

Eight Levels of Faith Lesson 5
Part 2 of Faith that Builds Bridges

Acts 11:22-24

*22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they **sent forth Barnabas**, that he should go as far as Antioch.*

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

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

I. Review

1. We have now looked in detail at 7 of the 8 levels of faith, **[slides]** starting with the first three, no faith, little faith, and weak faith, these three being the underwater levels of faith.
2. We looked at the three levels of faith that rise above: the measure of faith, the gift of faith, and strong faith.
3. Last week we introduced the last two levels: great faith, and full of faith. These are the highest levels of faith that build bridges.
4. **Great faith** is a step above strong faith in how it crosses over what would be difficult barriers between people, even those caused from hurtful words, in order to see God's miracles and deliverance accomplished.
5. **Great faith** also understands the connection between given authority and a miracle. When God delegates authority, great faith picks it up and uses it.
6. **Full of Faith** is the final level we introduced last time and will finish with tonight.
7. So far, we have seen how this highest level of faith helps a person work at the lowest levels of service, but while there, builds bridges to keep peace and ministry going.
8. And as full of faith ministry goes forward, it also grows upward, and we saw that **Full of Faith** operating like an apostle in miracles and wonders.

II. (8) Full of faith

A. Spreading faith

1. As we said last time, there are two individuals who identified in the Book of Acts who had this highest level of faith.
2. I think it is telling that The Book of Acts is literally the "Acts of the Apostles" as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.
3. As these great apostles acted in faith by the Holy Ghost, there arose others around them that caught their faith, lived out their faith, and as was in the case of at least two of their coworkers, they rose to the highest level of faith.
4. I mentioned this a couple times last week, that **[slide] faith spreads by sharing your own**. And you never know who might catch your faith and then take it to an even higher level than you.
5. That should not bother us, though. We ought to be thankful for anyone who rises in faith, even if they rise above us, for the whole church benefits from anyone who grows in faith.

6. And I will add, it can pull others down a notch if they see others lose faith.
7. So our faith does impact others, whether high or low.

B. Stephen

1. The first individual we identified as being “Full of Faith” was Stephen.
2. He got his start in ministry as one of the first appointed table waiters for the [image] First Pentecostal Church of Jerusalem, Widows’ Soup Kitchen.
3. The ministry was a great idea but it was sort of winging it at the beginning. Not being well organized, some widows were being neglected.
4. And unfortunately, it appeared that there was an ethnic or cultural conflict among the new church members that brought about this neglect.
5. Some of the Grecian widows complained because they were being neglected in the meal distribution while the Hebrew widows were not.
6. And whether that was someone exhibiting an ethnic bias against their sisters, or if the problem was that they just were not well organized, the tension that existed between the two ethnic groups was bridged by this level of **faith that builds bridges**.
7. Let me add this important word: whatever caused the division among members, there is a level of faith that can build bridges between them.
8. And so what the world needs now, is faith, sweet faith. That’s the only thing, that there’s just too little of.
9. And since **little faith is underwater faith**, it does not have a positive impact on a person’s lifestyle.
10. However, if we could see a greater part of the population of our nation and world to rise to the level of either **Great Faith** that we talked about last time, or **Full of Faith** that we are focusing on now, these levels of faith are the levels of faith that build bridges!
11. Stephen was such a person who rose to lead during that cultural clash:
*Acts 6:5 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: ...*
12. Stephen was chosen to serve tables of angry old ladies, because people tensions can be bridged by when someone full of faith and full of the Holy Ghost is on the team.
13. But having that level of faith helps to not only to bridge the personality tensions that exist, but also do wonders and miracles:
*Acts 6:8 And Stephen, **full of faith** and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*

C. Full of Faith meets the ultimate crisis

1. But for Stephen, this man full of faith, serving lunch to angry old ladies was not the height of his ministry. His level of faith, **full of faith**, brought him into conflict with other cultural, ethnic, religious, and political biases that existed.
2. This was not a problem that arose in the church, but in the larger Jewish community from around 5 different national groups who were present that day:
Acts 6:9-10
9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the

Libertines [former slaves], and *Cyrenians* [northern coast of Africa modern Libya], and *Alexandrians* [northern Egypt], and of them of *Cilicia* [southern Turkey] and of *Asia* [western Turkey], disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

3. Perhaps these people were drawn by the church's meal outreach program or perhaps they had just heard Stephen's bold preaching.
4. Whatever it was that drew them, what began as a debate, turned into a protest that turned violent, and ended with a vigilante-style execution.
5. The passage goes on to reveal that the debate got so fierce that these men made rounded up some men to make false accusations against Stephen to the temple leaders, who then brought him in for questioning before the Jewish elders.
6. Here is their accusation:
Acts 6:13-14
13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:
14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.
7. Remember, Stephen was being called before the same Jewish elders who had recently tried and sentenced Jesus to death.
8. This was the same Jewish elders who had recently arrested Peter and John for preaching Jesus, and commanded them to stop preaching Jesus.
9. Now Stephen is standing before that same governing body for preaching Jesus.
10. Then preserved in the longest chapter in the Book of Acts chapter 7, we get to read the response, which is more like a sermon, of this **full-of-faith** table waiter, miracle performer.

