

How to *Weaken* and Lose Your Faith

In the parable of *The Sower* in Matt.13:3-9,18-23, two-thirds of those who *received* and *accepted the seed* (*rocky ground, among the thorns*) eventually “lost their faith.” That’s a scary, but all-too-real scenario. For anyone who has *sown the seed* with any regularity, it is a sad reality: Not everyone who *becomes* a Christian stays a Christian. As in the parable, the reasons vary- “*no firm root in himself*” and “*affliction and persecution*” (v.21), or “*the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches*” (v.22) are still foremost among them. But in every case, it didn’t **have to be** that way. Choices were made that led to either the *abandonment* or *loss* of faith.

This has been a tough year for faith. Our Elders, like those throughout the country (and world?) have been deeply concerned that the disruption of our “norms”- in the church, at home, and in society, could have a detrimental effect on the faith of some of our members. Obviously, those with *small, weak, or feeble* faith are most “at risk” (cf. Heb.12:12). So, what is it that we typically do to make a “bad” situation “worse”?

How to *Weaken* or Lose Your Faith:

1. Stop Reading/Studying the Word. Never forget that the *source* of faith is “*the word of Christ/God*” (depending on translation), Rom.10:17. If we stop *feeding our faith* (or put it on a *starvation diet*), it will surely be *weakened* and may be *lost* altogether. The *gospel* is *God’s power for salvation* (Rom.1:16), but is made impotent if we don’t or won’t *hear, read, and study* it! Faith must be *watered* (1Cor.3:6), *grown* (2Pet.3:18), and *supplied* (epichoregeo- to *supply* or *furnish*) to remain healthy, strong, fruitful, and to accomplish its intended goal, 2Pet.1:5-11.

So, have you utilized your “extra time” these last few months to: *read* your Bible; *study* it; take advantage of all the online resources that have been made available (both here and elsewhere)? Be honest, have you done *more* or *less* to “grow” and “support” your faith? Be careful- what we *neglect* we often *lose*!

2. Stop Talking to Its Author. Communication, we are told, is: a) vital to sustaining any relationship; and, b) a “two-way” street (or *exchange of ideas*). God “communicates” with us through ***His word***, 1Thess. 2:13; 2Thess.2:13-15, cp.v.10; 2Tim.3:14-16; 2:15. But we “communicate” with Him through ***prayer***. It is through *prayer* that we pour out our “*heart’s desire(s)*” (Rom.10:1) with that the Spirit “*intercedes*” and “*helps our weakness*” (of proper expression) with “*groanings too deep for words*,” Rom.8:26-27. However, the Spirit will not do it for us; that is, apart from our participation. He’s not going *intercede* for us if we’re not praying! Think about it: You may have a “friend” that you only speak to occasionally- perhaps once or twice a year. But that is not the “friend” that you’re going to call on when you need help! No, you’re going to call on the “friend” that you talk to all the time. They’re the one you’re close to, and the one on whom you can depend.

So, have you been “communicating” *more* or *less* with God this year? Have your prayers consisted of almost all *petitions/requests*, or have you remembered to be *thankful* also? If you want to *weaken* or *lose* your faith, just stop “communicating” with God. It’s easy to do... just start speaking to Him more infrequently and with less gratitude and the rest will come easily enough.

3. Expect God to Conform to Your Needs, Wants, and Desires without Conforming to His. As “communication” is a *two-way street*, so are the

“relationships” formed by it. If we only “communicate” *our* needs, wants, and desires to God, but are unwilling to allow Him to “communicate” *His* desires and will for us, that relationship is doomed to failure. Note two passages in this regard, 1Pet.3:10-12 and 1John 3:21-22. Both of these texts emphasize not only the importance of *knowing* God’s will, but *doing* it. Only then does God regard our petitions. So what happens? We constantly pray to God for *our will to be done* (cf. Jas.4:1-3), but because we are relatively unconcerned with or devoted to *His will being done* in and through us (cf. Matt.6:10), He refuses to hear our prayers. Then, we start thinking (and saying to ourselves and others) that “prayer doesn’t work;” our faith *weakens* rapidly and then is *lost* altogether. It is all caused by our expectation that God *conform to our will* rather than us *conforming to His will*. In essence, we have the *Servant – Master* relationship backwards. Additionally, we are typically more concerned with our *physical lives here* than our *spiritual lives there*, cf. 1Cor.3:1-3 and Phil.3:17-21.

So, have you been more concerned with (and your prayers have reflected) your *physical life* according to your will, or your *spiritual life* according to God’s will? For illustrative purposes, consider the *Disciples’ Prayer* in Matt.6:9-13. Only one item was *physical* in nature (the provision of *daily bread* in v.11). The rest of the prayer consisted of: Praise/Spiritual Relationship, v.9; Petition for God’s Will to be done, v.10; Spiritual Forgiveness, v.12; Spiritual Guidance, v.13a; and Praise, v.13b. While not a mathematical formula to be followed by rote, it does provide a heaven-approved pattern that reminds us of the priority of God’s *spiritual* will over our *physical* will(s)!

- 4. Spend Your Discretionary Time with Those Who Have No or Misplaced Faith.** Prov.13:20 says, “*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*” Let’s make no mistakes about the identity of the *wise* and the *foolish*. The *wise* are those who *understand what the will of the Lord is*, and *walk* accordingly in wisdom, Eph.5:15-17; while the *foolish* are the opposite- those who *refuse to hear, or hear and do not do the words of God*, Matt.7:24-27. Certainly, we must *live in the world* and *associate with immoral* people, 1Cor.5:9-10. Which is why “discretionary time” was specified! We must often *work with* and *do business with* the foolish people of the world.

So, when you have the opportunity to *choose your associates/association*, what did and do you choose? Was it those who are *exemplary* of strong faith, and will *educate* and *encourage* you toward the same, Heb.6:9-12; 12:7? Or was it those who have *no* or *damaged* (cf. 1Cor.5:11) *faith* themselves, and will surely help to *damage* or *destroy* your faith, 3John 11?

Conclusion(s):

- There is *always* a choice.
- We can *choose* the attitudes, activities, and associations that will *grow* and *strengthen* our faith. Or conversely,
- We can *choose* the attitudes, activities, and associations that will *damage*, *weaken*, and ultimately *destroy* our faith.