

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this meditation and memorisation series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will meditate on the meaning of a Bible verse about one characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ and then memorise it together. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. In this fourth series God teaches that there are 5 important traits in the Christian character: Christlikeness, purity, love, faith and humility. The topic of today's meditation and memorisation is: A DISCIPLE DEVELOPS THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER OF FAITH.

(S) **POINT 1. MEDITATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE**

The new Bible that verse we will meditate and memorise is Romans 4:20-21. We will ask one another questions in order to help us to meditate on the truths written in the Bible. Let me read Romans 4:20-21 in its context, Romans 4:17-22. "As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed - the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old. - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

The memorisation verse is: Faith. Romans 4:20-21. "Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." Romans 4:20-21.

(T) **First.** Let us meditate on verse 17. **Faith is rooted in God's character and ability, not in anything else.** Romans 4:17 says, "Abraham believed the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were." The faith of Abraham was not a faith in his own accomplishments or in his own inherent goodness. Abraham's faith was centred in God. The God who revealed himself in the Bible is the object of all true faith.

(S) **What did Abraham believe about God?**

(T) Abraham believed three important things about God. He believed that God gives life to the dead. He believed that God calls non-existing things into existence. And he believed that God makes insignificant people very significant.

One. Abraham believed that God gives life to the dead. In Genesis 12:4 we read that Abraham was 75 years old when God called him and gave him the promise that he would have a son. In Romans 4:19 we read that Abraham had to face the fact that he was already an old man and that his body was as good as dead. He did not have any power to beget a child. Moreover, he had to face the fact that his wife, Sarah's womb was also dead. She did not have the ability to bear children anymore. The biological facts as well as human experience told him that it was impossible to have a child!

But God promised to him that he would have a son and become the father of many people. From a human standpoint, this promise was impossible. It could not be fulfilled. But Abraham did not look at science and human arguments. He looked to God, who created science and humans. He looked to God who gives life to the dead! He believed that God could take his impotent body and Sarah's infertile body and give it new life! The object of Abraham's faith was not scientific facts, nor human considerations, but God with whom nothing was impossible! Abraham believed in God and in God's ability to give life to the dead!

Two. Abraham believed that God calls non-existing things into existence. Abraham had the faith that is described in Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." Abraham believed in God who created the visible universe and everything in it out of the invisible. God created simply by the word of his command. God created the materials of the universe and created the universe from these materials by speaking his creative words. Abraham believed that although the fulfilment of God's promise seemed scientifically impossible, God could again command the impossible to become possible! He believed that God could call the non-existing things into existence. Although this created universe is dependent on the physical laws inherent to it, God is not dependent on the laws, which he himself created! At any time and in any place, God can command and create new things into existence! God can and does create miracles, which no science is able to explain.

Three. Abraham believed that God makes insignificant people very significant. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 we read, "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards;

not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of this world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are." In the world, the people of the world call certain things and certain people wise, mighty and noble. They also call the Christians foolish, weak and inferior. But in Jesus Christ, God chose people, who simply do not count in the opinion of the world, to put to shame the people that are regarded as important in the world. God uses the so-called despised Christians to destroy the wisdom, power and position of the so-called important people of this world. Abraham believed in the God who chooses people like him, weak and old, to accomplish his purposes in the world.

Conclusion. The object of your faith should always be the God who creates everything and who causes the impossible to become possible.

(S) **Second.** Let us meditate on verse 18-24. **Faith is a continuous and persistent trust in God.**

(T) What is the meaning of believing against all hope?

(S) God teaches us to *have faith even if it is against all human expectations!* In Romans 4:18 we read that against all hope, Abraham in hope believed. Hope is the expectation that something desirable would become a reality. Looking at God's promise from a human point of view, gave no hope at all. But looking at God's promise from the point of view of the God who can create something out of nothing gave hope. Against all human expectations and calculations, Abraham expected God to do what he had promised. His faith expected God to fulfil his promise. Likewise, God encourages Christians to have faith even if it is against all human expectations.

What is the meaning of not weakening in faith, but being strengthened in faith?

(T) God teaches us to *strengthen our faith by believing and obeying God's Words again and again.* In Romans 4:19-20 we read that Abraham believed without weakening in his faith. Instead he got strengthened in his faith. Faith is weakened by doubting what God said and by wavering to obey God. When we begin to speculate about what God said without remembering who God is, then thoughts of doubt can easily creep into our mind. And every time we put off obedience to God's commands, we become more and more indecisive. Abraham did not allow doubt and indecision to weaken his faith.

