

Talks – What is faith – myfishbites.com

A Quote – ‘What is Faith?’

‘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, page 312)

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!)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”

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 dissed him. ‘..Why did you bring us out here? Are you trying to get us killed? We should have stayed in Egypt..’ Moses called out to God, God spoke back to him and then Moses responded in faith. The sea parted and we know the rest.

Our attitude should be like Moses not like the people!

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

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.

“Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. She said to Elijah, “What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?”

“Give me your son,” Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. Then he cried out to the LORD, “O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?” Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”

The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to

his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

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

In his book, 'Adventures in Naked Faith' by Ross Tooley (page 14), 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).

"So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

- God told Elijah to call down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18.36-37)

"At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant **and have done all these things at your command**. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

- Peter got a word from God to walk on the water before he plunged in (Matt 14.28-29)

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said.

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.

You cannot live by faith through trying to keep in God's good books. This is doomed to failure and is one reason why Jesus came and died to offer us a free gift. See Romans 3.23 and Galatians 3.11-14:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is

written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

5. Faith doesn't come if you don't read the Word.

Romans 10.17 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.

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

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

Romans 3.3-4 says this:

"What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written:

"So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

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:

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

Romans 4.19-20 shows that faith is not static (talks about Abraham's faith):

"Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God."

In Hebrews 12.2 the Bible says Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith, This tells us it's an ongoing process:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

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

Living however you like is a distortion of the Gospel. – it's wrong!

In Galatians 5.13, Paul made it very clear that we cannot use our freedom in Christ to behave however we want to. In fact, the freedom in Christ empowers us to serve and love others:

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

James 2.14-24 takes another angle and reminds us that our faith is not an excuse to do nothing. In fact, our faith is what drives us to take action and show that our faith is alive and real:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

What is your faith life like?

So, where do you stand today with your faith? How are you going to respond? How we can show the world an active faith and make God known in relevant, creative and loving ways?