

Small Group Guide

“How Can I Grow in Faith?”

Message Summary

The fact that we should grow in faith is a basic part of the Christian life. But exactly *how* we grow in faith requires some thought, for we never simply drift into greater faithfulness. What does it mean to make progress in our faith? Throughout Scripture, God tells us how to be found faithful: we must look to Jesus and aim at godliness.

First and foremost, we must agree with God. We know God by knowing His Word, which transforms us into His image and enables us to know His will.

We must examine our lives. God’s Word acts upon our hearts and weighs what we think, see, feel, and do. It changes our values and pushes us to live by the Spirit, not our flesh.

At the core of growing in faith is the start of our faith—the gospel. By faith in the work of Christ on the cross, we are saved, and it is to His finished work we must continually look if we are to grow in faith. If we fail to internalize the gospel, we can err toward self-righteousness, living by a list of do’s and don’t’s and feeling proud of our own accomplishments, or we can err toward guilt and shame, failing to stand in the victory purchased for us by the blood of Jesus.

Growing in faith requires that we outsmart the enemy, which can only be done when we know and admit our own weaknesses and hide ourselves when we see the traps he has laid for us. Through Ephesians 6, we see that in our battle with the enemy, God has given us beautiful, strong equipment that we must actively take up. Passivity does not produce faith; actively walking in the truth of God’s Word produces life-changing faith and protects us from the enemy’s temptations.

Trusting that God sees every day ahead of us requires faith, and as we trust in Him to be with us through anything and everything that happens for us, He drives away our fear and brings incredible fulfillment to our lives.

Discussion & Application Questions

*After briefly reviewing the message summary, use these questions to further examine the sermon and to discuss how these truths apply to daily life, so we can “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (Jas. 1:22). Based on your knowledge of the people in your small group, **select the questions that will best help you frame the group’s discussion** of this sermon and sermon text.*

AGREE WITH GOD

1. What do the words *faith* and *repentance* mean? Why do faith and repentance mean we are agreeing with God?
2. Read Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 4:3-4; John 6:67-69; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; and Psalm 19:7-11. Discuss the role of God’s Word as we grow in faith.

3. **Application:** As you read through the verses above, in what specific ways do you need to change your habits to agree with God?

EXAMINE YOUR LIFE

4. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what are the profits of Scripture? What is the role of Scripture memory in our fight against sin?
5. **Application:** Ask yourselves the diagnostic questions listed below, asking “Why?” or “Why not?” after each. If time permits, search the Word for verses that address each of those questions.
 - a. Are you governed more and more by God’s Word?
 - b. Are you more loving?
 - c. Do you have a growing concern for the needs of others?
 - d. Do you embrace your local church?
 - e. Do you grieve over sin?
 - f. Are you closed off to correction from parents, mentors, or godly friends?
 - g. Do you yearn for heaven, to be with Jesus?
6. Identify one next step you need to take this week with one of these diagnostic questions. How will you take that step?

INTERNALIZE THE GOSPEL

7. If we don’t internalize the gospel, we find ourselves drifting toward self-righteousness or guilt. How does the gospel drive away self-righteousness? How does the gospel drive away guilt?
8. **Application:** What are some specific ways self-righteousness creeps into your thought patterns? How do you combat that?
9. **Application:** How do you stay in a place of repentance and dependence on God without bearing the weight of guilt?

OUTSMART THE ENEMY

10. Read Ephesians 6:12-20. What spiritual armor does God provide for His people? Referring to Matthew 4, how did Jesus fight temptation? How does King David say he kept from sinning in Psalm 119:11?
11. **Application:** What happens when we actively realize that the enemy has a strategy for taking us down? As you consider your personal, specific weaknesses, what should your response be?
12. **Application:** Read Proverbs 22:3. Are you hiding yourself from ideas and people and places that are spiritually dangerous to you, or are you going on and suffering for it? What spiritual armor do you need to put on to hide yourself from that temptation? What specific Scripture are you memorizing to fight temptation?

USE THE EQUIPMENT

13. Look up the definition of passivity. Why doesn’t faith grow in passivity?
14. How does God equip believers? For what purpose does He equip them? Is the purpose inward, outward, or both?
15. **Application:** Read Colossians 3:1-15 and compare it to Ephesians 6:10-18. How do we “put on” the armor of God? What do we need to “put off” in order to put it on?
16. What’s one area in which you want to grow in 2018? How will you plan to grow in that area? What things can you do throughout the year to grow in that area?

Things to Consider

*If you have people in your group **who did not hear the sermon**, read the sermon text (Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 4:3-4; Galatians 2:20; and Hebrews 11:1-2; 12:1-2) together and briefly summarize the main points of the sermon. Recapping the sermon text and sermon outline can also be a helpful way to start the group, even if everyone did hear the sermon.*

This sermon challenges us to grow in our faith—to agree with God, examine our lives, internalize the gospel, outsmart the enemy, and use the spiritual armor equipment He gives us. As you prepare to lead your group, choose some of the discussion questions to help you go deeper in your study of how we grow in faith.

Another option is to review the sermon and then study Jesus' Parable of the Sower and Seeds in Matthew 13:1-9, 19-23. Romans 10:17 says, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." Identify in the Parable four types of soil. Discuss the practical ways that this "word about Christ" can fail to produce the fruit of faith. Talk about ways to guard your hearts, citing specific Scriptures you can memorize (such as Psalm 19:7-11) to help you remember the precious value of the Word of God. Close your time in prayer, asking God to give you hearts of good soil that produce many works of faith.

Weekly Prayer Focus

Pray for Our Church:

- Praise God for the gift of His Word and ask Him to increase our commitment to and hunger for His Word.

Pray for Our City:

- Pray for Brook Hills students of all ages who have returned to school after the holidays.
- Pray for Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church and for Pastor Bob Flayhart.

Pray for Our World:

- Pray for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionaries Dwight and Mary Kay Martin serving in Thailand.