

How Does Your Faith Grow?

When I finally started taking God seriously and diligently read His Word, the idea or concept of “faith in God” was foreign to me. I didn’t really understand it and I certainly did not have any kind of faith to speak of. I would read about Abraham being told to sacrifice his son Isaac and I thought that Abraham was someone extra special or that he had “superhuman” qualities that God gave him. As if to say that no one could be ordinarily expected to have that kind of faith. I am learning, however, that this is somewhat true, but not entirely. Allow me to explain...

Let’s start with the Bible’s own definition of faith:

Hebrews 11: 1 *Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.*

Isn’t this a great definition of faith?

Imagine you and a close friend are standing on the edge of a great chasm like you might see in an Indiana Jones movie. There is no visible way across. But when you re-read the ancient map you read a clue that suggests that a walking bridge exists starting at the end of the path, only it is invisible!

Do you trust the old map? What could be that important on the other end that would warrant the risk? Who steps out first, you or your friend? When you decide to take the first step, you are hoping that your foot will stop at the same level as your other foot and be able to support your weight.

How much confidence would you have in that first step? After taking the first five steps and seeing that this invisible bridge does indeed exist, do you have a little more faith in

the map and the bridge itself? Of course! How exciting it would be to stand on an invisible bridge in the middle of a chasm. Now you have to keep on going and the rest of the bridge is still invisible. Are you ready to run across at this point, or still go one step at a time? It still takes faith and each step should be made with more and more confidence, but you'll never see the bridge.

John 20: 29 *Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."*

In this analogy, **the bridge is like God**, He wants us to trust totally on Him, leaning entirely on Him.

Let's take Asa, one of Judah's kings, as an example.

Here is a lesson for what is right:

2 Chronicles 14: 10 *so Asa deployed his armies for battle in the valley north of Mareshah. 11 Then Asa cried out to the Lord his God, "O Lord, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty! Help us, O Lord our God, for we trust in you alone. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O Lord, you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!"*

12 *So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians in the presence of Asa and the army of Judah, and the enemy fled.*

And here is a lesson for what is wrong:

2 Chronicles 16: 7 *At that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa and told him, "Because you have put your trust in the king of Aram instead of in the Lord your God, you missed your chance to destroy the army of the king of Aram. 8 Don't you remember what happened to the Ethiopians and Libyans and their vast army, with all of their chariots and charioteers?"*

At that time you relied on the Lord, and he handed them over to you. 9 The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. What a fool you have been! From now on you will be at war."

What I find fascinating is that king Asa knew better. He saw the Lord work in his life previously and witnessed a great miracle in defeating 1,000,000 Ethiopians, yet failed to continue trusting in God.

This tells me that we need to be careful and persistent in knowing where our faith is placed. This is why it is imperative in getting to know God on a personal level deeper and deeper. I am convinced that the more we know Him, the more we'll trust Him. Does this make sense to you? How well do you know Him?

The map is like the Word of God.

All believers can digest the Word for spiritual nutrition and this helps us to understand and know our Creator all the more. This is why the Bible, in and of itself, is never enough. Anyone can read the Bible, but real faith comes by putting into practice that which we've learned and act on it.

For example, when the car breaks down, do we quickly whip out the credit card for the solution without acknowledging God and go to the nearest mechanic? Or do we pray about it and allow God to work in the situation? If we do not give God a chance to help us and rescue us as promised then how will we ever develop any kind of faith? Does this help you realize why it is so difficult for the rich to inherit the Kingdom of God?

Psalm 37:

5 *Commit everything you do to the Lord.*

Trust him, and he will help you.

6 *He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn,*

and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

7 *Be still in the presence of the Lord,
and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.*

Hebrews 11: 6 *And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.*

I love this verse, don't you?

First, it makes it clear that faith is required to please God and second, it gives us the basic requirements of that faith. This is just a starting point. This is where the spiritually new-born begin. But in order to truly please God, I believe He wants us to grow and develop this faith.

I believe the parable of the servants is a great illustration of this:

Matthew 25: 24 *"Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. 25 I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.'*

This servant clearly did not know his master very well and committed a grave mistake. Here's where his ignorance led him:

Matthew 25: 29 *To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. 30 Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

Unfortunately, I believe there are too many self-proclaimed believers in this position right now.

I apologize for the cynicism,

but I think far too many people that know the Truth are far more interested in working for their retirement on this earth than they are in working for eternal treasures.

Matthew 6: 19 *“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. **21** Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

John 6: 26 *Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. **27** But don’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you. For God the Father has given me the seal of his approval.”*

This is where the “rubber meets the road”. This makes it an individual sport. Not that we can’t work together to help build each other’s faith through fellowship, but the “day in and day out” practice of trusting in God requires the individual’s effort and the Christian believer cannot rely on their pastor for that.

Check out this verse...

The Bible actually tells us how we can build the faith. In other words, it is saying “Read me!”:

Romans 10: 17 *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (NASB) (This translates from the English to “Read your Bibles daily!” LT (Larry’s Translation) □*

Getting back to Abraham, it is important to keep in mind that he was an ordinary man. There was nothing special about him other than being chosen by God. What we need to keep in mind is that he was prepared over time by being tested by God and for his obedience and this is the case for any one of the saints.

Hebrews 11: 17 *It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, 18 even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." 19 Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.*

Back to our analogy, to get across the bridge and develop a faith in it, we needed to have the map and read it. God is far more complex and the journey He intends for us is much more complicated than the bridge will ever be.

This is why the Bible is essential for daily consumption.

This is why the Bible is required reading with the kind of faith that leads you to expect to hear God's voice so that He can lead and direct you. A "man of God" such as a pastor or elder can usually never tell you what God wants you to do next, although it may seem obvious. That is something only you can discern for yourself. Is there any wonder why God put countless "Be not afraid" passages in His Word? And we must never forget this, straight from the Master's lips:

Matthew 28: 20 *... be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Are you complacent in your Christian walk? Are you ready for an adventure?

“Dear Lord, I lack faith. It seems as though I doubt you all the time and fail to take your Word as truth. Will you please forgive me and help me to know you more so that I can have a great confidence in you? You are my Lord and I commit my life to you today. I will trust in you and you alone. Change my heart so that I desire what you desire and despise what you despise. Thank you in advance for all the wonderful things you’ll continue to do in my life as a result of me putting my faith in you. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

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