



# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## CHRISTIAN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

### LESSON 5: Faithfulness and Perseverance

All the virtues we are studying in this module were displayed by Jesus at some point in His earthly life. The goal of discipleship is to become more like Jesus, though we will never be perfect, holy and entirely sanctified in this lifetime. The character traits in this lesson require that we have faith in God, trusting Him in the difficult times, knowing that He is faithful to us and will help us to persevere to the end. Read on to learn more about what this faith looks like!

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Hebrews 12:1

Do you see a pattern in Abraham's life? It is remembering who God is, and trusting that He will be faithful in keeping His promises. God's faithfulness to us is the best example of perseverance that we can follow.

Hebrews 11 lists at least 15 amazing men and women who had faith. Their faith wasn't exercised only when things were going well, but it was a faith that caused them to obey even in the darkest times. Despite unimaginable obstacles, they were able to persevere to the end. Wouldn't you like a faith that isn't shaken? Wouldn't you like to be free from fear of the future, regardless of what it brings you?

Abraham was one of these amazing men mentioned in Hebrews 11. In Genesis 11:27-32, he married a wife, and went with his father to the land of Haran where they settled. While they were there, God visited Abraham and gave him a startling message. He was to leave his father's land and travel to a place God would show him. There, God promised him, he would become a great nation with a great name, and through him all nations would be blessed. That's an incredible promise, isn't it? But it came with a price: his faith and obedience. Because of a famine, Abraham and his wife travelled into Egypt where they acquired great wealth and livestock. At every turn when God showed Himself faithful to him, Abraham built an altar as a memorial.

Abraham had great faith in God, and he remained faithful to Him. Even though he and Sarah were very old, Abraham believed God when He promised they would have a son. Later when God told him to sacrifice that same promised son on an altar, Abraham did not delay in his obedience. When God stopped Abraham and provided a ram in Isaac's place, Abraham praised God who was faithful. Though it took a lifetime for the promise to be realized, Abraham did not take his eyes off God, and trusted in God's plans for him.

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It takes perseverance to walk with Jesus when faced with trials, difficulties and persecution. Like Abraham, we may not know where God is leading us, but we continue to trust in His faithfulness. The end goal is to be where Jesus would have us be, whatever it takes to get there. Persevering is not passively enduring hardship, but it involves pressing on through it with hope. It is faithfully praying even when we don't see the answer

immediately. It is courageously facing difficulties, knowing that Jesus will never leave us.

Faithfulness is related to perseverance. It is acting in obedience to God. As a servant of God, we must be faithful in our God-given responsibilities. Even when difficulty comes, we will not quit or doubt God. We must be faithful in all areas of our lives – in our jobs, our marriage, relationships and in our Christian service.

Both perseverance and faithfulness require us to believe that God is powerful to do what He says He will do, that He cares deeply about us, and that His plans are ultimately for our good.

Christians who possess these virtues are not defeated by obstacles, nor stopped by adversity. They not only trust and obey God when everything is going well, but also in the storms and dark times of life. Their faith is not dependent on their circumstances, but on God who never changes.

## IN REVIEW

- Faithfulness and Perseverance require faith in God who does not change, who loves us, and is faithful to us.
- Abraham was called a man of faith, and his faith in God was credited to him as righteousness. He possessed a powerful faith accompanied by action, allowing him to endure many difficulties and hardships.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- How has God been faithful to you through difficult times? How can you set up 'memorials' in your life, or otherwise remind yourself of God's faithfulness to you, so that you can persevere in faithfulness?
  
- Consider how Jesus endured shame and anguish on the cross for your sins. How does contemplating what Christ went through on your behalf help you to endure what you are struggling with today? Thank God for His faithfulness to you.
  
- Describe how believers before your time led lives of faithfulness and perseverance. Do you have any personal heroes of the faith? What did they overcome and endure for God? What was the result of their life? How do they inspire you today?

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