

Faith

It is a subject that creates a lot of discussion and at times a lot of controversy

It is something that can open doors with people

And at times can close them completely

<Bucket List Faith>

When you talk about faith you find that there are many different opinions

But it seems people have difficulty describing or defining what faith is

☞ Even the dictionary has many definitions

complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

"this restores one's faith in politicians"

strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than on a system of religious belief.

• a strongly held belief or theory.

"the faith that life will expand until it fills the universe"

☞ Richard Dawkins defines faith as "Faith is belief without evidence; a process of active non-thinking. It is a practice that only degrades our understanding of the natural world by allowing anyone to make a claim about

nature that is based solely on their personal thoughts, and possibly distorted perceptions, that does not require testing against nature, has no ability to make reliable and consistent predictions, and is not subject to peer review.”

Even in Christianity there are differing thoughts and opinions

☞ Some define faith as an attribute given by the Spirit of God that enables us to reach into God's invisible world and take possession of that which we cannot see.

Some will simply quote scripture to you as a definition.

☞ *"What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead."* Hebrews 11:1 TLB

When you speak to many Christians you get the impression that Faith is something you need to get God to do something for you

It is heavens currency and when you have enough God moves.

In a conversation I was having with some people about faith recently one person stated

“Any lack that believers experience is a commentary on their lack of receiving that which has already been given.”

Another person commented “When we have childlike faith, the air fills with wonder and miracles manifest in our lives, because we believe!”

So there is at times an idea that when bad things are happening you don't have enough faith

And when good things are happening you have the right level and God is doing things for you

Countless people all through scripture had faith even though their lives were in difficulty

Joseph spent 13 years in prison for something he didn't do because of a prophetic word and every day Joseph had to have faith

☛ ***“until what he had said came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.”*** Psalms 105:19 ESV

Several people walked with God and are listed in Hebrews as champions of faith and they never saw God's promise fulfilled in their lifetime

Hebrews 11 is the champions of the faith chapter and in the list of people there is this verse

☛ ***“All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth.”*** Hebrews 11:13 NLT

The problem with most definitions of Faith that people have is where they start

Even the scripture we read earlier is a poor translation

For the most part when you talk to people about faith they are the starting point

☞ ***"What is faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen."***

We will always get into trouble when things revolve around us

Faith isn't about us

And God isn't our butler waiting on us to have a full enough bank account to be able to move in our lives

☞ So What is Faith Really?

It is a question I have asked myself many times over the years

I have met people who have been in prison because of their belief in Jesus

People who by outward appearances are not blessed

People who are not in complete health

One person I know about cannot
ever have kids because they connected his
balls to battery cables to many times

People who don't have tons of excess

And yet they are confident, at peace, and joyful
and the presence of God walks in the room with
them

And the people in scripture who endured great hardships

Men like Paul who wrote

☞ ***“I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. 24 Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. 26 I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles.***

☞ ***I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not.[a] 27 I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm.***

28 Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my

concern for all the churches.”

2 Corinthians 23-28 NLT

And Paul would later write “***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.***”

2 Timothy 4:7 NIV

So Paul knew faith wasn't about your circumstances and it wasn't about prosperity, health and being blessed

Faith isn't about us at all

So what is faith?

☞ First off let me say you don't have faith for something

Faith is in someone

We don't have faith for healing

We don't have faith for finances

We don't have faith for security and safety

☞ Faith is in someone

“By faith, barren Sarah was able to become pregnant, old woman as she was at the time, because she believed the One who made a promise would do what he said. ”

Hebrews 11:11 MSG

☞ Very simply Faith is believing God is who He said He is, and He will do what He said He will do.

We get into trouble when we make it any more complicated than that

☞ ***“A man cannot please God unless he has faith. Anyone who comes to God must believe that He is. That one must also know that God gives what is promised to the one who keeps on looking for Him.”*** Hebrews 11:6

NLV

So Faith is believing God is who He says He is and He will do what He said He will do.

Faith is being secure in the nature and character of God

But faith isn't just mental assent to God

This is also where people err

We say we believe God is who He says He is

And believe that is enough

Faith is something that isn't passive

☞ Believing that God is won't get you very far

“Do I hear you professing to believe in the one and only God, but then observe you complacently sitting back as if you had done something wonderful? That’s just great. Demons do that, but what good does it do them?”

