

## *The Encouragement of Faith*

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**Introduction:** When a man truly lived by faith he has an abundant life.

- A. One who has this faith will find others drawn to them. **(Acts 2:46-47)**
  - 1. Men long for a singleness of life that is fulfilling.
  - 2. Men also do not want to be fooled by lies and acting.
- B. The power of a living faith is in its ability to release us from the earthly view of life.
  - 1. There are days where I am caught up in myself I look up and see the beauty of God's creation and am reminded what is real!
  - 2. Take two healthy people; one may be filled with burdens, bitterness and distrust while the other is filled with optimism, love and purpose.
  - 3. Jesus pointed out why His followers have found this peace.  
**(Mt 11:28-30; Jn 10:9-10)**

### ***I. The power of a living faith in ones heart***

- A. Some have never had a living faith. **(Jas 2:18-20)**
  - 1. Consider some cheap substitutes for a living faith: knowledge, activity, tradition, worship and originality.
  - 2. The glaring inconsistency of this "faith" becomes evident in time. **(Jn 18:28)**
  - 3. Be assured that our children will see this inconsistency.
- B. A living faith is full of optimism.
  - 1. There is great strength in knowing that God is with you!
  - 2. There is great strength in knowing that money and things are not the center of your life. **(1 Tim 6:6-8, 10)**
  - 3. How does a person who is filled with this kind of joy act?
- C. A living faith is full of courage. **(2 Cor 4:13)**
  - 1. A living faith is bold and wants to help others. **(Acts 4:29-31)**
  - 2. Why would some be afraid to speak? The world will punish you with lost friendships and family that will shun you.
  - 3. Many "Christians" have given up speaking the word or will abandon those who do if their friends become upset.
- D. A living faith is full of zeal.
  - 1. Zeal can be best described as energy and fire.
  - 2. Where does our zeal come from? **(Tit 2:13-14)**

### ***II. There are environments that faith cannot grow in***

- A. Faith cannot grow in materialism. **(1 Tim 6:17-19)**
  - 1. How will I know if I am substituting earthly wealth for faith?
  - 2. How do you view your brethren? **(Jas 2:5-6)**
    - a. In the world the rich look down on those who have less.
    - b. What does our tongue reveal about us?
  - 3. A local church cannot build faith in such an environment.

- B. Faith cannot grow in a heart of pride.
  - 1. Many glory in their ability to think. **(1 Cor 8:1-3)**
  - 2. In an atmosphere of pride men must praise and recognize others or be attacked and shunned. **(2 Cor 10:12; Gal 4:17)**
  - 3. Pride will always form cliques and parties.
- C. Faith cannot grow in an atmosphere of fear.
  - 1. What do we fear? What does faith say? **(1 Pt 3:11-13)**
  - 2. Fear will drive you into isolation and misery.
  - 3. Fearful people need to learn how to believe in God.
- D. Faith cannot grow in a heart of bitterness. **(Heb 12:14-15)**
  - 1. It is very easy to let your hearts become filled with these thoughts.
  - 2. It is even easier to share and spread these thoughts. Some who are awkward socially have found “acceptance” in the “fellowship of the miserable.”
  - 3. Do you want the fruit of the spirit or the fruits of the flesh? One will take a lot of cultivation and weeding while the other needs little effort.

### ***III. The center of our relationships as Christians is our faith***

- A. The heart of our assemblies must be here. **(Heb 10:23-25)**
  - 1. Our assemblies and not just individuals coming to their own isolation chamber and then going home. There is a “one-another” aspect as well.
  - 2. The truth is that our general assembly should be but a fraction of our time together. Is that true for us?
- B. One fruit of faith is edification of other Christians.
  - 1. The essence of our encouragement in association is our faith? Some are encouraged by something else. **(Rom 1:11-12)**
  - 2. The building of faith was the center of Paul’s relationship with other Christians. **(Col 2:5; Phil 2:19)**
  - 3. What gave Paul encouragement? **(1 Thess 3:1-5)**
    - a. Paul knew that the battle for these Christians would be the establishing of their faith.
    - b. In tribulation do we see the hope and power of God?
- C. Faith is maintained in an atmosphere of love **(Col 2:2)**
  - 1. Consider what you must add to your faith.
  - 2. What made the work of Barnabas so strong? **(Acts 4:36; 11:22)**
  - 3. Be honest are your relationships with brethren based on a mutual faith or on other mutual interest?

***Conclusion:*** We must win the battle for the mind.