to purchase His favour, but because there is love for Him and a desire to walk according to His truth.

This keeps obedience from becoming cold religious duty. We hear because we want to know Him, and we obey because we love Him.

The life of obedience therefore grows from the relationship already established through the new birth. We belong to Jesus Christ, His life dwells within, and we desire our conduct to agree with His Word.

Continuing in the Word

Jesus did not describe discipleship as hearing His Word once. He spoke about continuing in His Word and allowing truth to remain part of the disciple's life.

Jesus said in **John 8:31-32**:

> *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

To continue in the Word means that truth remains part of our daily walk. We do not receive a teaching today and forget it tomorrow, but allow the Word to become established within us and continue living according to it.

This is why reading, studying, meditation, faith and obedience all belong together. Each has a place in bringing the Word from the page into the daily life of the disciple.

We read the Word so that we may know the truth, and we study so that we may understand it correctly. We meditate so that the truth becomes established within us, believe it by faith and then obey what God has spoken.

This is the proper response of a disciple. The Word of God is not only to be heard because it is to be lived, and the disciple who receives His truth should allow that truth to shape the whole life.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does obedience show love for Christ without earning salvation?

Personal Reflection

Where have you used biblical knowledge as a substitute for doing what Jesus said? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

Look back over how you handle God's Word and respond in faith. Where has your understanding not yet become practice, and what deliberate change will you make?

CONCLUSION: WALKING BY THE WORD AND FAITH

BACK TO CONTENTS

The life of a disciple must be continually nourished by the Word of God and lived by faith in Jesus Christ. The new birth gives spiritual life, but that life must grow, become established and learn to walk faithfully with Him.

Jesus said in **Matthew 4:4**:

> *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."*

The Word of God is spiritual nourishment. It gives light, direction and understanding, and helps the disciple recognise the difference between truth and error. For this reason, the Word should have a regular place in our daily lives.

We have also seen that reading alone is not enough. The disciple should study the Word carefully, meditate upon it, hide it within the heart and allow it to shape thoughts, attitudes and conduct.

God did not give His Word simply so that we could increase our knowledge. He gave His Word so that we would know His truth and live according to it.

James wrote in **James 1:22**:

> *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."*

The Word must therefore be joined with faith and obedience. What God has spoken must be believed and then allowed to shape the way we live.

Faith receives what God has spoken and places confidence in Him. It is not positive thinking or confidence in ourselves because biblical faith rests upon the character of God and the truth of His Word.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:7**:

> *"For we walk by faith, not by sight:"*

There will be times when the disciple cannot see or understand what God is doing. Circumstances may be difficult, prayers may not be answered immediately and faith may be tested, yet Jesus Christ remains faithful.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 10:23**:

> *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"*

This is the foundation upon which the disciple can continue. Our confidence is not in changing circumstances, but in the unchanging faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

The Word and faith therefore belong together throughout the Christian life. The Word reveals the truth, faith believes the truth, and obedience lives the truth.

As the disciple continues reading, studying, meditating, believing and obeying the Word of God, spiritual understanding grows and faith becomes stronger. The purpose is not simply to know more, but to become increasingly established in Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:6-7**:

> *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."*

We have received Jesus Christ, and now we must continue to walk in Him. The same Christ who gave us spiritual life remains the centre of our growth and the foundation of our faith.

The Word nourishes us, faith trusts Him, and obedience keeps us walking faithfully in Jesus Christ. As we continue in His Word and live by faith, we become increasingly rooted, built up and established in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do God's Word, faith and obedience together help a disciple continue in Christ?

Personal Reflection

Where have you separated Bible study from trust or daily conduct? Explain what this truth shows you and what should change.

Action Step

What one truth has most challenged your current way of living? How will your next action show that your confidence rests in Jesus Christ and His Word rather than in circumstances?

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

How do God's Word and faith work together to nourish and establish the life received at the new birth, according to The Word and Faith?

2. Understanding

What different purposes do reading, careful study, meditation, and hiding the Word in the heart serve, and how should they lead to obedience rather than knowledge alone?

3. Personal Reflection

Where have you treated the Bible as information, a duty, or a way to confirm your own view instead of receiving its correction with a teachable heart? Give a specific example.

4. Response to Truth

When an answer to prayer is delayed or a trial contradicts your expectations, how should the account of faith in the Person of Jesus Christ change your response?

5. Action Step

What daily time will you set aside this week to read the Bible, consider its meaning, and obey one truth it teaches? Say when you will begin.

6. Early Response

Have you already set aside a daily time to read the Bible, consider its meaning, and obey one truth it teaches? If yes, briefly explain what you did or what changed. If not, explain what prevented you from beginning.

7. Ongoing Practice

What continuing pattern of reading, meditating, remembering God's faithfulness, and acting on the Word will help you remain steadfast when faith is tested?

8. Doctrinal Clarity

Why is biblical faith confidence in God and what He has spoken rather than positive thinking, confidence in faith itself, or a demand for a chosen result?

9. Living the Truth

What truth has God's Word shown you that now requires action? Explain what you will do to move from hearing that truth to obeying it.

10. Final Response

After studying The Word and Faith, how will you keep the Word, trust in Jesus Christ, and obedience together in your daily walk, especially when circumstances remain uncertain?