

The Spiritual Habits of Jesus Series

Jesus' Habit of Faith

By
Andy Davis

At A Glance:

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These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

Jesus' Habit of Faith

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Praying for Caleb's Test Results¹

1. Just this past Wednesday, Mandi had to take Caleb to the doctor. At the end of the week last week, Caleb got sick. He was dealing with significant symptoms for several days. Following this episode, after Caleb was feeling significantly better, he was still having concerning symptoms—so much so that we decided it would be a good idea for him to go to the doctor to get tested.
2. Despite feeling better, Caleb was constantly thirsty. He drank and drank without his thirst being quenched. Mandi and I knew he was hydrated, yet he was still very thirsty. What immediately came to mind was that this is a sign of diabetes. One of Mandi's young nephews has it. Caleb's thirst continued for an extended period of time after he was hydrated, so we decided to take him to the doctor.
3. As Mandi was interacting with the nurse, she said all the symptoms Caleb was experiencing were exactly what happened to her child, who was diagnosed with diabetes. This did nothing to calm Mandi's concerns, as she knows how life-changing diabetes is. While waiting in the doctor's office, Caleb asked who would give him his shots and wondered if it would be in the arm or the stomach.
4. As Mandi and Caleb were at the doctor, I was praying. I prayed, like most people naturally do, that I hoped Caleb would not have diabetes. That was my personal preference. However, I also prayed that we would willingly accept a diabetes diagnosis if that were what God thought was best for Caleb.
5. I considered this as a real possibility because I know God's highest objective is not our comfort and ease—although our well-being is. I honestly rested in God's wisdom and talked to Him about Caleb having diabetes with contentment. I trusted that if this was the case, Caleb must need diabetes to become the person God wants Him to be. I asked that God would use diabetes to change Caleb's heart, develop His character, and increase His love for God. I expressed my desire for Caleb to use diabetes as some capacity to glorify God. I wasn't emotionally disturbed with the possibility of diabetes because I know God wants what's best for Caleb and knows exactly how to produce it.
6. When the test results came back, we found out Caleb didn't have diabetes. Due to his previous symptoms, Caleb's stomach Ph levels were out of balance, which was causing the symptom of unquenchable thirst. I prayed again and thanked God for His goodness to our family.

- B. Living with an attitude of trust in God transforms our lives in many significant ways, including how we pray, our emotional condition, our attitude toward God, and how we respond to the events of our lives. When a person possesses a strong trust in God's reliability, they will act

¹ My purpose in using this personal example is not to puff myself up or try to convince others of my own righteousness. Faith is a characteristic every disciple needs to have. I'm merely presenting a quality I need to have to rightly call myself a Christian. My goal in using my experience is to give you a real-life example of what faith looks like.

differently from what we consider the normal human response. This causes disciples to be unique and stand out as different from others—in a good way.

- C. The person who stood out most uniquely in this regard is Jesus. When we compare the life of Jesus to the lives of those around Him, we see Jesus living faithfully and obediently because of His deep attitude of trust in the goodness of the Father. So important is a trusting perspective and attitude toward God for Jesus that He commands disciples to have it in Mark 11:22.

