

# STUDY 2

## A FAITH THAT MATTERS

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### INTRODUCTION

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#### **Exercise Faith.**

The Christian life is a journey, and as we walk with Christ, we will be regularly challenged to trust Him. We grow in our faith as we continually trust Christ.

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### Writer Bio

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wrote the Daily Readings for this unit. She is a wife of 24 years, a mother of three, as well as a Minister, teacher, and writer. In her pastime, she loves spending time with her family, baking, reading, and teaching to reach as many souls as possible with the Gospel of Christ.



## A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT UNWAVERING FAITH IN GOD

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Life can be filled with challenging and unpredictable days. Days that are filled with twists and turns that leave us uncertain of which way to go. All we know is that we're maneuvering through some difficult situations, and the road ahead seems cloudy at best. We have those days when we say, "if it ain't one thing it's another," meaning that issues have compounded and before we can resolve one matter, another matter arises.

If it's really overwhelming, we many find ourselves uttering the idiom, "when it rains, it pours." That might be the day your car engine is slow to start, and you know you need a new battery. What you didn't know until the mechanic called is that you also need a new alternator. On the other hand, it could be a day that as a parent, your little one is sick. You feel helpless, and you can't even think straight.

When you have those days and you feel like you're at your "wit's end" or in total despair, that's when

you remember "who" you are and "Whose" you are. Those are the days you rely upon, call on, and cling to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those are days you replace non-supportive cliches that exaggerate the problem with sustaining Scriptures of hope like Luke 1:37, "For nothing will be impossible with God." Those are the days that you must truly believe that God is able, and you activate your "mustard seed" faith as described in Matthew 17: 20-21, "for truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Those are the days when you must believe that God is working things out for your good.

This unit reminds us that we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). The unit further emphasizes our need to trust Christ fully as we grow to a level of deeper, unwavering faith.

# LIFE-CHANGING FAITH

Leader pages on pp. 136-139

**THE POINT:**  
FAITH BEGINS WITH THE  
CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS.

## LUKE 5:1-11

<sup>1</sup> As the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear God's word, he was standing by Lake Gennesaret.

<sup>2</sup> He saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the land. Then he sat down and was teaching the crowds from the boat.

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<sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

<sup>5</sup> "Master," Simon replied, "we've worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets."

<sup>6</sup> When they did this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets began to tear. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them; they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

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<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus's knees and said, "Go away from me, because I'm a sinful man, Lord!"

<sup>9</sup> For he and all those with him were amazed at the catch of fish they had taken,

<sup>10</sup> and so were James and John, Zebedee's sons, who were Simon's partners.

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"Don't be afraid," Jesus told Simon. "From now on you will be catching people."

<sup>11</sup> Then they brought the boats to land, left everything, and followed him.

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### MEMORY VERSE

### KEYWORDS

**Lake of Gennesaret (v. 1)**—This body of water, also known as the Sea of Galilee, was a freshwater lake situated in the hills of northern biblical Palestine.

**Sat down . . . was teaching taught (v. 3)**—In the first century, rabbis typically taught from a seated position (Luke 4:20-21).

**Lord (v. 8)**—The term sometimes translated "master," this title is the term normally used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus as "Lord."

**Zebedee (v. 10)**—The father of James and John ran a fishing business based at Capernaum on the north shore of Lake Gennesaret (the Sea of Galilee).

# WHAT STEPS SHOULD WE TAKE TO LIVE A LIFE OF FAITH?

I have a confession to make. I don't like surprises. I deeply appreciate when things are predictable, and decisions are easy. But, of course, life is full of surprises and important, life-changing forks in the road. God requires us to take a leap every now and then.

In 2012, I was enjoying the comfort of a great church family, close friends, and a consistent, generous salary. Nevertheless, that was the year where I had to make a tough decision. Both of my parents, who lived 500 miles away, were going through the valley of dementia, and miraculously, I was offered a job opportunity that would allow me to move five miles away from my parents, but it came at a cost. I would only make about half my current salary. However, the prompting of the Holy Spirit could not be ignored.

I faced the two roads that Robert Frost wrote about, and I felt the pull of God to take the road less traveled. I needed life-changing faith. We all face these decisions, don't we? God calls us into uncharted territory, which sometimes requires a deep faith rather than the faith that longs for comfort and consistency.

