

"In the beginning  
was the Word,  
and the Word was  
with God, and the  
Word was God."  
~John 1:1

# The Lord's Flock *Growth* DIGEST

PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES



## “Contenders for the Faith”

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In its simplest terms, faith is a strong belief of a spiritual truth. In the New Testament, the words “faith” and “believe” occur almost 500 times.

Among the most profound biblical definitions of faith are the following:

- **“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”** (Hebrews 11:1).
- **“Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.”** (Romans 10:17).
- **Faith is the body of truth which constitutes the whole of the Christian message.** (Jude 3).

As believers and followers of Jesus Christ, we are exhorted to be defenders and contenders for our faith.

*“Beloved, although I was making every effort to write to you about our common salvation, I now feel a need to write to encourage you to contend for our faith that was once for all handed down to the holy ones.”* (Jude 3).

Many biblical teachings ask us to fight for our faith:

- **“Compete well for the faith.”** (1 Timothy 6:12).

- **“Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong.”** (1 Corinthians 16:13).

- **“In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one.”** (Ephesians 6:16).

In our Community, our members have been blessed to have been plucked out from the dangerous “sea” of hideous sins and brought up to the safety of a spiritual “ship”. We have to remain in this ship and beware of falling back into the “sea”. We should continue with our prayers, Bible study, receiving the Holy sacraments, and doing service in our Community. We should no longer fall prey to the temptations of the flesh, of the world, and the devil.

When our members were baptized in the Holy Spirit, their hearts of stone were changed to natural hearts (Ezekiel 36:26). They have been transformed by the renewal of their mind (Romans 12:2). They should beware not to backslide by falling victims to the wiles of Satan.

All of our leaders and members are exhorted to faithfulness. *“Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away. For if the word announced through angels*

*proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard.”* (Hebrews 2:1-3).

**In our Community, your Elders are assiduously teaching and faithfully pasturing our flock.** Leaders and members are exhorted to continue their prayers, their study of the Holy Bible, and their service to God. Everybody is also encouraged to spread the Gospel and to save souls through consistent witnessing for the Lord and bringing “seekers” to the Spirit Empowerment Seminars.

**Even within a group of men of God, there is still danger from “wolves” who may creep into the sheepfold and run away with some “sheep”.**

- ***“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves.”*** (Matthew 7:15).
- ***“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. And from your own group, men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away after them. So be vigilant and remember that for three years, night and day, I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears.”*** (Acts 20:29-31).

**“Wolves” are influenced by their selfish desires in amassing worldly riches and in making a name for themselves.** They also pervert the gospel message by promoting humanistic ideas and teachings, modernistic and materialistic thinking, and the social (instead of the spiritual) aspect of the group.

**All of us should be contenders for the Christian truth.** We should fight for this truth that we received as an inheritance passed from generation to generation. Let

us forever thank God that we have been blessed to have found the truth. Let us keep it carefully, spread it liberally, and earnestly contend for it and for our faith!

**As contenders for the faith, let us follow the examples of St. Paul and the early Christians:**

- ***“I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.”*** (Philippians 3:14).
- ***“They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”*** (Acts 2:42).

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