

Updated—December 27, 2016

Maturing Toward Wholeness in the Inner Life

Chapter Six

Faith

Choosing to Rely on God for Forgiveness of Sin and Everything Else

1 – God created our first parents for a life filled with delight, meaning, joy and love. They were to receive this life by continually relying on him.

2 – But Adam and Eve decided to turn from God and go their own way. They thought they knew better. They chose to rely on themselves.

3 – This was a disastrous decision! It left them guilty before God. But it did more. Cut off from God's wisdom, they kept making bad choices. We have all done the same.

4 – Self-reliance became deeply embedded in humanity, resulting in further dysfunction. We make our own decisions—and they damage us.

5 – Self-reliance is an expression of self-will. Self-will is an expression of self-worship, our core idolatry, the evil that has distorted us.

6 – Jesus called his hearers to repent and rely on God's rule. Repent of what? Of what prevents us from receiving from God; self-worship. Discipleship is lived in a posture of repentance.

7 – Self-reliance surfaces early. Toddlers are often very self-assertive. They need to be protected from the harm self-reliance ultimately causes.

8 – God in Christ is redeeming humanity. On the cross Jesus' made provision for

- our sins to be forgiven and
- God's life to be re-formed in us.

9 – The offer of this redemption is a Father's gift. We can't earn it. We can only say "yes" to it. We gain access to it by faith.

10 – What is faith? Mental assent? Yes, but more than that. It is belief that leads to relying on what is believed. Faith without works is dead.

11 – I can "believe" China has over 1 billion people. If census workers made a mistake I don't lose anything. I am not invested in this belief.

12 – I can "believe" that a rope bridge over a canyon can support me. If I choose to walk across the bridge I am relying on what I believe.

13 – Faith is choosing to rely on God—in everything! It is a moment by moment default setting we learn from Jesus. He taught it. He lived it.

14 – Faith is God-reliance

- for my sins to be forgiven
- for my bondage to sinful behavior to be broken.

I can't choose one but not the other.

15 – Wanting to “believe” in Christ for eternal life, but holding on to sinful behavior, is not what God is offering. This is just another form of self-will.

16 – I cannot rely on God and disobey him. Why would I disobey God? Because I think my way, not his way, is best for me. This is self-reliance.

17 – Biblical faith is expressed by obedience. Obedience is an outflow of biblical faith. If I trust God I will want to live the way he says is best.

18 – Christ takes away our sin. How?

- He takes away our guilt.
- He takes away our sinful behavior.

Relying on him we come to share his life.

19 – So many “believers” are in bondage to sinful behavior. Why? We have by-passed discipleship. In discipleship we learn from Jesus how to enter into a new life.

20 – In the life of faith we choose to rely on God apart from what our five senses seem to be telling us. We walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

21 – God is Spirit. He is not part of the physical world, though he created the physical world, is everywhere present in the physical world, and shows himself to it as he wills.

22 – The idea that the only reality is physical reality cannot be proven and is simply untrue. Christ is risen and is everywhere present to us.

23 – The “proof” of the Unseen Real is transformed lives throughout the centuries. The facts are in the public record for any who will examine them.

24 – Living by self-reliance results in personal crisis when faced with serious accident, illness, job loss, family tensions, old age, etc.

25 – What ever made me think that relying on myself was a good idea? Far more “logical” is to rely on God who created me and is always with me.

26 – Some view faith as a one-time act. This is how many understand it. Many others cannot identify a time when they “first believed.”

27 – However it begins, faith must mature—from being one act, to occurring in fits and starts, to becoming a settled response to every occasion.

28 – We meet Christ by relying on him. We live with Christ by relying on him. “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.” (Colossians 2:6)

29 – Learning how to rely on God is closely related to learning how to live in his Presence. Jesus teaches us how in discipleship to him.

30 – Faith is not established primarily through analytical thinking, although this is involved. Faith is established by being in the Presence.

31 – In the Presence we experience God. This forms us more deeply than analysis ever could. We know we have been with God and we can trust him.

32 – We discover the Bible is God’s word when we meet God there. We come to know on a level that does not violate our reason—but is deeper.

33 – Unbelief is not essentially a mental problem but a moral problem—a sin problem. One determined to sin—to live in self-will—will not believe.

34 – Learning how to rely on God is closely related to learning how to live with him in his kingdom. Jesus teaches us how in discipleship to him.

35 – Learning how to rely on God is closely related to learning how to pray without ceasing. Jesus teaches us how in discipleship to him.

36 – A life lived relying on God is filled with peace, sanity, order and blessing. Jesus promised us, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (John 14:27).

37 – A life lived in self-will creates disorder, alienation, unresolved pain. News headlines daily portray prominent people badly malfunctioning.

38 – Jesus lived relying on his Father. “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing” (John 5:19). Jesus calls us to do likewise. “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).