

Eight Levels of Faith Lesson 2 Underwater Faith

*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.*

I. Review

1. Last week we looked at faith as a way to raise our expectation and gave the lesson a subtitle, "More Than Expected."
2. I suggested we begin our day by saying, "Lord, blow my mind with greater things than I can even imagine."
3. Since God can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, why not start with high expectations?
4. **[image: 8levels of faith – Title only] [image: 8levels of faith – all levels]** Plus we took an overview of the "eight levels of faith."
5. Tonight we will start by looking at the first 3 of the 8 levels of faith in greater detail. These 3 are the underwater levels of faith.
6. Our goal is to help us UP our expectations, and UP our level of faith above these first three substandard levels of faith.

II. No faith

A. What faith is

1. On the faith spectrum, the level at the bottom is no faith, a condition that if not resolved, is both dangerous and even eternally devastating.
2. The Book of Hebrews tells us:
*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.*
3. **[slide]**In this verse we find a basic 2-part definition of what faith is. Faith is:
 - a. Believes in God; *He is...*
 - b. Believes that God rewards those who seek Him diligently
4. **[slide]** Because I have faith, that faith affects me. Faith Does:
 - a. I **live** knowing God exists,
 - b. I live knowing God wants **me** to seek Him
 - c. I live knowing God will **reward** me for seeking Him
5. Seeing these things, that is why I cannot please God if I have no faith.

B. Jeshurun, comfortable in blessings

1. A person can arrive at a point of no faith while being blessed by God.
2. While blessings from God should cause me to grow more thankful and closer to God, another reaction to blessings is forsaking God.
*Deuteronomy 32:15 But Jeshurun waxed **fat**, and kicked: thou art waxen **fat**, thou art grown **thick**, thou art covered with **fatness**; then he forsook God which made him, and **lightly esteemed** the Rock of his salvation.*
3. But God used Jeshurun ("upright") here in sarcasm because Israel had turned away from the Righteous One who made them righteous.

4. And remarkably, they kicked against God after receiving His blessings of deliverance from slavery and provisions in the desert.
5. What is interesting is that during times of struggle, like Israel during slavery, or like us during a global pandemic, people of all walks of life, honor, and even seek God for help.
6. But when things get better and times of blessings come, people tend to step back from that position of seeking God, and some even think that maybe it wasn't God who got them through it after all. They did it on their own?
7. And as was the case with Israel, they forsake the God who gave those comforts, and lightly esteemed Him.

C. From blessing to no faith

1. Let us put this back into the context of levels of faith.
2. Just 5 verses later, in verse 20, we read about the condition of Israel's faith:
*Deuteronomy 32:20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is **no faith**.*
3. They went from blessed to no faith (or unfaithful).
4. We already read *Hebrews 11:6* that said without faith it is impossible to please God, and they are also similar to the church of Laodicea:
*Revelation 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and **have need of nothing**; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*
5. And where was God in relation to that church? Outside wanting to come in.

D. Warnings for those of no faith

1. But listen to the warning to those who have prospered but lost their faith:
Luke 12:19-20
19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.
20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?
2. I mentioned earlier that having no faith is dangerous eternally. Faith says "He is," but no faith believes "He isn't":
*John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that **I am** he, ye shall **die in your sins**.*
3. And without faith, even the preached Word does not profit them:
*Heb 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.*
4. No faith = no profit. So where does unbelief end?
*Rev 21:8 But the fearful, and **unbelieving**, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the **lake which burneth with fire and brimstone**: which is the second death.*

E. Faith or fear?

1. In addition to blessing, another thing that can remove faith, is fear.
2. Following a day of teaching, Jesus told his disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee to the other side. But then storm winds blew in.
3. As they crossed the sea, the storm winds beat on the ship and waves crashed over the bow so that it filled with water.