## Strive to Hear God's Word //

**Luke 5:1-3**

In the business world, we often hear adages like: "Make sure the right people are on the bus." For Peter, it was important to have the right person on the boat. At the beginning of the story, we see Jesus, the Word of God in flesh, teaching a crowd of people. Peter is doing what fisherman do. Then Jesus asks Peter for a favor. At first glance, the request seemed like a little thing: "Can I borrow your boat?" Often Jesus calls us slowly into an adventure. He invites us to take one step, then another, and then another. It's important, as we chart our lives, that we make sure that the right person is in the boat! Jesus calls us out of our ordinary, day-to-day life into a journey with Him.

Can you imagine the regret that Peter would have suffered if he had chosen to say to Jesus, "We're really kind of busy here. We've got nets to clean. We've got fish to catch. We've got mouths to feed." He would have missed out on the adventure of eternity. It began with a simple request to allow Jesus into his boat.

Peter realized that he wasn't the main character. A crowd needed to hear God's Word. He didn't



## THE POINT: FAITH BEGINS WITH THE CALL TO FOLLOW JESUS.

interfere with the process. He didn't make any excuses. He just let Jesus use the boat. This wasn't the first encounter that Peter had with Jesus, but in a way, it was his first step toward a life filled with glory and adventure.

Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ." Peter realized that there was something greater going on here. We can only imagine what he was thinking as he watched Jesus share the Word with people from the hull of his little vessel.

### WHEN DO YOU REMEMBER HEARING GOD'S WORD IN A WAY THAT WAS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL?

Charles Studd experienced such a call from Jesus. He was born into privilege in the year 1860. He was a renowned scholar athlete during his Cambridge University years. He was a "man's man." Everyone around him felt he'd excel in business and society. In the middle of all this wealth and prestige, he'd heard the call of Christ. Regarding his conversion experience he said, "I knew then what it was to be 'born again,' and the Bible, which had been so dry to me before, became everything."<sup>5</sup> He left England and dedicated his life to spreading the gospel in China, India, and Africa. One could say Charles Studd let the Word of God into the boat of his life, and that made all the difference. That Word that seemed to be so dry to him took on a life of its own. You may not know his name, but you may have heard a phrase that he penned:

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,*

*Only what's done for Christ will last.*<sup>6</sup>

It's so easy for us to cling fretfully to our net and our boats, but we might miss "amazing." That's what life is all about, isn't it? As a Christ-follower, I don't need to worry about the value of my 401k in 10 years. I need to take the first step into an adventure that will mean something 10,000 years from today. The greatest problem in the world is being lost. So, we have to ask ourselves, "What boat is Jesus wanting from us?"

## Obey Christ's Directions for Big Results

// Luke 5:4-7

"I wish you would have been there!"

That had to be the response that Peter would give when he told the story to others years ago. Amazing things happen when we simply do what Jesus calls us to do. It was a simple request: throw that net out into the water. I love that Luke records Simon's response. "We've been here all night. The fishing is bad, but since you asked



### DIGGING DEEPER LAKE OF GENNESARET

The Lake of Gennesaret is one body of water that has borne many titles, "Sea of Galilee," "Sea of Tiberias," and "Lake Kinneret." In the Old Testament, it was referred to as "Chinnereth" or "Chinneroth," which means harp or lyre, the shape that the lake is said to resemble. In Greek, the word Gennesaret means garden of the prince and valley of riches. This is Israel's largest freshwater lake measuring approximately 13 miles long and 8 miles wide; it is fed by the Jordan River. Most Galilean roads passed by this lake, and the village of Capernaum is located on its shore. It is here where Jesus did much of his ministry, making Simon Peter and Andrew "fishers" of men, preaching to the multitudes, calming the waters, and walking on the surface of the water. It is also the area where Jesus fed the four and five thousand.

