

“Roots” (Faith) (Gospel Sanctification III)
(Study 9 of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” Series)

Opening Questions (10 Minutes)

1. What is a book, a movie, a tv show, or a song that you will re-read, re-watch, or re-listen to over and over?
 - What is usually going on that makes you want to go back to that story or feeling?
2. In that story or those lyrics, is there a character you find compelling?
 - Who do you find yourself identifying with or just excited for his or her scenes or lines?
 - Describe this character and what’s so compelling about him or her.

Let’s look at one such character the Bible, Jesus of Nazareth. What does he say or do that makes others strongly react to him with faith or its opposite. (This is a second aspect- or “corner” of the Triangle Diagram from Study 7- of how biblical change works.)

Scripture Study (10-15 Minutes)

Read the following to give context:

Jesus has just fed 5,000 men plus women and children the day before this passage. That evening Jesus and his disciples rowed (or walked!) to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The crowd has followed them, leading to “today’s” question and answer session.

Read John 6:25-32 (first in the ESV, then the NLT)

1. Be quiet for 30 seconds. Think or write. Now what are your first impressions?
 - What’s your emotional, gut-reaction?
 - Ask a question you have (or can think of).
 - Volunteer a thought or comment- about a verse or the whole passage.
2. How does Jesus describe settling for less (“false bread”)?
 - What kinds of “false bread” do verses 26-27 describe?
 - What’s a recent example that felt like settling?
 - What is something or someone you turn to with your spiritual hunger instead of God?
 - Why did you choose that thing or person?
 - What do you think you wanted about God or from God?
 - What did it feel like to chase that alternative?
3. How does Jesus describe spiritually hungering and thirsting for more (“true bread”)?
 - According to verse 35, what does directing our hunger to Jesus look like?
 - What’s a recent example when you chose to long for more, with God?
 - What did that look like?
 - What did it feel like?
 - Did you get what you wanted- in that moment or later?

Scripture Passage (The Book of John 6:25-32)

John, Chapter 6- English Standard Version Translation (ESV)

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" 26 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." 28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

John, Chapter 6- New Living Translation (NLT)

25 They found him on the other side of the lake and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" 26 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. 27 But don't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval." 28 They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?" 29 Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent." 30 They answered, "Show us a miraculous sign if you want us to believe in you. What can you do? 31 After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" 32 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. 33 The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 "Sir," they said, "give us that bread every day." 35 Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Group Discussion (25-30 minutes)

"What Faith Feels Like" (2 Stories)

Faith Feels Like a Leap

Can I get 3 volunteers to each read aloud a paragraph of the explanation below?

The phrase "leap of faith" is sometimes used poorly- as if Christianity has no or requires no reasonable basis. But describing faith in God as a leap is sometimes appropriate. For instance, Christianity often feels like a "leap of faith." One could illustrate "faith" as follows:

"Imagine a little girl is trapped upstairs in a building that's on fire. She sees her father calling out to her to jump. But before she'll jump, what has to happen? First, she needs the **knowledge** that her father is strong enough to catch her. Second, she must also **believe** that it's true: that her father is right there willing and able to catch her. (He is not just some lie she has

invented inside herself or her neighbors have invented outside her.) Finally (third), she has to **trust** that her father will indeed catch her. Only then will she jump from the fire to her father.”

This story could describe us- whether we feel like we have never “leapt” to Jesus or even after we have “leapt” to him many, many times. Leaping into the outstretched arms of God is just another way of saying faith is an emotional, social, mental, and spiritual action. And the Bible and Christians often imagine this mostly internal movement of the heart physically: knowing-believing-and-trusting in Jesus looks like letting go of _____, then flying to and holding fast to him- with the weight of our lives.

1. What are your first impressions hearing the story of the little girl? (It could be a thought, a question, or a comment.)
2. What are your first impressions hearing the explanation of how faith feels like a leap? (It could be a thought, a question, or a comment.)
3. Using the story of the little girl, what’s the difference between...
 - knowledge and belief?
 - knowledge and trust?
 - belief and trust?
4. What would a “faith” in your everyday world look like without...
 - knowledge?
 - belief?
 - trust?
5. Have you experienced the kind of faith described in the story or explanation?
 - If so, when was that and what were some of the circumstances in your life?
 - How do you feel or think about it now, looking back at that experience?

Faith Feels Like Rest

Can I get another 3 volunteers to each read aloud a paragraph of the explanation below?

From our story of the little girl and the explanation of her and our process, it is clear that faith is the opposite of self-reliance. It is giving up on our own resources and fleeing to Jesus. It is accepting who Jesus is, what He has promised, and who we are in Jesus Christ. It is receiving these truths into our lives and hearts- by our thoughts, feelings, actions, and words. Ultimately, faith is about God’s work more than ours. It is less about the strength of our, subjective faith and more about the strength of the object of our faith. And this feels like resting the weight of our lives more and more on God. Therefore, one could also describe “faith” as follows:

Suppose I’m standing on the edge of a lake during the first cold weeks of winter in the Northeastern part of America. The lake is frozen over with a very thin sheet of ice. Being filled with faith and confidence I take a step to walk across the newly formed layer of ice. Unfortunately, even though I am extremely confident and “full of faith” the result would be a cold, wet shock. As long as the ice is thin, it doesn’t matter how much faith I have. The ice is not reliable.

Now imagine a few months later, after the cold winter has taken effect. The ice is now several feet thick as I stand at the edge of the lake. Because of my past experience, I’m extremely cautious as I think about walking across the ice. I’m not sure whether the ice will hold me. After all, it didn’t before. Even though I’m frightened and have “less faith” than I did before, the

smallest, most hesitating step will be rewarded by the feeling of a firm footing. What's the difference? The object is more reliable. It's true that the power of faith rests in the reliability of the object. (Dave Lowe)

6. What are your first impressions hearing the story of the frozen lake? (It could be a thought, a question, or a comment.)
7. What are your first impressions hearing the explanation that the strength of faith is about the "reliability of the object" versus our passion or zeal? (This could be a thought, a question, or a comment.)
 - Do you feel more frustrated or relieved that your confidence or fear isn't the most important factor in faith?
8. How does this description of faith as rest change the way you view yourself and other Christians?
9. The Westminster Larger Catechism (72) defines faith as "*not only assenting to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receiving and resting upon Christ and his righteousness for the pardon of sin and for the accounting of his person as righteous in the sight of God*" (with updated language and underlining).
 - Using the frozen lake story or an example from your own experience, what does faith as receiving from Christ look like?
 - Using the frozen lake story or an example from your own experience, what does faith as resting upon Christ look like?

Group Prayer (15 Minutes)

Ideas for communal and personal prayer

- "Share for yourself, and pray for the person sitting at 2 o'clock from you"
1. What's one *burden* you need prayer for- for relief or healing?
 2. What's one *sin* you'd like to (re-)confess to God?
 3. What's one *deed* in your life or community you'd like to praise God for?
 4. What's one *desire* stirred by this time together with God that you can pray for?