Mark 4:37-38

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

4. Fear gripped the disciples causing serious doubts about this Jesus with whom they had become shipmates.
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?
5. In their fear-driven state, they made **two bad assumptions**: (1) Jesus doesn't care, and (2) all hope was lost.
6. Listen, if you made the decision to get on board with Jesus, you need to know that He does care for you and that unending hope exists for you.
7. Jesus will not jump ship when things get tough, leaving you to perish alone, so don't you even **think** about jumping ship.
8. Don't abandon ship, or faith, simply because you are afraid and don't understand what God is trying to accomplish in a tragedy.
9. [slide] **Remember, God isn't afraid of the thing that is causing you fear.**
10. Look at Jesus' question:
*Mark 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have **no faith**?*
11. [no faith slide] Are you at the place of **no faith**? faith under water? Jesus is on board with you and He isn't afraid.
12. Exchange that fear and unbelief with faith in the One who calms storms.
Ps 56:3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

III. Little Faith

- A. When suffering lack, seek Him first
1. The second level of faith is **little faith**. [img: 8 levels of faith]. Notice the difference between little faith and gift of faith. That will be important in a moment.
2. Of course, having a little faith is an improvement over having no faith with its serious, eternal consequences.
3. Last week we looked at a passage that described someone who lacked basic provisions like clothing and food and found themselves at the condition of little faith. And honestly, that is a **natural** and human response.
4. But read Jesus' **super-natural** faith response to the situation of basic lack:
Matt 6:30-33
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**?
31 Therefore **take no thought**, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
5. So if we are not to "take thought" or worry about these necessities, what does Jesus expect us to do?
33 But **seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**
6. It is important to understand what Jesus is **not** saying. He is not saying "Don't worry about getting a job, just go to church and you'll have what you need."

7. No. His parables expressed the importance and fruitfulness of diligent labor. His point was this: don't let your lack stop your pursuit of God. In fact, seek Him and the kingdom first if you want to be blessed. Like tithing.
 8. When you suffer lack, seek Him first!
- B. When suffering lack, look back
1. Another occasion where Jesus identified little faith, was when the disciples were concerned about having no bread.
 2. When you have little faith because you are suffering lack, look back:
Matt 16:8-10
8 Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?
9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?
10 Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?
 3. Look back. He did it before, He can do it again.
 4. In an earlier lesson we mentioned that when your faith is weak, look back to the time you were first saved, a time when high faith led you to salvation.
 5. When suffering lack, look back.
- C. When suffering lack, look up
1. In this next example of little faith, we see how faith can fluctuate based on the circumstances we are facing.
 2. Peter was in a unique situation that I'm sure none of us have ever been in, yet we have been in situations that have affected us in the same way.
 3. Peter had a surge of faith in a crisis, which we could describe as the gift of faith.
 4. Jesus went to a mountain to pray and sent the disciples across the sea on their boat. But it was a night of strong winds and high waves.
 5. Jesus left His mountain prayer and walked on the water to their boat.
 6. When Peter saw Him, he cried out to Jesus with a bold, faith-filled request.
Matt 14:28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.
 7. I probably would not have thought to ask that in that situation. But Peter received the gift of faith for that moment. God had given him the gift of faith to step into a crisis and touch God.
 8. Peter took those miraculous steps of faith on the water, but then shifted his attention from the target of his faith—Jesus—to the peril before him—drowning.
 9. As soon as Peter lost focus on His pursuit, his faith literally sank three levels, from gift of faith to little faith—which, by the way, is not enough to hold a person above the turmoil. It is under water--below sea-level:
Matthew 14:29-31
29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.
*30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was **afraid**; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*
 10. Notice this: Little faith still has the power to reach Jesus! As we saw before, when fear and doubt enter, they push faith either totally out, or as we see here, down several levels:

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of **little faith**, wherefore didst thou **doubt**?