**When has God required that you step out of your boat and follow Him?**

...” I can relate to this response by Simon Peter. Through God’s word I hear Jesus calling me to do something very personal that seems rather simple and yet perplexing, and my first reaction is to explain to the Creator of the Universe why His direction doesn’t make any sense. That’s embarrassing to confess! It’s easy to do, though. We’ve lived many years and have a wealth of experience, so we forget that the One who is whispering direction has been at this a long time, since the Garden of Eden. He knows precisely what He’s doing. He’s never once been proven wrong.

### WHEN HAVE YOU SEEN A SIMPLE ACT OF OBEDIENCE LEAD TO SPIRITUAL FRUIT?

You have to ask yourself, why did Peter obey? Perhaps the greatest element of his decision-making process was the words that he heard as Jesus preached. That’s what the Word of God does. It emboldens us to be obedient. It gives us the guts to do illogically wonderful things.

Peter was glad he did what Jesus told him to do despite all the information and experience he had as a fisherman on this futile day of fishing. He did what Jesus said and amazing things happened.

It’s really some good advice! Many people will regret at the end of their lives that they didn’t do exactly what Jesus said as Peter did. However, no one will regret the times that they clearly heard in scripture and prayer His call and decided to simply obey.

### WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT FAITH WALK THE LORD HAS ASKED YOU TO TAKE?

## Humble Yourself and Follow Christ // Luke 5:8-11

Peter’s response to Jesus startles us. Because of everything that he had seen on that crazy, miraculous day, he fell at Jesus’s feet and proclaimed his shamefulness. There was no “high-fiving” or shouts of wonderment. In that moment of miraculous consequence, he could only think about how sinful he was. It startles us at first, but then we remember how unworthy we all are in our own righteousness to experience grace. It’s overwhelming! It’s shocking! We look across the



span of our lives, take a long hard look at the cross, and wonder why He would do this.

*As Isaac Watts wrote:*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small.*

*Love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.<sup>7</sup>*

Why would such an Almighty God stoop so low to intersect his life with ours? Perhaps we’ll never understand this mystery, but that won’t keep us from celebrating it. It won’t keep us from reveling in the grace of Jesus Christ and his gift of eternal life. If it’s all true, why wouldn’t we be worthy of turning our lives upside-down?

Luke mentions nothing about the fish or the paperwork of the boat ownership or a five-year plan for interning with Jesus. There was no long-range planning in this decision. For all we know, it was a split second, all-in resignation from the life he once knew. You do that when you meet the Savior. You are saved, and you write a blank check—no reservation, no caveats in the fine print, and no regrets.

Jesus has a way of calling us out of the ordinary and moving us into a completely different place. Yet, so many people who lived, worked and developed a life for themselves have a difficult time docking the boat. Too much has been invested. It’s too late to change horses in midstream. It’s important when you realize that you have only one life. You’ve got one shot at this. Steve Jobs

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famously said to the Coca-Cola executive that he was recruiting to run Apple, "Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or come with me and change the world?" The question that we have to ask ourselves, the one that God is asking us, is far greater. "Do we want to continue in our ordinary, comfortable life or do we want to change eternity?" There's so much riding in this decision not only for you but for the generations that you will impact. It's so easy just to go with the flow and drift into retirement with plans that you have made over the decades. Nevertheless, there's no way that you could ever measure the excitement of finishing strong in the sovereign will of the Lord.

This is the essence of deep faith. Deep faith beckons us to adventure and radical generosity of our time, talent, and treasure. It's deep faith that allows us to dock the boat and follow, asking our Savior, "What's next?"

### HOW HAS FOLLOWING JESUS NECESSITATED THAT YOU LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND?

#### DID YOU KNOW?

*The Risk Paradox* by Alan Ying and Doug Schneider is a book highlighting the results of a study conducted on risk-taking. The authors interviewed 102 people of various backgrounds to understand the risks that people take and the impact these risks have on their individual lives. The information gathered led to what the authors called the "risk paradox," which means "taking a risk is the least risky thing that you can do to living a fulfilling life."<sup>8</sup> Ying and Schneider discovered that people who take risks focus on what they might lose by not taking the risk as opposed to the risk itself. The book stresses that "risk is only a deterrent when one has something to lose."

