

Eight Levels of Faith Lesson 1

Overview: More Than Expected

Isaiah 64:1-4

1 Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens [tear apart the sky], that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down [tremble] at thy presence,

2 As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

3 When thou didst terrible things [awesome things] which we looked not for [things we didn't expect], thou camest down, the mountains flowed down [trembled] at thy presence.

4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

“Terrible” means stand in awe, reverence, fear, astonishment

I. Introduction

1. I want to reintroduce you to a topic I taught a few years ago on the topic of faith. In our study of scripture, we can identify what appears to be 8 levels of faith.
2. Since we are at a point where our faith needs a lifting up, it is time to come back to this topic. Being away from church services has been a trial of our faith.
3. It has let us know whether we are with our level of faith. Have you remained “faithful” to your relationship with God after not being able to attend church for 2 months?
4. As Christians, there are certain practices that help our faith be the energy that drives our spiritual self.
5. Things like prayer, time in the Word of God, time spent worshiping the Lord, and hearing positive reports of how God is working in the lives of our brothers and sisters.
6. And of course, going to church feeds all of these areas that grow our faith, but how is your faith now? Have you continued in those activities that strengthen your faith?

7. The purpose of this study is to look at the 8 Levels of Faith, sort of like a Faith-ometer, to help us realize where we are, and also to see ways we can challenge our faith to move into higher levels.
8. Tonight's lesson will be an overview of those 8 levels of faith, which will take time to expand on each in late lessons.
9. I want to title this lesson tonight, "More Than Expected."

II. More than we expected

A. No ear, No eye

1. Before we review the 8 levels of faith, I want to study the passage we just read.
2. God has a way of surprising us. Some days begin and our expectations are for a normal day, but then some God-thing happens, something that we were not expecting.
3. What we might think was a chance encounter—people use the word, serendipity, or even good luck. But to the child of God, it was a God-incident.

4. God has a way of giving us something greater than what we expected.
5. But what if we were to start our day with high expectations from God? What if we began our day with saying, “God, I believe today you are going to blow my mind with your awesome greatness!”
6. When we have high expectations based on what God can do in and through us, it can change a bad day into a God day.
7. That passage in Isaiah sets up that expectation:
 - a. Verse 1: Oh, God, would you just burst from heaven and shake my world!
 - b. Verse 2: Like fire burns wood and makes water boil, shake my world!
 - c. Verse 3: Long ago you came down on the mountain, it shook, and you did greater things than we ever expected.
 - d. Verse 4: *For since the world began, no ear has heard, and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him! NLT*

8. No ear has heard, no eye has seen, a God like our God who works for those with expectation!
9. If God can do greater than we expect, why not start with an expectation of the miraculous?

Eph 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

10. Where will we end up if we start with high expectations?

B. Faith helps

1. So what is the role of faith in setting our expectations? In some uses of the word faith, the word expectation is a synonym.
2. As it is in this next passage. Faith, or higher expectations, comes by hearing the Word of God and looking at what God is doing:
Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

3. If faith comes from hearing God's word, where does doubt come from? By hearing the word of the devil, our human tendency to focus on negative circumstances.
4. Just as negative thoughts and emotions come from focusing on the negative things, so does faith come by magnifying God and His goodness and what He can do.
5. Focusing on doubtful situations of the past and present, cause us to have low and no expectations.
6. On the other hand, consider a farmer. He endures the hardship of preparing a field by clearing it, plowing it, and sowing seed, all in the expectation of reaping a harvest.
7. High expectation drives him:
1 Corinthians 9:10 Or saith he it [the Law of Moses] altogether for our sakes [so we can apply it to our circumstances]? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.

