

The Refiner's Fire
Seeing the Invisible

Lesson #8 for November 24, 2007

Scriptures: Isaiah 40:27-31; John 14:1-14; Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:18-23.

1. This lesson is about faith. When times get tough, does faith seem more “invisible”? Or is faith always “invisible”? What is implied by that? If you are able to see something that is “invisible,” is it still invisible?
2. How do you define faith? What is faith?

Faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known. The better we know Him, the better the relationship may be.

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God—based on the more-than-adequate evidence revealed—to be willing to believe what He says (as soon as we are sure He has said it), to accept what He offers (as soon as we are sure He is offering it), and to do what He wishes (as soon as we are sure He wishes it)—without reservation—for the rest of eternity. Anyone who has such faith would be perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven.

Faith also means that, like Abraham, Moses, and Job, we know God well enough to reverently ask Him, *Why?* adapted from A. Graham Maxwell

3. The famous “faith chapter,” Hebrews 11, does not tell us what faith **is** but rather what faith **does**. In what sense did Moses “see” the “invisible”? (Hebrews 11:27) Did he see God? Did he see what God could do for him personally? Did he see what God could do for the children of Israel?
4. Is it easier to have faith when times are easy and good or when times are tough? If we say it is easier when times are good, why has the church grown best during times of persecution and martyrdom?
5. Does the church need tough times to “sort out” the “dead wood”?
6. What is most important to you about your relationship with God when times are tough? Is it important just to know that God is out there somewhere? Is it important to know that God cares about you personally? If we knew God very well, would all our struggles go away? If so, what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane?
7. What kind of circumstances would lead you to doubt God’s care for you?
8. If we see something which appears to be good, and which we really desire, and which we believe that God could give us, does our faith waver when God does not give it to us? If something seems to be very good from our human perspective, can we be certain that it is for our best good from God’s perspective? Is it possible that God sometimes has something even better in mind for us?
9. Do we truly believe that when the great controversy is over, we will be able to look

back and see that God led us in the very best possible way—considering the circumstances we chose as God respected our free will?

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory [225] of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor. (*DA* 224.5; compare *MH* 479.2; *PK* 578.1; *RH*, March 7, 1912 par. 1; *CC* 278.5; *FLB* 64.3; *HP* 267.2)

10. “If God didn’t hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn’t gladly and freely do for us?” (Romans 8:32, *The Message*)
11. Why is it so hard to trust God and leave things up to Him when we really want something for ourselves that seems to be good?
12. Does your faith in God and your trust in Him trump your own personal desires and time line? Can you move forward in life even when you cannot see God’s answers to your problems? Can you stop worrying?
13. Modern movies demonstrate through Hollywood technology that our senses can be fooled. We see it on television every day. So where do we find reality? If we cannot believe what we can see, hear, taste, and touch, what is ultimate reality? Is it always clear to us which choice God wants us to make? Do faith and reality ever truly conflict or contradict each other?
14. Are God’s love and care for you more real than what you can see and hear?
15. Read 1 Peter 5:7. Is it a sin to worry? If we really had faith, would it do away with worry? Why do we choose to worry? Do we only worry when God does not seem to answer our prayers? “Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop.” Do you ever feel like your relationship with God is “long distance” and not “local”?
16. If we were really Christian, could we eliminate all our worries? Did Paul or Jesus ever worry?
17. Read John 14:1-14. Do we really believe that if we had enough faith, we could do “anything in Jesus’ name”? What was Jesus trying to tell us there? Is that a challenge to see whether or not we can perform miracles? How successful have you been at changing the circumstances in your life? Was Jesus trying to challenge us to do “magic” to test our faith?
18. What did Jesus really have in mind when He said we could do “anything” “in His name”? What did Jesus mean when He said we should pray “in His name”? Do we expect God to:
 - 1) Violate the laws of nature?

2) Violate our freedom?

3) Step over the bounds of His limitations in the great controversy?