II. Command to Have Faith

- A. In this series, we've looked at nine other spiritual habits of Jesus that helped empower Him to live the life we observe in the most accurate historical records of His life—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.² Jesus' life amazes and impresses us to the point that His disciples place it at the center of their focus so they can follow His example as the pattern of successful and healthy living. While disciples lack Jesus' divine nature, and therefore will never reach their final goal of living exactly like Jesus, there is plenty that we can identify with concerning Jesus' human nature as our role model. While perfection is illusive, progression is not. Therefore, disciples strive to be like Jesus in their daily manner of life.
- B. The tenth spiritual habit found in the life of Jesus is that of faith. Faith is living with a deep trust and strong confidence in God's reliability.³ We see Jesus living His life with complete trust in the Father that is unlike anyone else in all human history. Time after time, we see Jesus succeed in faithfulness and obedience to the Father when those around Him fail in fear and doubt. Jesus acted with trust in the Father every moment of His life to the very end, even amid the most difficult of circumstances.
- C. So important is the habit of trusting God that Jesus commands it as a necessary step in a life that pursues God and pleases Him: ²²“And Jesus answered saying to them, ‘Have faith in God.’” (Mk. 11:22). Jesus commands His disciples to “Have faith in God”. It is one of the most important concepts in the Gospels.⁴ The terms “faith” and “believe” occur 243 times in the New Testament.⁵ Not just any faith will do. Wishful thinking doesn't produce positive results even if it makes a person feel better. Our trust must be in the right object: the one true God that really exists. Putting hope in any god or any religious system is a losing strategy. If we have trust in unreliable people, processes, or deities, we won't be helped by them, even if our trust in them is very strong. Faith is only as effective as its object.
- D. As the disciples are amazed at the fact that a fig tree withered and died at an unnatural speed after Jesus said no one would eat fruit from it again,⁶ Jesus used this event as an opportunity to

² Solitude, prayer, seeking the Father, Bible study, meditation, personal worship, worship with others, building relationships, and serving others.

³ For more on what it means to have faith, see Laying the Foundation sermon series message 3 “An Attitude and Lifestyle of Trusting God” along with sermon Grounded Faith: No Leap Required.

⁴ M. W. Yeung, [“Faith,”](#) ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 259.

⁵ M. W. Yeung, [“Faith,”](#) ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 259.

⁶ This was intended by Jesus to be a visual picture of Jesus taking the kingdom of God away from the Jewish people and giving it to the church (Mt. 21:33-43).

explain the importance of faith.⁷ According to Jesus, even small amounts of faith, without doubt, are extremely powerful.⁸ When prayers are offered with an attitude of trust in God, they are answered positively and produce results if the person praying is also living a godly lifestyle (Mk. 11:23-25). Trust, combined with obedience, strongly motivates God to respond to our prayers.

- E. While this command to have faith (active trust) in God is not new, Jesus adds more detail to this command that is unique to Him.⁹ Jesus includes having faith in God with believing in Him. Jesus understands faith in God to include, “¹ Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.” (Jn. 14:1). Jesus elevates Himself to equal status with the God of the Bible. In Judaism, if Jesus is wrong, He is committing blasphemy.¹⁰
- F. Jesus claims to be the proper object of spiritual devotion in the same way God is (Mt. 16:13-17, 18:6). Jesus isn’t just a religious leader or figure; He is the object and benefactor of true religion. Jesus is not merely the example for a person of faith, He is primarily the object of faith.¹¹ This fact is true of the earliest disciples of which ancient non-Christian sources testify. A Roman author and high ranking official, Pliny the Younger, who tortured, persecuted, and killed people in the early church; wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan, around 112 AD that says:
- They [Christians] affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind. Even this practice, however, they had abandoned after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your orders, I had forbidden political associations. I judged it so much the more necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves, who were styled *deaconesses*: but I could discover nothing more than depraved and excessive superstition.¹²
- G. Further explaining the result of believing in Him, Jesus says people who trust Him also trust God. To believe in Jesus is to believe in God. There is no separation between the two, “⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.’” (Jn. 12:44). To reject Jesus is to reject God as well (Lk. 10:16). Not only is believing in

⁷ Luke 13:1-9

⁸ Faith is a degreed property which means in can come in varying levels of strength. A person could have weak faith or a strong faith.

⁹ Another definition of faith is belief in God’s words, trust in his Son Jesus, and faithfulness in living out his demands. M. W. Yeung, “[Faith](#),” ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; IVP, 2013), 259.

¹⁰ If Jesus is right, He is changing humanity’s understanding of God. Jesus defends and explains this surprising claim by giving reasons to think He is equal to God (Jn. 5:18-32).

¹¹ J. Gresham Machen, [Christianity and Liberalism](#), New Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 70.

¹² Pliny, [Letters, Vols. 1 & 2](#), ed. T. E. Page et al., trans. William Melmoth, vol. 2, The Loeb Classical Library (London; New York: William Heinemann; The Macmillan Co., 1931), 403–405.