D. Full of faith gets full of boldness

1. Then Stephen concluded his bold sermon with these bold and biting words:
Acts 7:51-52
51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.
52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:
2. Of course, Stephen was referring to recent events where they condemned Jesus, the Just One, to death.
3. These words angered many among the crowd, who rushed at Stephen, forced him out of the city gate, and before Roman authorities could intervene, the mob stoned him to death.
4. This **faith-full** preacher was so bold and convincing, that he made a lifetime impact on a young bystander, the zealous Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus.
5. But since **sharing your faith spreads faith**, it was around 25-30 years later, that that same Saul, was arrested for preaching Jesus.
6. And who would he bring up in his defense to his accusers but Stephen, the man whose **full of faith** example was an encouragement to him at his moment of trial. (Acts 22:20)

7. What does it mean to be full of faith? Be faith-full at whatever job you have, large or small.
8. Be willing to use that faith as the occasion arises during that lowly work.
9. Be bold enough to stand for truth when truth comes under attack, for you never know who your bold faith will impact.
10. Being full of faith means your faith will carry you all the way to death.
Acts 7:58-60
58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.
59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.
60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

III. Barnabas—full of the Holy Ghost and faith

A. Faith begins with consolation

1. Barnabas was another man who was **full of faith**.
2. When we are introduced to Barnabas, we learn that was a nickname given to him by the apostles that described his character:
Acts 4:36-37
36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,
37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.
3. The Greek word translated, “Consolation,” is para-klesis, which literally means one who comes alongside with help, encouragement, comfort, or refreshment.
4. That word accurately describes this man based on what we see of him. In this passage, he sold property and gave the proceeds to the apostles to help supply the needs of the church family.

B. Faithful to Antioch

1. Later on we find Barnabas again comes alongside others to help is in the city of Antioch.
2. After Stephen was stoned, a great persecution erupted against the church in Jerusalem that caused all but the apostles to flee:
Acts 11:19-20
19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.
20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene [some of Stephen’s accusers were from here], which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.
3. We should first make note who it is that went out preaching. It was not the apostles but church members. Including some from men from Cyrene. We read that some of Stephen’s accusers and murderers were from here. Perhaps they were also influenced by Stephen’s testimony.

4. These went out “preaching the word,” and
Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.
 5. There were many new believers in the city of Antioch who needed leadership. When news of the revival in Antioch got back to Jerusalem:
Acts 11:22-24
22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.
23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.
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. The construction of the sentence indicates just like Stephen, Barnabas was not only full of the Holy Ghost, but also full of faith.
 7. And with those working in Him, he helped establish a pioneering work on this new northern frontier for Christianity. This was the furthest north the gospel message had reached so far, and it was led by full-of-faith Barnabas.
 8. Those called to evangelism and a missionary work have this **full-of-faith** level which is necessary for that level of service.
- C. Faithful to a junior disciple
1. But we see a third time that Barnabas came alongside someone to help.
 2. And this event which gets only a minor mention in scripture, **a verse of only 9 words**, is, in my opinion, quite possibly, the most important verse in the history of the church:
Acts 11:25-26
25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:
26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
 3. Let’s look back in time a few months or years. Barnabas had tried to introduce Saul to the Jerusalem church before, but Saul’s violent reputation from his former life, left them doubting Saul’s sincerity.
 4. This man who had been a destroyer of the church, now suddenly wished to be accepted by the church. They just didn’t trust him:
Acts 9:26-27
26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.
27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.
 5. A characteristic of someone who is full of faith is that they look for others they can work with and build.
 6. Barnabas saw potential in this new convert, and now in Acts 11, Barnabas gave Saul his first official ministry opportunity.

7. Not long after this, Barnabas and Saul were sent by the Antioch church on their first missionary journey.
 8. And during that journey, a transition occurred that made Barnabas the second in command. It became Paul and Barnabas, the traveling missionaries.
 9. Eventually Paul would learn from that example and helped build other young preachers.
- IV. Conclusion
1. Full of faith means:
 - a. you have a high calling that starts low (waiter);
 - b. by your thoughtful and compassionate actions, you help stop murmuring in the church;
 - c. you exceed the expectations of your position by performing wonders;
 - d. you become a target for the adversary but are bold and faithful unto death.
 - e. you come alongside others to minister financially and to encourage;
 - f. you are drawn to young converts to help them be accepted and grow;
 - g. you help young ministers get ministry training and are not threatened by their success, even when they are elevated above you.
 2. **[image levels of faith]**
 3. What remains for next week is a review of each level of faith, and then do a personal faith assessment to help you find where your faith level is.
 4. And then having a better understanding of what sort of faith you have, if you are not satisfied with that level, you can prayerfully determine a plan of action to rise above.