

What is Faith? A Quote

'Biblical faith is never a matter of believing impossible things. It is responding to a God-given vision... Faith means 'seeing' the world in a particular way, from an angle God has shown us.' (from 'The Bible for Everyday Life, consulting editor, George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury)

Hebrews 11.1 (Amplified Bible)

"Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]."

1. Faith is NOT about believing God one minute and not the next

James 1.5-8 says that if we ask God for wisdom we should not doubt what God tells us. (Sometimes it's hard to know what God has said I know, but this is another matter! We can check it by lining it up with the Word of God, asking other Christians etc.) We must try hard not to be indecisive – this messes with our head. Sometimes we just have to make a choice, go with it and stick with it.

In Exodus 14, the Israelites had escaped from Egypt through God's power. Eventually they came to the Red Sea and were seemingly trapped. They looked in the distance and saw a furious Pharaoh heading their way with a bunch of top soldiers. What did the people do? They slagged off Moses and disrespected him. '...Why did you bring us out here? Are you trying to get us killed? We should have stayed in Egypt...' Moses responded in faith. The sea parted and we know the rest. Our attitude should be like Moses not like the people!

What about the example of Mary and Zechariah in Luke 1? Though both had doubts about the practical arrangements of God's promises, Mary believed and this set her apart.

2. Faith is NOT about believing only when things are OK or when we 'understand'

In many of the 'Ashes' series (cricket) between England and Australia, the games swing one way and then the other – Australia on top, England on top. Like any sport it can be like a see-saw – until England hopefully run out winners! Faith means keeping the faith, even when there are ups and downs..

In 1 Kings 17.17-24, Elijah raised a boy from the dead by faith. Even when this boy had died in the same house where Elijah was staying and his mother was understandably stressed out at Elijah, he responded in faith and the boy was raised from the dead.

What was the point of this story? Well, verse 24 explains it – "And the woman said to Elijah, By this I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is

truth." So the purpose was to bring glory to God and to prove that the Word of God is faithful, true, living and powerful. Our life of faith is a pointer to the Lord God.

3. Faith is NOT about doing something when God has not spoken.

In his book, 'Adventures in Naked Faith' by Ross Tooley, he quotes a story of when Sister Yun was doing a mission in South Korea. Many people were heading up a mountain to hear her and there was heavy rain. Three young people decided to believe God to walk on the water up a muddy powerful river. Unfortunately these 3 women drowned. Why? Wasn't their faith big enough?

The answer is that they acted without getting a word from God. They went their own way. God hadn't spoken to tell them to walk up the river. Many people fail because of this. Let's look at some Biblical examples..

- God told Moses to get the people out of Egypt at the burning bush, Exodus 3.10
- Peter got a word from God it was OK to walk on the water before he plunged in – Matt 14.28-29
- Elijah got a word to move on from the Brook – 1 Kings 17.7-9

In 1 Samuel 13.2-15 Saul acted as a priest (the God appointed duty of the prophet, Samuel). He acted on his own initiative because he was impatient. Because of this, God rejected Saul as King and through Samuel he told Saul (1 Samuel 13.13-14).

4. Faith CANNOT be exercised or achieved by following a set of rules.

In a recent news story, a Pakistani man wanted to feed needy, hungry and desperate people affected by the earthquake that hit Pakistan and Kashmir. He set up a camp, but was threatened by a local mullah who told him that as it was Ramadan (a time of fasting for Muslims), the man must only cook at night – else the mullah would come and burn it all down. This is religious-ness at its very worst. Christianity is not / should not be like this.

You cannot live by faith through trying to keep in God's good books, by following rules. This is doomed to failure and is one reason why Jesus came and died to offer us a free gift. Now our faith is in relationship to Jesus to changes us from within by his Holy Spirit. See Romans 3.22-23 and Galatians 3.11-14.

5. Faith doesn't come if you don't read the Word and live the Christian life.

Romans 10.17 page says that faith comes through hearing (the message). I think we need to hear the Bible, hear stories of faith in order to build up our own faith.

"So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself)." (Amplified Bible)

6. Your lack of faith does NOT mean that God is not faithful.

Romans 3.3-4 (Amplified Bible)

What if some did not believe and were without faith? Does their lack of faith and their faithlessness nullify and make ineffective and void the faithfulness of God and His fidelity [to His Word]? By no means! Let God be found true though every human being is false and a liar, as it is written, That You may be justified and shown to be upright in what You say, and prevail when You are judged [by sinful men]

1 Corinthians 1.1.9 (Amplified Bible)

God is faithful (reliable, trustworthy, and therefore ever true to His promise, and He can be depended on); by Him you were called into companionship and participation with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

7. Faith is a process, a choice and CANNOT be static.

Nor is it the same for everyone. Paul writes in Romans 12.3 that you shouldn't think you are better than you are but decide who you are by the amount of faith God has given to you. Romans 4.19-20 shows that faith is not static (talks about Abraham's faith). In Hebrews 12.2 the Bible says Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith, This tells us it's an ongoing process. If someone starts our faith, it suggests there will be an ending in a different place (as in a race). If someone is the perfecter of our faith, it suggests a process of change and shaping to become perfect. The life of faith is a journey.

8. Faith does NOT mean that you can live however you like.

This is a distortion of the Gospel. Galatians 5.13-15 (The Message Bible)

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That's an act of true freedom. If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then? My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness.

9. Faith is NOT a magic wand that can be waved

When I was once going for a job interview, I was very ill on the day of interview and just plain unable to travel. I phoned up to let them know and got through to the mother of the pastor. She told me that my problem was a 'lack of faith' and that I must claim victory over the illness and travel anyway.

Now there are undoubtedly times where you can pray and God will heal, no doubt. But I'd already prayed for healing, and maybe God was holding me back from going. Maybe not going was an act of faith. (Turns out there was no job after all). But faith isn't simply a magic wand that can be waved – like prayer, it is a complex process that God alone understands and is Lord over.

10. Faith ALWAYS manifests itself in action

James 2.14-26. Go and read it – [here's a link to The Message Bible version.](#)