

## **Put on Your Faith Glasses**

*As Presented by Lisa Bishop*

Air Dates: July 24 - 28, 2023

### **Day One**

As you think about the measure of your faith these days, how's your faith sight? A few years ago I had my annual eye exam and while I had held onto my 20/20 vision for 40+ years, the time had come when my ability to see clearly was not as sharp as it once was. When doing my daily Scripture reading or trying to peruse a menu at a restaurant it was becoming evident that I could not see as clearly as I had in the past. My vision was becoming blurred, my eyesight was weakening.

The same thing can happen to our faith over time. If we are not mindful, life's disruptions, disappointments, detours, and delays can cause our faith to weaken. So how is your faith sight? Are you seeing God for who he really is--faithful and trustworthy even when you cannot see? Or are you in a season where you are finding it difficult to trust God?

In the book of Genesis we read of the covenant that God made with Abraham to become the father of many nations promising him descendants and multitudes of generations to come. But from a human perspective there was one perplexing problem. Abraham was 99 and his wife Sarah was not only unable to bear children, she was also 90 years old. Yet, God would do what only he could do, the impossible. And keeping his promise, Sarah would bear a son and Abraham's descendants would in fact become as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Romans 4:18-21 says, *"Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."*

He did not waver through unbelief. Instead he was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God! In the face of what was humanly impossible, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw but what God said.

What situation are you facing right now that seems insurmountable? What circumstance is God calling you to look through the lens of faith? When you put on your faith glasses you will see with a renewed perspective that is altered by your trust in God and your view will change.

### **Day Two**

If someone were to look into your life, how would they know that you are a follower of Jesus? Is your Christian faith just a label or is it truly a lifestyle? Do your faith-filled actions speak louder than your words?

There are a lot of people who say they are Christians but their lives are void of proof and one source of evidence for your faith is kind acts, your good deeds towards others.

James 2:14-17 says, *“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”*

James is not saying that you earn your salvation through your good deeds. True faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior alone is what saves you. But rather, your good deeds will demonstrate the authenticity of your faith. Faith takes action and how you live reveals what you believe. Faith is the root, good works are the result, the holy fruit of a faithful life.

First Peter 2:12 reinforces this truth: *“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”* As a follower of Jesus we intentionally act and live in a manner worthy of the gospel and we look for ways to serve others and bless them.

How has your faith prompted you to meet the needs of those around you? How has your allegiance to Christ changed how you interact with and love your neighbor? Do you tend to think of yourself first or are you willing to sacrifice your comfort to share with others? Are you only inclined to do good for others when you can benefit? Ask God for opportunities to live out your faith and to continue to produce good works in and through you as evidence of your belief and hope in him.

Living a faith-filled life can be hard. As followers of Jesus we need other Christ-followers in our lives. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* If you do not have Christian community, can I encourage you to find a Bible preaching church near you? You were not meant to walk this journey of faith alone. Get involved in your local church, join a small group, participate in a Bible study.

### Day Three

Have you ever felt hurt by the words of a good friend? Several years ago a friend gave me some feedback that was really hard to hear. While she didn't intend her words to be mean, they pierced me. I knew that her intention was not to harm me but to point something out that was a blind spot in my behavior. Even though she spoke those truths out of and in love, her words still stung.

Have you ever had a friend speak painful and plain words that cut? Proverbs 27:6 Amplified version says, *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend [who corrects out of love and concern], But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful [because they serve his hidden agenda].”*

What these words of wisdom teach us is that a mark of a true friend is the willingness to wound us with words of loving correction. The correction may not feel good at the time (it rarely does) but its purpose is to help us grow and mature us spiritually. Two key words in this verse are “faithful” and “friend.” Both descriptors clarify that the person is pointing something out stemming from their love for you, commitment to your friendship and investment in your spiritual transformation. The ability to be open and honest with each other, coming from a spirit of love, faithfulness, and integrity, designed for the good of the other person is the mark of a true and deepening friendship. With that intention a friend's “wounds” should be kindly and gratefully received.

It feels counterintuitive to invite correction in our lives. After all, the culture around us has grown more and more resistant to any type of correction. People do what is right in their own minds and if anyone dares to say anything that may appear critical, it is easily dismissed. But as a follower of Jesus it is important for you to invite faithful and biblical correction in your life. How do you react when someone points out a part of you that needs growth and transformation?

