

Forgetting Faith

Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

- Hebrews 11:6

All Christians have faith in Jesus. With faith, we are justified (declared righteous) before God. Placing our faith and trust in Jesus for the first time is the absolute beginning of what should be a lifestyle of faith. This lifestyle, described in the Hebrews 11:6 verse, after the title of this chapter, is the *practice of faith*: seeking Jesus, mirroring His thoughts and actions by God's power. It means involving Him in the plans, direction, and the details of our lives.

There is no overcoming a faith deficit regarding good works. It is one of two necessities that must be in its rightful place to govern our lives. Most Christians know the importance of faith intellectually, but shockingly, most of us live much of our lives without trusting God for much of anything. We choose to live our lives not placing faith in God for the significant, amazing (to use an overused word), and impossible. We choose instead to keep our lives "in front of us;" the predicable Christian life is what we prefer. We live our lives inside our strength, mind, abilities, influence, education, etc. In other

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words, we have faith in ourselves most of the time.

Certainly, we will miss the mark of faith often in our lives. Even biblical heroes like Abraham and Moses did. They too had times where they were not secure in their faith; they instead doubted. Abraham demonstrated this when he feared for his life twice and lied about the relationship to Sarah (e.g., Genesis 20). But he had a heroic act of faith in offering his son on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). We too, are living our daily lives, making faith and doubt decisions. Moses did not have the faith to go into Egypt alone (cf. Exodus 4:10-14).

Faith Fades Fast

Some of us have lived parts of our lives in faith. We know “how to do it.” But risk-taking with God is something that has faded from our realities. We instead live our lives settling in at the bell curve of averages. We settle there because there was a point in which faith began taking a backseat to replacement preferences: comfort, predictability, and perceived safety. By not having higher measurements of faith in God, we start and continue in our lives of faithless activities. Especially when we get older, we start managing faith so it doesn’t intrude into our safety nets too far or often. We should reexamine our lives for faith continually; we need to recommit to faith in measurable ways.

Selfishness

Our prayers of faith can quickly start focusing on us only. Even worse, our selfishness, left unchecked, will turn to pleas of the despicable: prayers for luxury goods, of fancy houses and pools, fancy cars and boats. We should be on our guard against fleshly, selfish prayers (prosperity gospel prayers). James reminded the Church, “You do not have because you do not ask; you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so you can spend it on your passions” (James 4:2 b, 3). James explained, that spiritual motive (also necessary for love) is the requirement for certain types of prayers. How many of our prayers have been for material things instead of kingdom things? We must be attentive

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to our motives or faith is corrupted.

Pride

Pride and self-righteousness kill faith. “The danger to success is success.”³² The more God has used us, especially if He has done the marvelous in our lives, the more we must watch out for the pride that can effortlessly reveal itself. We may error at times and start to become like many of the Pharisees, filled with self-righteousness. God uses our committed holiness and actions, but they can become a source of pride. So we must remain humble as we see God working in our lives. His righteousness is our only righteousness (cf., Philippians 3:9). If we start taking pride in God’s work ourselves—like we did His work for Him—we will surely see Him take His hand off of our lives to re-humble us. Be wise; give God all of His glory and be thankful instead of prideful that He uses us for His will.

Naysayers

Listening to naysayers can result in faith’s demise. God does some of His most fantastic work while the sidelines are full of doubters, naysayers, and “bench warmers.” These are people who are in danger of never understanding the practice of faith, never submitting to God’s work through faith, never embracing faith for themselves. They don’t believe that God uses ordinary people in very uncommon ways to fulfill His desires. The determined will choose to not play it safe. They will be the ones who are determined to place faith at the forefront and to be in constant discovery of God’s work they participate in.

³² Peter Tanchi, GACX Compelled Conference Session (Denton, Texas), Sept. 25, 2019.

Uncommitted Faith

One must not give up on the faith. This idea doesn't mean one must commit for life to a specific ministry *per se*; ministries come and go; methods come and go. But beginning a work of God and letting doubt creep into our commitments may put our faith on ice. Faith demands the passing of time. We need constant reminding that faith would not be faith at all if we received everything immediately. There would only be asking and receiving. Some of our prayers will not be answered in this lifetime; these will take much more patience. Let us not become tired or frustrated in these cases. Let us instead be counted among the faithful of Hebrews 11. God commends such patience.

"No"

The most challenging times for our faith will be the times God says "no"—especially "no" in a crisis. This is when our faith in God's character must be meditated upon. We need to confess quickly and perhaps constantly if we begin to doubt God's love or His power. There will be times when we will have strong desires, but God has other plans. This can be frustrating. This may even be heartbreaking.

Holy Huddles

Talking and meeting about having faith is a common practice. Churches and ministries are full of committees and boards which discuss to death their dreams of doing something. There has never really been a shortage of ideas on how to help and reach people. But as faith's practitioners, we must take deliberate action in faith. Our faith intentions minus our faith actions don't amount to much at all. "One intentional act will get more done than a thousand hopes and dreams."³³

³³ Peter Tanchi, GACX Compelled Conference Session (Denton, Texas), Sept. 26, 2019.

Fear

Faith must overcome fear. Many Christians are terrified by what God may ask of them. Most of us know what it is like to have been somewhat timid in involving God in every area of our lives; God can be weighty. We know He has an uncanny ability to challenge us in ways we would shiver at (God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son, for instance). We also know God will push us; He will demand more than the common goals of our humanness. During these times we may begin to be fearful that God is looking for something we do not stand ready to give. It is during these moments that we need to ask ourselves, “Why should I fear?” We should not allow the unknown to paralyze us in fear. We can trust God.

One of the saddest things to see is terror in the eyes of Christians while they contemplated the possibility of a life lived in faith. We need to remember that God will always take care of our basic needs: food and clothing (cf., Matthew 5:45; 1 Timothy 6:8). However, if we, as American Christians are being honest, we are often afraid that God may take our swimming pools!

Doubt

Doubt is cancer to faith. James told the Church, when asking for wisdom from God, one should, “ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without doubting” (James 1:5b, 6a). James goes on to say that the doubter is “unstable” and “double-minded” (v 8). Pure faith, even in the smallest amounts, must be uncorrupted by doubt; for it cannot be genuine if doubt is at hand.

On the other hand, we shouldn’t think that we need a moon-shot dose of faith in life. Jesus taught His disciples, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20 b). Great Christians of the past were those able to trust God with child-like faith, handing more of their lives over to a loving all-powerful Father. A mustard seed will almost fit inside this “O.” That is enough to move a mountain. That

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is enough for God to use you as a faithful vessel to fulfill His vision for you.

Look for the Faithful

The Bible reads in Proverbs 11:14, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (NKJV). However, be cautious who you pick to listen to. Make sure that you are looking for counsel from those who have walked by meaningful faith and yet still walk by it in measurable ways.

There are many well meaning Christians who look primarily at physical resources to give their recommendations. God is not broke. Others may say you don’t know enough, forgetting God is all knowing. I could go on but one should get the point.

Remember this: there may also come a time when you might stand alone in your convinced state of faith.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 8:5-13

Questions

1) When was the last time you took a “risk” for God? What motivated you to take that risk?

2) Be honest. Are you willing to sacrifice safety and comfort to live a life of faith? Explain your answer.

3) Are you trusting in God—right now—to do something above your educa-

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tional background, experience, and talents?

Aim Point

- 1) Ask God to grow your faith.
- 2) Look for ways to trust God for things only He can accomplish and use you to those ends.