Jesus the same as believing in God, but it is also required. When Jesus tells His disciples to have faith in God, He also means that they are to have faith in Him as well. It is not possible for an individual to claim to have faith in God and at the same time reject or not trust Jesus. Faith in God requires trusting and accepting the message of Jesus.¹³ Jesus must be embraced and accepted for who He is in order for faith in God to be genuine and effective.

H. What is required to believe in Jesus? The declaration of faith by the disciples is captured by the apostle John when the disciples tell Jesus:

³⁰ “Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.” ³¹ Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?” (Jn. 16:30-31)

- I. After all their contact with Jesus and learning from His teachings, they eventually arrive at the place where they, “know that You [Jesus] know all things” (v. 30). They have full confidence in Him.¹⁴ The disciples came to realize everything that comes out of Jesus’ mouth is accurate information—He only speaks what is true (Jn. 8:45-46). Jesus doesn’t need human accountability to make sure His perspective is accurate (“have no need for anyone to question You” v. 30). Not only does soul-saving faith realize Jesus knows all things, but it also accepts Jesus as God’s spokesperson (“we believe that You came from God” v. 30).
- J. How did Jesus respond to this proclamation of faith?¹⁵ While the disciples’ statements about Jesus are correct, they still have room to grow in their depth of faith. Jesus calms their excitement by pointing out how their immature faith is going to fail with the difficulties that are about to come (vv. 32-33). The reason Jesus told them of their soon to be failure was to encourage them and give them peace. The disciples, much like us, are a mixture of expressions of faith interspersed with times of failure on our journey of developing a stronger, more mature trust in God. While the disciples have genuine faith in Jesus, their faith is not yet strong enough to endure danger and difficulty related to following Jesus. While the disciples abandon Jesus, Jesus’ faith is strong enough to stand faithfully and by Himself with only the Father supporting Him.
- K. Are you open and willing to accept everything Jesus says as truth and an accurate explanation of the world? Are you convinced that Jesus speaks for God? Does your life indicate these are your true convictions? Jesus and His words will be the foundation of our personal convictions if we genuinely trust Jesus and believe in God. Those who trust Jesus will have and continually develop a Biblical worldview that thinks Biblically about everything.¹⁶ Not only is Jesus’ perspective on any subject the most accurate, but it is also the most moral. It is impossible to

¹³ While Jews have accurate knowledge about God to an extent (Jn. 4:22), they are also missing other knowledge of God that is critical to genuinely embrace Him (Jn. 5:39-40, Rm. 10:2).

¹⁴ Leon Morris, [*The Gospel according to John*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 631.

¹⁵ Jesus response could be taken as a question, “Do you now believe?” or a statement, “You believe at last.” Leon Morris, [*The Gospel according to John*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 632. The question form is the better alternative given what follows.

¹⁶ I learned the slogan, “think Biblically about everything” from Biola University.

improve on Jesus' values and standards of morality. These are fixed and immovable foundation stones for the disciple who possess a soul saving trust in Jesus.

- L. Disciples allow Jesus' perspective and words to influence and shape their thoughts and outlook on all areas of life. A person who trusts Jesus will give Him the benefit of the doubt and consider Him to be the most reliable source of information and life advice, even when other good sounding alternatives exist. Disciples who possess a strong confidence in God will submit and surrender their thinking to the perspective of Jesus and the Bible. What is your typical response to what you learn in the Bible? Do you quickly and easily accept it?¹⁷ Are you hesitant and doubt it until you are convinced it is reliable? Do you dismiss it as foolishness? These reactions will indicate the quality and strength of your trust in God's reliability.