19. Why is it that Jesus could calm the storm on Lake Galilee but He could not see through the portals of the tomb when He was in His final hours in Gethsemane? Was His faith falling apart in Gethsemane? Were the Father and the Holy Spirit present in Gethsemane? Weren't all the angels ready instantly to do God's bidding if He would allow them to help Jesus at that time?
20. Is it ever God's will to let us suffer through a "crucible" experience? Is it God's will that we go through an experience like Jesus had in Gethsemane?
21. We believe that God can do anything. He could suddenly give us a new home, or a new car, or transfer \$1 million into our bank account. God has the ability to do those things, but He does not do them.
22. Doing any of those things would tend to violate the orderliness of God's universe. Without orderliness, we could not have freedom, and love would not be a possibility! But don't we believe that in the long term, God will do more than we could ever ask or think? The home God plans to give you in heaven is far better than anything He could give you here! That new car that you might be dreaming about would just be in the way in heaven!
23. Is the problem with "exercising faith" that we are too much like children and we cannot wait? Is "grown-up" faith willing to wait?
24. Review in your mind your understanding of the purpose of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now ask yourself, "Why was the resurrection necessary?" If Jesus had not risen from the grave, would there be any Christianity? Would Satan have won in the great controversy? Or was the resurrection primarily to prove that God is more powerful than Satan? Is power what we really need? Is power what God needs to win the great controversy?
25. Read Ephesians 1:18-23. How do you understand the expression, "The resurrection power also works in us"? What kind of "power" does the church need most today?
26. If God knew that it would not be possible to raise Jesus from the dead, would He have allowed Him to die? Remember that Jesus' worry was that sin would create such a gulf between Himself and the Father that their separation would be eternal. (DA 686.5; 753.2) Do you worry about your sins? Do you worry about the separation they are making between you and God?
27. What would happen to the church if members were more open in speaking about the ways in which God has worked for them in their lives? Would faith grow?
28. So often we seem to think that we have to solve our own problems. Someone has jokingly produced a plaque which says, "Why pray when you can worry?" Is that a description of your life?
29. Honestly now, do we really believe that our ideas are better solutions for our problems than God's ideas for our lives? Are we worried that God will take too long to solve our problems?
30. When you are tempted, do you honestly believe that choosing to do what you want to

do at that moment is better for you than what God wants you to do at that moment? Why?

31. In the Old Testament, we read about dramatic times when God fought for Israel. Their enemies were destroyed, but Israel did not lose a single soldier. But for some unbelievable reason, Israel seemed to want to fight their own battles instead of letting God fight their battles for them. What possible reason could there be for that? Were they worried that God would get the credit for their victories instead of getting the credit themselves?
32. If we really believed that God would “fight our battles” for us, would we be willing to let Him? Or do we believe that we have to “fight” our own “battles”?
33. Does God ever solve our problems by giving us strength and resources to let us “fight” for ourselves?
34. Review the story of Esther. For the Jews at that time, there were uncontrollable forces that were apparently threatening their lives. What would you do if a government edict came out declaring that you and all your friends should be put to death?
35. But don't we believe that exactly that sort of thing is going to happen in the future? Read Revelation 13!
36. Something happened to the disciples at Pentecost. They knew that the resurrection was real, they knew that God's power was with them, and they seemed to move forward without fear!
37. What difference would it make to the Seventh-day Adventist church in 2007 if even a small group of people had that kind of experience? What difference would it make in the finishing of God's work?

Much of the faith which we see is merely nominal; the real, trusting, persevering faith is rare. Moses realized in his own experience the promise that God will be a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 651.3

Faith grows strong by coming in conflict with doubts and opposing influences. The experience gained in these trials is of more value than the most costly jewels. —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 555.2

Is that really true? If so, how does it work? Why does it work?

38. If we could grasp the truths of this lesson, would it transform our lives and the lives of those in the Church? If we stopped worrying so much about what was happening to us and worried more about God's reputation in the great controversy, would the work be finished more quickly?

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