Instead, Abraham grew stronger and stronger in his faith by believing God every time God spoke to him and by every time obeying what God commanded him to do. In Genesis 12:1-4, when Abraham was 75 years old, God promised to bless Abraham and commanded him to leave his country, people and family. And Abraham believed God and left as God had told him. Later, in Genesis 15:4-6, God promised to give him a son coming from his own body. And Abraham believed God. In Genesis 17, when Abraham was 99 years old, God again promised him a son and a multitude of offspring. He also commanded Abraham and all his male servants to undergo circumcision. And Abraham obeyed God. In this way, by every time believing what God said to him and every time immediately obeying what God commanded him to do, Abraham was strengthened in his faith. Continuing to have faith in God and persisting to obey God not only strengthens our faith. It also brings glory to God. Every time Abraham believed and obeyed God, he gave glory to God. Likewise, God encourages Christians to strengthen their faith by believing and obeying God's Words again and again.

Was Abraham's faith always strong?

(S) No. Abraham had struggles in his faith. In Genesis 12:11-13, Abraham rather depended on his ingenuity than on faith, when he asked Sarah to pretend to be his sister. In Genesis 16, Abraham and Sarah grew weak in their faith and began to take matters into their own hands. Sarah urged Abraham to sleep with her maidservant Hagar and beget a child for her. In Genesis 17:17-18 Abraham laughed in a moment of unbelief when he inwardly thought that he, at the age of about 100 years, and Sarah, at the age of about 90 years, could not possibly have a child. *But his unbelief did not persist*, because he sent Ishmael and Hagar away as a sign that he believed God's promise. The struggle of faith only made Abraham's faith in God and God's promise stronger.

How can we believe that God will do what he has promised?

(T) God teaches us to *believe his Words because of who he is.* In Romans 4:21 we read that Abraham was fully persuaded that God was able to do what he had promised. The promise of God depends on who God is. If he was only an idol made by the hands of people, then his promise cannot be taken seriously. However, because God is the One who gives life to the dead, who calls non-existent things into existence and who makes insignificant people very significant, his promise can be completely accepted. If God could create the whole visible universe out of invisible material, then he is also able to do anything he says! Because Abraham knew who God was, he was fully persuaded that God would do what he had promised. Likewise, God encourages Christians to believe his words because of who he is.

It is this kind of faith that God wants Christians to have. It is this kind of faith that justifies the sinner. It is this kind of faith that sees God's promises go into fulfilment. It is this kind of faith that helps Christians to face every problem in life.

Conclusion. Faith is never an incident, but a continual and persistent trust in God and in what God says.

(S) POINT 2. MEMORISATION OF THE NEW BIBLE VERSE

The method of memorising a new Bible verse has four steps:

Step 1. Meditate and understand the Bible verse before you memorise it.

Step 2. Write the Bible verse on a card or in a notebook. Write topic at the top. The topic today is "Faith".

Beneath that, write the Bible reference of the verse. The Bible reference today is Romans 4:20-21. And beneath that, write the whole verse.

Step 3. Memorise the verse in the right way. Always start with the name of the topic, the Bible reference and the first line of the verse. It is a good practice to learn the Bible reference twice, first at the beginning of the verse and then at the end of the verse.

Step 4. Review the new Bible verses every day for five weeks. And review the old Bible verses at least once every three weeks.

Let us memorise the Bible verse together. Then let us take turns to say that part of the verse alone without looking at the Bible or notebook.

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(S) POINT 3. REVIEW OF THE LAST BIBLE VERSES YOU HAVE MEMORISED

Let us review the last 5 Bible verses that we have memorised without looking at our notebooks.

Series "Discipleship", verses 3-4, and series "Christian character", verses 1-3.

(T) Serving. Mark 10:45. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45.

(S) Giving. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

(T) Christlikeness. 2 Corinthians 3:18. "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

(S) Purity. 1 Thessalonians 4:3. "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality." 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

(T) Love. Mark 12:30-31. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. Mark 12:30-31.

(S) POINT 4. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Daily review the last five memorised Bible verses once every day for 5 weeks.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www etc.

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".