III. Jesus' Habit of Having Faith

- A. Now that we have a better understanding of what Jesus meant when He commanded His disciples to have faith in God and believe in Him, we can look carefully at how Jesus' trust in the Father influenced the way He lived His life. Like the habit of serving, Jesus didn't only trust the Father when His life was "going well", Jesus also expressed a deep trust in the Father even when life was very difficult, and He didn't get what He wanted. Continuing to trust God in an extended season of darkness is a good indicator as to the strength of our faith. Trusting God when we're discouraged, hurt, in physical pain, emotionally distraught, being mistreated, or carrying an ongoing burden reveals a strong trust in Jesus.
- B. An interesting example of Jesus' level of trust in the Father comes at a time when Jesus is praising the Father for how He works in people's lives as He reveals Himself to people:
 - ²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight." (Mt. 11:25-26)
- C. In this prayer, Jesus is expressing deep trust in the way God operates in the world. If we only look at these two verses it would be tempting to think Jesus is on a spiritual mountain in which the Father is doing some amazing things around Him. God must be at work, right? Well, if we look at the context of what comes before this prayer, we get a very different picture. Jesus is expressing trust in the way God works right after He condemns the three cities in which most of His miracles took place because they didn't repent (Mt. 11:20-24). Jesus worked hard and cared for many people, only to have them reject Him and His message. Before condemning the main cities in which Jesus conducted His ministry, in a broader way He talked about the unresponsiveness of the generations of people in which He ministered (Mt. 11:16-19). Multiple ministry strategies were used to try and reach this generation, yet every method was rejected. Despite all these challenges, Jesus expressed a deep trust in the way God was working in the lives of those around Him!
- D. In addition to trusting God during professional "setbacks", Jesus also trusted the Father when He faced personal crises. When the pressure was on and Jesus wasn't getting His preferred

¹⁷ Do you imitate the disciples and hold onto Jesus even when you don't understand what He is teaching (Jn. 6:59-69)?

treatment from the Father, He still committed Himself to trusting the Father. Just prior to Jesus' death, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane:

³⁸ Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." ³⁹ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." (Mt. 26:38-39)

- E. Jesus trusted the Father so much that He wanted the Father's will to be done (Mt. 6:9-10), even when it would cost Jesus physical pain, torture, and death. Jesus valued God the Father getting His way regardless of what it cost Jesus personally. Jesus is troubled (Jn. 12:27) and deeply grieved in His soul. Jesus is in agonizing stress (Lk. 22:44). Despite all this, Jesus willfully trusts the Father's plan for His life knowing the difficult path ahead as He surrenders His will to God's ("yet not My will, but Yours be done." Lk. 22:42). Jesus didn't get what He wanted from the Father, yet He accepted God's plan for His life with open arms—even intentionally taking steps to obey it without fighting against it.
- F. Although there are many more examples that could be chosen from the life of Jesus, in one final one, Jesus reveals a strong trust in the Father when He knowingly and boldly acted faithfully toward God in the presence of opposition:

¹ He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. ² They were watching Him *to see* if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. ³ He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" ⁴ And He said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. ⁵ After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him. (Mk. 3:1-6)¹⁸

- G. Jesus knew people were trying to trap Him in the things He taught and did, which is why He, "looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart" (v. 5). The religious leaders were stubbornly resisting Jesus and His message. Before Jesus did anything He knew, "they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him" (v. 2). Despite the hostility and the ill intentions of those who were around Him, Jesus didn't hide or back down. He confronted those who were opposed to Him as He told the man with the disfigured hand to stand in front of everyone.
- H. Jesus defended what He was about to do by asking a question, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" (v. 4). Jesus repeatedly defended the freedom to do what is right and beneficial to others on the Sabbath using logical reasoning and arguments (Jn. 5:1-18, 7:21-24, 9:1-7→13-16, Lk. 13:10-17, 14:1-6), including arguments from the Scriptures (Mk. 2:23-28, Mt. 12:1-8, Lk. 6:1-5). They responded by not saying anything (v. 4),

¹⁸ Matthew 12:9-14, Luke 6:6-11

likely because they couldn't defeat Jesus' arguments. Jesus' view of the Sabbath was a major point of contention between Jesus and the religious leaders.