Are you the type of person who is open to receiving feedback from friends that while feeling hurtful may be helpful? It can be easy to feel defensive when your shortcomings are exposed but you simply cannot grow if you recoil from correction. The kisses of an enemy are deceitful. You really don't want flattery from someone who does not have your best interests in mind. Your aim as a follower of Jesus is to grow in his likeness. And as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:15 *"...speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."*

Who can you invite to speak truth into your life? Nobody's perfect. Be humble, invite faithful words that wound and be grateful for the greater goal of maturing as someone who loves and follows Jesus.

## Day Four

Do you believe that God will show up in your life every day, no matter what? When you think about the character of God, what comes to mind? Perhaps you think merciful, gracious, loving, holy, forgiving. What about faithful? Do you believe that God's faithfulness to you is unconditional, that he can be relied on even when you are unreliable?

The Apostle Paul reminds us of the nature of God. *"If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself"* (2 Timothy 2:13). Just stop for a moment and let the magnitude of these words sink into your mind and heart. No matter what you do, God will be faithful to you. As you think about this verse, there are two simple truths that I want you to see and let seep in deep.

### **Faithful is who God is.**

Faithful is not something that God does or just displays toward you. Even if he wanted to (and he doesn't), he cannot stop being faithful to you because that is part of his nature. And his nature is unchanging. As Paul said, for God not to be faithful, he would have to disown himself and we know he will never do that.

### **God's faithfulness is unconditional.**

God is not faithful based on some long list of conditions you are required to meet. God's decision to be faithful to you has absolutely nothing to do with you, which is a good thing because most of us have a faulty track record.

Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, even when you are unfaithful to God, even when you sin, God will remain true to you. Regardless of how you act, you cannot do anything to make him love you less. Even when you are faithless, he remains faithful. This is mind blowing and true. There is no other God like Jesus Christ who displays such loyalty and steadfast love for you.

Psalm 36:5 declares this truth, *"Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies."* And Deuteronomy 7:9 beckons, *"Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."*

As you love and follow Jesus, albeit imperfectly, God remains loyal to you. This is reason to give God glory, and honor, and praise. *Lord, we thank you for your unending love. Thank you that you are faithful even when we are not. Turn our hearts to you, stir our affections for you. Help us to receive your abundant love and respond with gratitude, living lives holy and pleasing to you.*

## Day Five

What do you do when life gets hard? When your faith gets tested, how do you respond? Do trials in life incline you to distance yourself from God or do life's tough moments compel you to lean into Jesus? Trials of life will come. At some level we know this, so why do we get so stunned when trials happen? Jesus told his disciples, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:63), and we will too.

If you have been a follower of Jesus for any amount of time you are probably familiar with James' instruction on life's trials:

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).*

James is a book about practical Christian living; a life that reflects a genuine faith by being not only hearers of the Word but doers. (James 1:22). If we are honest, sometimes we like to read and hear the Word of God but actively living out God's instruction, that's another story. Especially when the rubber hits the road and hardships come. One of the most difficult parts of the Christian life is the fact that becoming a disciple of Christ does not make us immune to life's trials and tribulations.

Considering it pure joy when you face trials is counterintuitive. Joy is not typically our first reaction to difficulties and challenges. No one likes to suffer, yet as a follower of Jesus, in your suffering, there's a unique opportunity for God to perfect and complete the valuable character-building work he started in you. God uses difficulties, trials, and persecution to test, strengthen, and grow your faith.

Our faith can get lazy and flabby when times are easy. While I don't want flabby faith, I sometimes don't want to go through the refining fire that's required to purify and sanctify. But, trials are an opportunity for your faith to work – and get a workout. Just like lifting increased weight builds and strengthens your muscles, the heaviness of hard times can build and strengthen your faith when you rely on and trust Jesus.

When James says to “count it all joy,” he encourages us to evaluate the way we look at trials; to develop a new mindset and attitude that considers trials from God's perspective. Trials test your faith. And when you persevere, grounded in faith in Christ, believing (even when it does not feel like it) that he is with you and working all things for your good, it will be a faith builder.