8. When the farmer plows, he does it with hope, faith, and expectation that he will eventually be threshing a harvest.
9. He sees the standing stalks of grain in his mind while he is working with nothing but clods of dirt in a barren field.
10. Faith in the beginning leads to actual partaking of a harvest.
11. Notice the first part of this verse. Paul said, God spoke this for our sakes—**NO DOUBT!**
12. The purpose of this study is that exactly: to see a transformation from doubt to expectation. **No doubt; yes hope!**
13. Do you want to see “no doubt?” Well then quit listening to what doubt says and start listening to what the Lord says! Do as the farmer does—take action based on hope and expectation and faith.
14. Why does a woman endure great discomfort of her body for nine months? Because she is...expecting.

15. Yes, she expects morning sickness, weight gain, cramps, swollen feet, an aching back, and pain beyond expectations. But she also **expects** that to be followed by the great joy of looking at her child in the face as she holds that precious life in her arms.

III. The progression of faith

1. Now let us take the faith journey as it progresses through eight levels. From no faith all the way to strong faith. Look at this chart showing each level [**img: Progression of Faith 1**]

A. (1) No faith – expecting tragic loss

1. After a day of teaching, Jesus told his disciples they should cross the Sea of Galilee to a town on the other side. But not long after the journey began, a major storm blew in.

2. Once in the middle of the sea, the storm winds beat on the ship as waves crashed over the bow so that it filled with water.

3. Fear gripped the disciples. They woke Jesus from sleep in back of the ship, and said:
Mark 4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?
 4. Jesus woke, spoke to the sea, and it became calm.
 5. Then he spoke this question:
*Mark 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have **no faith?***
 6. Are you at the place of no faith tonight where you have an expectation, but it is and expectation of tragedy? Remember, Jesus is still on board. You need to look to Him not the storm.
- B. (2) Little faith – focusing on lack
1. One day Jesus had in His audience some people whose lack of finances had them in anxiety about not being able to provide the essentials for their family.

2. Jesus gave them an illustration from nature. Doesn't God feed the birds? Doesn't God clothe the lilies of the field?

3. But God thinks more of you than birds and flowers:

*Matthew 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of **little faith**?*

4. Little faith is better than no faith, as it is moving up on the spectrum of faith.

5. Notice the difference in intensity between no faith and little faith.

6. No faith says, "We're going to die!" Little faith says, "We don't have food or clothes!" Little faith retains a focus on the problem, but is not as imaginative of negative outcomes as is no faith.

7. But little faith can grow by seeking Him first.

c. (3) Weak in faith

1. The next level of faith is similar to the first two, in that the first three are “under water.” **[img]**.
 2. No faith, little faith, and weak faith are the bottom three levels. The scripture does not give us an example of someone with weak faith, but instead, gives an example of someone who does NOT have weak faith—Abraham:
*Romans 4:19 And being not **weak in faith**, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:*
 3. Abraham did not have weak faith, and as a result he and Sarah had a baby in their upper years. The promise child came even when it seemed unlikely.
 4. So weak faith is a contrast to Abraham’s faith, in that when the situation seems impossible, weak faith focuses on why it won’t happen. Doubt is stronger than faith.
- D. (4) Measure of faith

1. So we don't want to settle for no faith, little faith, or weak faith. The next level on the spectrum is the "measure of faith."
Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.
2. Those earlier levels on the spectrum were below the normal level—under water. But when we get to the measure of faith, this is the level at which God wants us to begin.
3. The exciting thing about the measure faith, is that those who use it, enter into the use of various gifts of the spirit.
4. The next verses list some of them: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and showing mercy.
5. If you will just use the faith God has already given to you, you can be operating in the gifts doing great works for God right now.

E. (5) Gift of faith

1. Moving on now from no faith, little faith, weak faith, the measure of faith, to the gift of faith.

2. If you are willing to step up beyond the normal, there is the gift of faith that God gives.

1 Corinthians 12:4, 8-9

*4 Now there are diversities of **gifts**, but the same Spirit. ...*

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

*9 To another **faith** by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*

3. The gift of faith is given to those who are confronted with a crisis situation, but God gives them a bold voice of faith to speak to the crisis to see it resolved.

