

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 10: THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled Introduction to Evangelism. This series of lessons aims to prepare participants to effectively share the Gospel with others. Understanding how God equips us for ministry and how to prepare our Gospel message for various worldviews will help us bring the unchanging message of the hope found in Jesus Christ to a world that does not yet know Him.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 10: THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to explain the concept of saving faith, and to understand how to present the Gospel in a way that appeals to the intellect, emotion, and will.

LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson examines the difference between faith that is a feeling or wish or a fleeting thought, and faith that saves us. Scripture indicates that not everyone who claims to be a Christian will enter the Kingdom of heaven ([Matthew 7:21](#)). Some people will come to the end of their lives and discover that what they thought was 'following God' was not true saving faith. Either they were merely acting like a Christian without true belief, or they thought they believed but it did not impact their actions. It is important that participants heed this warning and understand that salvation is not simply praying an easy prayer and getting a pass to heaven in exchange. Following Christ means being willing to obey Him and leaving everything behind to follow Him. Don't make the decision to follow Christ sound easy. It is costly and will change their whole life!

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Are there people in your life you put faith in? What does it mean to have faith in a friend or a family member? How is it different from having faith in God?
- ❖ What are some things people put their faith in aside from God (science, ritual, superstition, habit, government, relationships, etc.)?
- ❖ Do you know anyone who has tremendous faith in God – faith that sets them apart? How can you tell they have faith by their words and actions? Why is their faith special or different?
- ❖ When we say 'having faith in Jesus,' what does that mean? Is it just believing that a man named Jesus lived long ago? Is it believing that the words He said about how to live life are true? Or is it something more?

STUDY

TEACH

- ❖ **The Faith of the Centurion:** Understanding faith is important, and we should strive to have a faith in God that is true and pleasing to God. We will examine two examples of faith found in the Word of God.



- In Luke Chapter 7, we read about the faith of a Centurion (a soldier). His faith was so sincere that it caused Jesus to state that He had never seen a faith so great in all of Israel.
 - Read Luke 7:1-10

ASK PARTICIPANTS

- What was special about the Centurion's faith?
- How did the Centurion prove his faith?

TASK

As one group, or in smaller groups, ask participants to:

- Read Matthew 7:21-29
- Compare the difference between this faith and the faith of the Centurion.
- What are your feelings about the fact that some people believe they have true faith and even perform miracles in Jesus' name, but in the eyes of God their faith is false?
- ❖ **Two Kinds of Faith:** It appears when reading these verses that there are two kinds of faith. Effective and ineffective faith, or more accurately, saving faith and non-saving faith. Let's look more closely at the two passages to discover the differences.
 - **Saving Faith** – In the story of the Centurion (Luke 7:1-10) we see an example of saving faith. This is the kind of faith that God requires of us.
 - Vs. 6-7 “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you.” The Centurion humbles himself before God. He demonstrates his humility by sending others on his behalf. He did not assume that Jesus would have time to meet him or would do as he asked just because he was important. This is particularly relevant since the Centurion would be a wealthy and important man who could easily command someone's presence or obedience.
 - Vs. 7 “But say the word, and let my servant be healed.” The Centurion sincerely believes that Jesus can speak and heal his servant. Jesus' word was all he needed; He didn't even need to see the servant. Vs. 8 “For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes.” The Centurion was used to exercising his power and authority. When he tells someone to do something they do it. However, he recognizes that Jesus' power is so much greater than his own.
 - **Non-Saving Faith** – The Bible talks about people who profess to know God, but deny Him by their works. Consider Matthew 7:21-29. These verses clearly state that such people are disobedient to God, and their “good works” cannot save them.
 - Vs. 22 “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in



your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you...'" There are people who profess to believe in God, yet they also think they are saved by works. They haven't taken the time to learn what God really requires.

- Vs. 24 "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock." This verse tells us that we must obey God's word. Saving faith comes from more than just hearing the words.
- Vv. 24-27 compare the man who builds his house on a rock and is unaffected by rains and floods, to the man who builds his house on the sand whose house falls when the winds and floods come. If you are building your own house and you go to a professional to get advice, he will tell you what will work and what will not work. The advice does not complete your work. You must choose whether to follow his advice or not. If you say you believe the professional and know him to be good, is it not then logical that you would follow his advice and build your house in the manner that he recommends? There are many people who profess to know God and believe his Word to be true, and yet when it comes to making decisions in their own life, they go their own way without regard for what the Bible tells them to do.

❖ What Does the Bible Say About Faith?

- The two passages looked at so far give us a good understanding of the nature of saving faith. Consider what else the Bible has to say about faith in the following verses:
 - Romans 10:17 - *Faith by hearing and the word of God.*
 - 1 Corinthians 2:5 - *Faith in the power of God, not the wisdom of men.*
 - Hebrews 11:1 - *Being sure of what we hope for.*
 - Mark 9:24 - *Help my unbelief.*
 - James 2:24 - *Not by faith alone, but by works as well.*

❖ The Focus of Our Saving Faith:

- Christianity isn't just about believing in Christ, praying a one-time prayer or saying yes to an evangelist. It is about a relationship with God. People of other worldviews might find this alarming, which is why it is imperative to explain to them this truth. Romans 6:5 talks about our union with Christ.
- When sharing the Gospel we must present the essential truths of salvation. Jesus is the focus. For example, consider the Gospel message in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Jesus died for our sins, was buried and then rose from the dead according to the Scriptures. Paul preached the Gospel fully wherever he went (Romans 15:19-20).
- Unless we communicate the Gospel in full, people will not be able to process all the facts (Romans 10:17). People must understand that they need a personal relationship with Christ and repent from sin in order to experience saving faith.

- ❖ **Whole Belief:** We must know how to communicate true faith so that people are not deceived. Communicating a saving faith requires that we appeal to someone's intellect, emotion, and will.



A complete picture of the Gospel tells us of God's perfect plan for justice, His great love for humanity, and His requirement of obedience.

- **Intellect:** We must appeal to a person's intellect. People need to hear the complete picture so that they can process all the facts. If you tell someone about the love of Jesus but do not share the requirement of repentance, they only know the part of the story that makes a person feel good, not the part that requires action.
- **Emotion:** We must appeal to a person's emotion. God also asks for relationship. The Gospel truth is the story of God's love for us. The Bible is full of God's help and grace. God appeals not only to our intellect but also to our hearts, and He asks us to call out to Him. There are many examples in the Bible of people who called out to God in praise or in distress. God desires a personal relationship with people who want to know Him more and seek His plan for their lives.
- **Will:** We must appeal to a person's will. James 2:14-26 tells us that faith without works is dead. Many say they believe, but without works there is no demonstration of faith or commitment to the Word of God. Just as your works alone will not save you, neither will faith unsubstantiated by works. Salvation is an act of obedience; God calls us to obey the Gospel or face judgement if we reject it (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17). We can thus say that saving faith is an act of human will, yielding to the living God and submitting one's own will to Him.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ What are some of the common phrases you need to avoid while sharing your faith with someone? *(These are phrases that might not be understood clearly by those outside of the faith, or may make receiving salvation sound easy and without cost, or praying a simple prayer without true belief.)*
- ❖ How can you tell someone the facts of how you came to have faith in Jesus Christ, and appeal to their intellect, emotions, and will?
- ❖ What is the relationship of faith and works? Can you have a faith that doesn't include obedience to the commands of God? Is strict obedience to the commands of God enough to receive salvation?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray for wisdom and understanding for yourself and participants as you share this message with others. Thank God for the wisdom of the Scriptures, and the great faith of those in the Bible as well as others in our lives who are examples to us.