Faith in God creates Action

☞ *Use your heads! Do you suppose for a minute that you can cut faith and works in two and not end up with a corpse on your hands?* James 2:19-20 MSG

If there is no action there is not faith

Because we can take God at His word we can then move forward into the things He asks of us

This may not work in our time table or in our plan but there will still be things for us to do

Joseph couldn't make any move to fulfill God's word over his life

But he acted in faith because he stayed true to God in all he did

And when circumstance seemed to take him further away from what God had spoken he could still be faithful

Because he was secure in who God was and didn't lose hope that God will do what He said He would do.

Noah built a boat, never knowing what it was or what it was for

There had never been water so there had never been a boat before

Abraham left everything he knew because God spoke

And because God was trustworthy and faithful he went without knowing where he was going

When God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac he could because his confidence was not in the promise God gave but in the one that gave the promise.

God said this was the child of promise and God is able to raise him from the dead

So faith creates action

What has God spoken to you about

And what is being left undone?

You cannot make the promises of God come true

They are not based on you

But there are things in what God has spoken to each of us that we can be doing

If God has spoken to you about people getting healed, are you praying for people

The results are irrelevant if you have faith

Because the results are not part of faith

Faith is in the one who spoke not in the results you get

If your not sharing Jesus with people then your not walking in faith

Faith always starts with what God has spoken to us and being faithful to that because of who has spoken to us

What has God given you in the natural

Being faithful there first is an act of faith

First the natural and then the spiritual

If there is no action, there is no faith

and sometimes all the action we can have is to remain faithful to what God has spoken regardless of the circumstances just like Joseph

But there is always action

Joseph could have given up and walked away at any time

You can have action without faith

Because you can do anything without the confidence and security in who God is

You can try to work for God's approval or acceptance

But you cannot have faith without action

Lastly we need to remember that Faith grows

Someone brought their son to the disciples saying he had a demon which would throw him into the fire or the water trying to kill him

And the disciples tried unsuccessfully to cast it out

Jesus walked up and saw what the demon was doing and simply told it to leave and it was gone

The story is found in Matthew 17

And when the disciples later quizzed Jesus about why the demon wouldn't leave for them He simply stated

“You don’t have enough faith,” Jesus told them. “I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.” Matthew 17:20 NLT

Now usually we see this as a negative comment by Jesus

But He was simply addressing the current state of the disciples faith level

What we need to realize is that faith doesn't grow on it's own, and it doesn't grow because we are exercising it

Faith grows by relationship

We know the scripture

Romans 10:17 ESV

☞ ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”***

This isn't reading the bible out loud, it is hearing God speak to us personally

hearing through the rhema – spoken word of God

Jesus said ***“It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God’s mouth.”***

Matthew 4:4 MSG

So in the relationship you have God is speaking

And if we believe that God is who He says He is,
And that He will do what He says He will do

We can then act on what He said, because faith
creates action

And as we see God's faithfulness again or
confidence in who God is deepens and grows

If we don't maintain the relationship with God

And we don't act on what He is speaking

Our faith won't go anywhere and we won't see God
moving

Faith doesn't make God move

Faith places us in a position to see what God is doing
because we are being faithful to what He has spoken
because we Believe He is faithful and will follow through
on what He has said

And so because of our action we place ourselves
where God is doing something

And the more willing we are to step into the
situations God is wanting to move in the more we
can see God moving

So what is your faith level like?

God has spoken to me about mine over the years
and every time take Him at His word my faith
grows

Because it is a gift and it grows by
relationship

I remember driving past a tire shop and they had a sale by
4 tires and win a trip

My thought was that would be cool I should buy
tires

My instant following thought was, I never
win anything though

And in that moment God challenged me on my faith

He asked when I pray for people what is my first
thought

I said I pray for people because you told me I should

My next thought was usually, “probably nothing will happen though.”

So my confidence in God's ability needed to grow, and in my relationship with Him He began to challenge those ideas and because I responded to His lead my faith has grown

Faith doesn't create situations for God to move

And faith doesn't force God to do anything

☞ Faith is believing God is who He said He is and that He will do what He said He will do!!!

And faith then creates action because without action faith is dead

And in the relationship we have with God our faith can then grow and deepen and we can see God do more and more things

Not because we have forced God's hand, but because we have been faithful to what He has been spoken and it has positioned us where He is moving with the confidence and boldness to step out and do what He has asked