- I. Even though Jesus was correct and provided good reasons to accept His perspective on the Sabbath, those who opposed Him were furious and developed ways to hurt Jesus (v. 6). Jesus knew the people watching Him would be upset and react with hostility to the truth, yet He publicly and intentionally told the truth and lived consistently with it. Jesus showed tremendous courage here, as well as a trust in the Father. Jesus trusted the Father would protect Him from His enemies so Jesus could complete all the work He had to do and entrusted Himself to those who hated Him because it was part of the Father's plan. Each of these elements of faith requires a strong trust in the Father.
- J. Does my life demonstrate examples of having a deep trust and confidence in the reliability of God as Jesus' life does? Can I point to specific pieces of evidence from my life that express a personal trust in God? It is important to remember that disciples are on a journey of continually developing a more informed and a stronger trust in Jesus and God the Father. None of us start the Christian life with a strong faith. We begin our Jesus journey with a weak and immature trust in God that grows the more we learn about God and live obediently to Him. While we may fail and struggle to trust God from time to time, it should be an encouragement if we see improvement and forward momentum over the years. If our level of faith is the same as it was five years ago, or worse due to life circumstances, that should really bother us as disciples. Our hope and goal is to always be taking steps forward.
- K. Jesus sets the bar for what it looks like to have a mature and strong trust in God's reliability. The more our lives imitate His, the stronger our faith is. When people live obediently and trust well in the difficult circumstances of life, just as Jesus did, then we can be assured that our faith is strong.

IV. How to Practice Having Faith

- A. One of the most important processes that can help disciples strengthen their attitude of trust in God is to spend time learning more about Him. The better a person understands who God is, the more they will trust Him. God delights in people who have a true knowledge of Him (Hos. 6:6). Individuals who understand God are deeply pleasing to Him.
- B. More specifically, disciple should learn about the character of God. God is morally good—perfect, actually. As followers of Jesus' way of life gain knowledge about God's faithful love, kindness, patience, mercy, generosity, faithfulness and loyalty, along with His other character qualities, they will naturally develop a deeper level of trust in God. Not only can disciples discover these qualities of God, but they can also pay attention to how these qualities motivate and influence God's actions throughout history. These aren't just abstract ideas; they are real factors in how God interacts with humanity and His world.
- C. Disciples should also learn about God's nature and His abilities. When a person has the conviction that God is unlimited in knowledge and He knows everything there is to know, their attitude of trust will increase. God will never make a mistake because He is missing information, and nothing is too difficult for Him to understand. Also knowing that God is unlimited in power

(strength) increases our trust in Him. God can accomplish anything power can accomplish if He wants to. Just these two properties of God's nature should encourage us greatly.

- D. While there are other elements of God that are good to learn about that help us increase our faith, these two are important ones. Our level of trust in God will be directly proportional to who we understand God to be. People who don't think God exists will have no faith in Him. Those who think He exists but aren't convinced that He is good will have very little faith in Him. People who have accurate knowledge about Him and have experienced Him consistently in their own lives will have the deepest level of trust in Him.

V. Conclusion

- A. Jesus asked the rhetorical question, "If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? (Jn. 8:46)." Jesus didn't mean, "maybe He is speaking the truth or maybe not," according to the verse right before this statement. Jesus is speaking the truth, yet there are people who don't believe Him. Jesus still confronts people with this question today. Since Jesus speaks the truth, why do some people not believe what He says?¹⁹
- B. Disciples should make it their ambition to follow Jesus' example of living their lives with a transformative trust in God the Father, "¹⁹ Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." (1 Pet. 4:19). Do right. Obey God in all circumstances. Then trust God to do what He wants with us and our lives. This is the life of faith.

VI. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Have you ever experienced a situation in which you had to intentionally work at trusting God? If so, when?
- B. Using another example of Jesus trusting the Father (Jn. 19:1-11), how is Jesus' trust demonstrated?
- C. What ways of thinking about God prevent people from trusting Him?
- D. How does Jesus describe the heart of a person who lacks trust in God versus the heart of a person who does trust in God (Mt. 6:25-34)?
- E. What can you do to both trust and increase your trust in God?

¹⁹ Jesus also gave the answer to His own question, it is because people enjoy and refuse to stop doing wrong (Jn. 3:19-21). Truth alone doesn't win everyone over because there is also a moral problem that must be dealt with to believe in Jesus as well as a spiritual problem (Jn. 8:47)—which motivates the intellectual and moral challenges.