

Let us finish with Step 3, as we look into the 12 Steps with God

Step 3 – Faith – Through God’s mercy and grace, we recognized our lost condition, repented of our sin, and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior to receive the gift of eternal life. Moment by moment we reaffirm that decision by turning our will and lives over to the care of God.

Tonight, we will explore the moment by moment...turning our wills and lives over to the care of God – this is where the rubber meets the road. This is when we put our faith into action and begin walking closer and closer to Christ each day.

We have discussed faith as a step in justification – coming to know Christ as our Lord and Savior, but what about as it functions in sanctification? Faith is our lifestyle, a journey of walking and growing in Christ. So, let us examine our faith by our lifestyle.

Several scriptures encourage believers to live in faith...the first one is Hebrews 12:1-2, “*And so then, having such a great mass of witnesses surrounding us, let us patiently run the race that has been given to us, laying down every impediment and sin that distracts us, focusing our attention on Jesus, the leader and completer of our faith, who traded the joy having been given him for enduring the shame of the cross, ignoring that shame, and now has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.*”

These two verses are rich in encouraging the Christian to walk in faith. It reminds us that as believers we do not run alone serving Christ, but that we are in the best of company as we live in faith. The verses also remind us of the need to dispense of sin because it pulls us away from the faith. Instead we want to focus our attention on Jesus himself because he is at the heart of our faith. And just in case we needed some motivation at this point, the last part of verse two reminds us of how committed He was to us. How can we do any less for Him?

A second passage to help challenge us with the need to live in faith is...Romans 12:1-2, “*So then, I implore you brothers, by the mercies of God, present your bodies to God as a holy, acceptable, living sacrifice, for this is your logical form of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, instead be changed by mind renewal so that you will discern the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*”

You may have never thought of a day’s work as a form of worship, or offense, but these verses establish that thought very clearly. Our bodies, with which we live these lives, are vessels to be presented to God as worthy elements to be used for His exaltation. In this we are to “renew” our minds to pursue His desires for our lives. Our lives must be lived for His purposes to be achieved, in accordance with His principles as our guide, and with His Spirit as our strength. This is the least we can do. When we live for ourselves, we sin by refusing God His due.

Romans 6:13 makes the point well as God uses Paul to strictly command His own, “*Do not present any part of your body as an instrument for unrighteousness to sin but present yourself to God as alive from death and your body parts as instruments for righteousness to God.*”

The word present refers to a decision of the will – a decision of our will to be an instrument of sin or God’s glory. The question comes down to a minute by minute decision to implement God’s will or our own.

The last passage to discuss here is 1 John 1:5-10, “*And this is the message that we heard from him and are proclaiming to you, for God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. If we said that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we are lying and are not practicing truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just and forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we all did not sin, we all make him out as a liar and his word is not in us.*”

This is a well-structured argument by the Holy Spirit, through the mind and pen of John the apostle. Verse 5 establishes a truth, and then verses 6-10 follow up with five conditional statements and their corresponding conclusions. It is an absolute fact that God is light. Since He is light, then those who fellowship with him walk in light and truth.

Notice the humanity of these verses. How often do we stretch the truth to sound better to someone? When we live in sin, but say our lives are good with God, we are lying. There is no part of our living faith that walking in darkness is tolerated, but we hate to admit that we are indeed in darkness. When we walk in darkness and know we must be in the light, we make untrue claims, but when we walk in the light, we do not need to make any claims at all because everything is as it should be. Walking in the light is a place of fellowship with God and with one another. If you are living in sin, but want to come back to righteousness, living with a clear conscience, it is an easy transition. Verse 9 gives the prescription for restored fellowship and righteousness: confession. When we acknowledge our sin to God, and own it, He is able to then forgive and restore us. However, it is difficult in pride to confess your sin, and admit your wrongdoing. In case you feel tempted to make excuses for your sin, the final verse makes it clear that our denial of sin is a huge insult to Him.

To live in righteousness is to be honest. Committing to righteousness is what living in faith is all about. We want to be a people who are always trusting God, and always striving to live for Him in holiness.

Consider and Confess:

1. Do you find it difficult to live for God in this world? Why, or why not?
2. Do you tend to leave faith only in the salvation compartment and neglect trusting God each day with every challenge, struggle, or decision you make?
3. If you really do believe in God, why do you return to sin? (Or maybe a more challenging question: If you keep returning to sin, is it possible you really do not believe in, or trust God?)
4. To live for God is to be growing, moving away from sin. Do you work on renewing your mind in the Word of God, presenting your body as God's vessel, removing sin from your life through confession and repentance, or disciplining your life in holiness?
5. When temptation to sin comes on strong, do you know how to find relief in Christ? We have stated in this step, "Moment by moment we reaffirm that decision by turning our will and lives over to the care of God," but to do that takes commitment of the mind and heart.
6. Do you really want God to influence your will? If so, what do you do to accommodate Him?
 1. Are you really turning your life over to His care? How, specifically?
 2. Are you spending time with Him? (Prayer and Bible Study)
 3. Are you worshipping Him? (Individually and corporately)
 4. Are you fellowshiping with His people? (Church)
 5. Are you forsaking sinful ways, influences, or patterns? (Repentance)
7. Do you really believe that God is able to help you? Why, or why not?

Looking forward:

At this point, the major sins of your life have been prominent in your thinking, but what about sin that you do not think about as much? What about sin you have not recognized yet? Wouldn't it be good to deal with it too?

Are you committed to your new life in Christ or not? If so, then you must be willing to do the tough work of self-examination? Are you ready for that?