11. In a matter of seconds, Peter moved from operating in the gift of faith to having little faith. Why? Because he looked below at the problem instead of above the problem to Jesus.
 12. Look down and you will see the trouble and destruction. Look up and you will see Jesus and deliverance. When suffering lack, look up!
- IV. Weak in faith
- A. What weak faith is not
1. **[img: 8 levels of faith]** Next on the faith spectrum is weak faith.
 2. It is possible that there is little or no difference between little faith and weak faith, and maybe it is even the same level with two names.
 3. But since “weak faith” is mentioned separately, we will consider it as a separate level of faith.
 4. Paul mentioned it saying this was NOT the kind of faith Abraham had.
*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:*
- B. What weak faith is
1. Using our detective skills, we can learn two characteristics of weak faith, and a synonym for it, revealed in the next verse:
*Romans 4:20 He **staggered not at the promise of God** through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*
 2. We see unbelief is the same as weak faith. Again, not a good place to be.
 3. Paul is showing us that Abraham did NOT have this level of faith, so he did not have the problem that comes with weak faith. Namely, that **weak faith staggers**, waivers, or has doubts in God’s promises.
 4. To have weak, wavering faith, does not mean you have no faith, but the result is about the same:
James 1:6-7
*6 But let him ask in **faith, nothing wavering**. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.
- C. Cast off doubt
1. Perhaps one example of a person with weak faith is the father of the boy who had a dumb spirit.
 2. He had some level of faith because he came to Jesus’ disciples asking for help for his desperate, tormented child. But their prayer didn’t help.
 3. Later in the passage, Jesus told his disciples that if they wanted faith and authority to cast out devils, they needed to fast and pray for it.
 4. Since the disciples’ prayer did not help his son, the dad’s faith grew weak. He had enough faith to ask for help, but now it was weak.
 5. Has this kind of disappointment ever happened to you? You were prayed for, and you prayed yourself, but when the answer didn’t come, your faith wavered.

6. If you are weak in faith as this father was, it is ok to admit that weakness to Jesus and ask Him to remove the unbelief:
*Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine **unbelief**.*
 7. Do whatever is necessary to deal with that doubt, perhaps fasting or listening to a faith-filled testimony. Then you will see the answer:
*Mark 11:23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not **doubt** in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*
 8. Do you see that help for weak faith, unbelief, and doubt? Believe in the promise more than the doubt.
 9. **Bro. Bernard spoke about this at General Conference last year: When faith grows weak, we believe our doubts, and doubt our beliefs. The solution is to doubt our doubts and believe our beliefs.**
 10. As we said before, Abraham did not have weak faith, and as a result he and Sarah laid down their doubts and believed that 90-year-old Sarah would have a baby. And the promise child arrived—even when the fulfilment of the promise was so **very** unlikely.
 11. So if your faith is weak, the question to consider is this: Which is more certain, my problem, or Jesus’ promise? That helps eliminate doubt.
- D. Praise God in advance
1. Romans 4:20 identifies a second characteristic of weak faith in addition to doubting the promises:
*Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, **giving glory to God**;*
 2. Since Abraham did not have weak faith, (1) he didn’t stagger at the promise, and (2) he didn’t withhold praise to God even though the promise was not yet fulfilled.
 3. So, a symptom of weak faith is a lack of worship, and an antidote for weak faith is to praise God earnestly before the answer comes.
 4. Jesus demonstrated this standing in front of the tomb of Lazarus. While Lazarus was still very much dead, Jesus said roll away the stone. Then He prayed:
John 11:41 Then they took away the stone [from the place] where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up [his] eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.
 5. Do you have weak faith? Cast out doubt by believing the promise of God, and then worship God in advance for the answer.
- V. Conclusion
1. **[slide]** What are the characteristics of underwater faith?
 - a. No faith: Trusting in self and not God. Fear. No hope. Thinking Jesus doesn’t care. Preaching doesn’t help. Dangerous place that ends in lake of fire. It may be temporary, you can get out by trusting God.
 - b. Little faith: caused by suffering lack or focusing on trouble. Seek Him first, look back, and look up. You can still touch Jesus.
 - c. Weak faith: Like unbelief and doubt, struggles believing God’s promises, wavers, withholds praise. Fasting helps and praising God in advance. Doubt your doubts and believe your beliefs.