

FAITH



5. Developing Faith (1)

(Leader's Notes)

We have seen that faith is like a seed, planted in our hearts, when we receive the word of God. As we continue to believe what God has said, confess it, and act upon it, the seed grows into a plant. Then we receive what God has promised. How can faith develop from a seed into a plant? Some of the ways faith grows is through testing, or delays, and through impossible situations. Let's look at these now.

1. Faith grows through testing

Just as plants often grow stronger when they face winds and storms, so Jesus allows our faith to be tested, so it will be strengthened. This is why Jesus sometimes tested the faith of those who came to him.

- ♥ How did Jesus test the faith of the following people?
 - The Canaanite woman : Matthew 15:21-28
 - The Royal Official : John 4:46-53

- ♥ What do trials do for our faith according to 1 Peter 1:6-7?
(Trials prove whether our faith is genuine or not.)

2. Faith grows through delays

- ♥ Abraham experienced a long delay in seeing the fulfilment of God's promise. How long did he have to wait before he saw the promise of a son come to pass? Genesis 17:17
(Abraham had to wait until he was 100 years old!)

- ♥ What qualities does God want to develop in our lives through these delays? Hebrews 10:35-39
(Perseverance v36, obedience v36, righteousness v38 and courage v39.)

- ♥ Share a time in your life when God has given a promise, but there has been a delay in receiving the answer. What did God do in your life during that time of waiting?

3. Faith grows through impossible situations

Another way faith is tested is when the situation or facts seem the opposite or contradictory to what God has said. In other words it seems impossible! This was certainly true in Abraham's life. He was 100 years old and his wife was 90. She was well past child-bearing age! It seemed impossible that God's promise could come true.

- ♥ Even though the facts seemed to indicate it was impossible for Abraham to have a child, why did he keep believing? Genesis 17:1-2, 18:13-14
(God told Abraham to believe because he is God Almighty, and there is nothing too difficult for him.)

♥ Has there been a time when God has given you a promise or a word that seemed impossible to be fulfilled? Share what it was, and how God answered, to encourage one another.

Our faith will be tested! God may allow delays before his word is fulfilled, or there may be circumstances that make it seem impossible for it to come to pass. He allows these to see if our faith is genuine, and to see whether our trust is in him or other people. So don't be discouraged if you haven't seen the promise God gave you fulfilled yet. Keep trusting!