**Biblical Truth:** Moving in faith, is never a risk when God is our guide (Rom. 8:31).

**While others may take a chance based on the idea of this "risk paradox," as Christians why are we sometimes hesitant in taking a risk that our all-knowing and all-powerful God has called us to do?**

## LIVE IT

### What is hindering you from doing what God has asked you to do? Will you accept His call?

The adage is true, "Where God guides, He provides." Deep faith is listening and responding to the call of God. 1 Samuel 15:22 reminds us that the Lord takes pleasure in our obedience. We can trust that He will honor it. The where, when, what and who God calls us to, may not make sense or line up with our current activities, but God is infinite in wisdom and knows the life-changing plans He has for us (Jer. 29:11).

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- **Examine:** Take an inventory of your heart. Are you willing to follow Jesus wherever He leads?
- **Drop a net:** We all have unnecessary, useless activities and pursuits. This week, drop something to make room for God's call.
- **Speak:** Share your personal story of salvation with someone who isn't a follower of Christ.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. CALLED INTO LIGHT // 1 PETER 2:9-10

The life of faith is a call out of darkness into light. It is a life totally dependent upon and submitted to God. Faith requires us to yield to God's Will versus our own. This can be difficult at times because faith requires that we trust God whether we understand or agree with His instructions or not. Even in times of uncertainty, where we may not wholly understand God's intentions related to life's circumstances, God does not desire that faith be blind. He instead means for His Word to be a "lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Psalm 119:105). God's Word is trustworthy, but we must apply it to wholly experience it, and this is accomplished solely by faith.

**God's Word illuminates the path of faith.**

## 2. OBEDIENT FAITH // MATTHEW 22:14

Faith requires obedience. When God calls us, we must do well to answer. Many are called but few are chosen because not everyone called says yes. The chosen are considered as such because of a willingness to obey with what is required by God. The wedding the guests were invited to in Matthew 22:14 required certain garments. It was not enough for the guests who were invited to show up but to also wear certain apparel meaning they needed to abide by the host's wishes and anyone who showed up dressed inappropriately was evicted. The same holds true for Christians. While Christ calls us, we must by faith be willing to align with His mind or remain in a state opposed to God.

**Obedience is evidence of sincere faith.**

## 3. CALLED TO FAITH // JOHN 6:44

God's call upon our lives is a perpetual pull. He draws us through multiple acts of loving kindness towards us, Jeremiah 31:3. If we do not answer yes to His initial call, He remains patient and asks again at a later date. God, through His infinite wisdom, knows just what we need to bring us to the level of faith necessary to trust Him wholly and completely.

God invites us first and then awaits our response. It takes humility to say yes to God. Humility is born out of a heart that recognizes that God's calling is a loving privilege and honor. He calls us all to faith to rid our lives of futile self-dependence and vanity, living lives empty of purpose. A life of faith is completely reliant on God.

**The life of faith is a gift from God.**

## 4. A YIELDING FAITH // JOHN 15:5

Nature teaches us that a branch detached from its vine will not only fail to produce fruit but will eventually wither and die. This holds true for the Christian too. Christians apart from Christ, our Vine, can neither produce fruit nor survive apart from Christ. Christ is the source of our life and livelihood. Christ being the source of our lives also, therefore, sits in a place of supreme authority over our lives. However, while He is supreme, He will never force us to do anything. We must willingly yield to Him. Yielding to God takes faith, a willingness to let God do as He pleases in our lives. Because God loves us, we can trust Him uninhibited as His greatest desire is to bless us.


**A yielded heart submits to God.**

## 5. SURRENDERED FAITH // 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-18

When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, we do not simply become new creatures but new creatures IN Christ. We are not born again separate and apart from our creator but one with Him as an integral part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). The human body is designed to do whatever the central command center, the brain, tells it to do and similarly, we as part of the body of Christ must yield to what Christ, the central command center of the Church, tells us to do. While this form of submitted yielding may not happen immediately upon conversion, over time as one commits daily to following Christ, a yielded heart is developed day by day by grace.

**Yielding requires faith to do what God says not just hearing.**



A young child in a yellow shirt stands on a dark staircase, looking up. The staircase is set against a dark background, and a large, white, curved architectural element is visible on the right side of the frame.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP IN FAITH.  
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE THE  
WHOLE STAIRCASE, JUST TAKE  
THE FIRST STEP.

— Martin Luther King, Jr.