4. They come upon a traffic accident and people are seriously hurt and God distributes the gift of faith to go pray and save lives.

5. They work in a Covid unit and God gives them faith as a minister.
6. God gives this gift to enforce His will in a tragic situation.

F. (6) Strong in faith

1. God imparts the gift of faith for a crisis, but beyond that is the level of strong faith. Rather than for just an episode of great need, this is the kind of faith to live with. Abraham had faith at this level.
2. We read earlier in Romans 4 that Abraham did not have weak faith, but we see here that he had strong faith:
*Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was **strong in faith**, giving glory to God;*
3. If you live at this level, God's promises are like your guidebook for each day.
4. Rather than looking at God's promises as good for someone else, strong faith moves into and lives in them daily.

5. Abraham was not a perfect man, but he did travel a long journey from pagan idolatry to belief in one God, and even set the boundaries of the Promised Land 1500 years before his future descendants inhabited it.

G. (7) Great faith

1. We've moved through no faith, little faith, weak faith, measure of faith, gift of faith, strong faith, and now come to great faith.
2. Jesus spoke to a Roman centurion who had just told Jesus about a sick servant at his house who was near death.
3. Jesus agreed to go home with the man. But the centurion responded, "No you don't need to come to my home."
4. This was a level of faith so great that it amazed Jesus when He saw it:
*Matthew 8:10 When Jesus heard [it], he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so **great faith**, no, not in Israel.*

5. Great faith understands how authority works and does not require a manifestation of Jesus—just His Word. Speak the word, my servant will be healed. Jesus answered great faith with exactly what was asked.

H. (8) Full of faith

1. **[img: chart]**

2. The last level on the spectrum is that which was seen by two very influential workers for God, Stephan and Barnabas.

Acts 6:5, 8

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: ...

*8 And Stephen, **full of faith** and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*

3. Stephen was full of faith, and not only demonstrated the power of God through

great wonders and miracles for others, but stood on that faith to death.

4. And his testimony at his death was so bold that it impacted a bystander, the young Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus.

5. Barnabas was another person who was full of faith:

*Acts 11:24 For he was a good man, and **full of the Holy Ghost and of faith**: and much people was added unto the Lord.*

6. Barnabas was full of faith, pastored the church in Antioch during a great growth period, mentored Saul of Tarsus until he became Apostle Paul, and stood up for John Mark until he was writing scripture.

7. Great faith is a living and active faith that governs the life of the one who has it until it carries them right out of this world.

IV. Conclusion

1. Our world is in a position that needs people living out a living faith, taking action on expectations.

2. In Isaiah 64, we read how God did awesome things beyond expectations until the mountains shook under God's presence.
3. That passage ended with verse 4:
Is 64:4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.
4. If that sounds familiar, it may be from where Paul quoted it:
1 Cor 2:9-10
9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.
5. Notice how Paul added some revelation to this passage. First, Isaiah said God had these amazing things prepared for those who wait

on Him. Paul said God prepared it for those who love Him.

6. That is in itself a deep revelation. If you love you, you will wait on Him!
7. Plus, Paul said that God has revealed those unseen and unheard things to us by the Spirit. The Holy Ghost even helps us to know how to pray for the kind of thing He intends to answer. You see it before prayer.
8. Do you need a healing today? Can you believe He has that prepared? Do you need provision today? Can you believe He has that prepared? He is ready with more than expected.
9. Do you need to see your life turn around? Are you ready to turn it over to God and be filled with His Spirit, the Holy Ghost? God will do what He has prepared for those who wait on Him.
10. Do you need to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ? There comes a time when we must quit talking about it and step out on an

expectation of faith that Jesus will wash your sins away and give you a new life.

11. The expectant farmer prepares, plants and then watches for a harvest.
12. Something beyond expectations is going to happen for you today.