

Faith in action

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I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things because I go to the Father. John 14:12

The Christian life is all about faith.

- We are saved by faith. *Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Acts 16:31*
- We are righteous before God by faith. *This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:22*
- We have relationship with God by faith. *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 5:1*
- We live by faith. *The righteous will live by faith. Romans 1:17*
- We serve God in faith. John 14:12

Faith isn't easy! We all struggle with it, and have lots of unanswered questions. But.....

We can't please God without faith

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

What is faith?

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1

The Greek words for 'faith' and 'believe' are:

<i>pistis</i>	faith	(noun)
<i>pisteuo</i>	believe	(verb)
<i>pistos</i>	believing, trusting, faithful	(adjective)

Faith is not just a human thing (eg. exercising 'faith' every time you drive through traffic lights). Different people believe all sorts of different things, and there are many different 'faiths'. This isn't biblical faith.



So what's the key to faith?

Faith is all about opening up to God; believing in Him; trusting Him; hearing Him speak, and then obeying what He says.

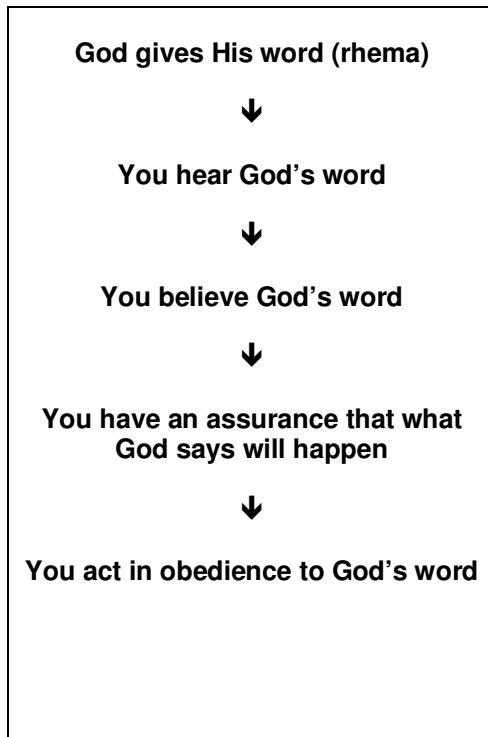
Genuine faith is not something that can be whipped up, or that everyone on earth has. In the Bible the word "faith" always relates to God. It is not just us trying hard to believe. It is a gift from God.

It is especially important to realise this when we are ministering to others. Often we will be in circumstances when we are powerless, or don't know what to do. God has to move in the situation! We can't arbitrarily manufacture faith as the need arises! It must come from God.

How do we get faith?

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Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22

Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

Examples of faith in action

- **Abraham** Hebrews 11:8-12

God said Abraham would be the father of a great nation. Abraham believed (even though he was very old) *"and it was credited to him as righteousness"*. It came to pass just as God said.

- **Your salvation** Romans 10:8-17

➤ You heard God's word and believed it.

Whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. John 5:24

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Acts 16:31

➤ You responded by receiving Jesus as your Saviour.

To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

- **Jesus healing the Centurion's servant.** Matthew 8:5-13

The Centurion believed Jesus' word. Jesus said He had not found such faith in the Jews.

- **A sore little toe!**

I prayed and I believed. I huffed and I puffed! I tried so hard to 'generate enough' faith for God to heal it! Nothing happened. But when God gave me just a mustard seed of faith the toe was healed. *"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. Luke 17:6*



So, faith is a gift from God. It always has its source in God. It starts with Him!

God gives His word; we believe it, we have an assurance that what God says will come to pass and then we act on it. That's faith!

"God is the author and finisher of our faith". Hebrews 12: 2.

Faith makes everything possible

If we have genuine faith (which has its source in God) everything is possible!

See Mark 9: 14 - 29.

The disciples couldn't drive out an evil spirit in a boy. They brought him to Jesus saying "if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us". v22

Jesus replied: "If you can! Everything is possible for him who believes". v 23
Immediately the boy's father exclaimed "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" v24

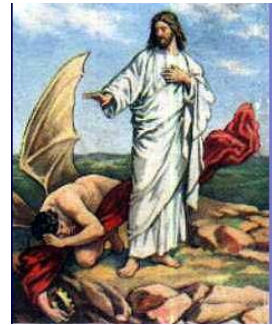
If something is God's will there is nothing that can stop it happening!

See Mark 11:22-24.

The disciples marveled because a fig tree that Jesus cursed withered up. Jesus replied "Have faith in God". Literally this is Have the faith of God. . If you have God's faith you will be able to say to a mountain 'Go, throw yourself into the sea', and if you don't doubt what you say, it will be done.

Jesus then says "I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours".

Taken on its own out of context this is like a 'blank cheque' for prayer. In context, though, it means that you will hear from God what He wants in the situation; you will then have 'the faith of God'; you will believe God; and then you will pray and act in accordance with His wishes. Because the situation has been born of God and is His will it will come to pass. Nothing is impossible for God!



Misconceptions about faith

Most Christians are like the disciples and the father in this story. We believe deeply, but we are also have lots of unbelief. Sometimes we believe and things happen; other times we believe and nothing happens. Sometimes we doubt, other times we are full of faith.

This can result in confusion, guilt, and uncertainty about our faith. This is often because we have a number of misconceptions about faith. Let's explore some of these now!

Misconception 1: Faith isn't based on facts

Faith doesn't have scientific 'facts' to back it up so it can't be 'proved'. There are lots of different ways that people believe not just one true way. All faiths are essentially the same. People believe what they want!

Not so! Genuine biblical faith is based on God's revealed word which is factual and which is truth. Jesus said *I am the way, the truth, and the life.* John 14:6. When you believe Him and put your trust in Him you find that this is true. Your faith is built upon a solid Rock!

(This isn't a popular message in our pluralistic society where people can believe anything they like).

Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you established the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you. Psalm 119:89-91

Misconception 2: We can work up faith

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:12-14

My faith is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness.....
On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

When this kind of thing doesn't happen we often say it is because we 'don't have enough faith'. "if only I had more faith I could have". (often leading to guilt and condemnation).

Unfortunately this is built on the misconception that we can work up faith or that we can have quantities of faith.

Jesus explained this in Matthew 17:20, 21 when the disciples asked why they couldn't cast a demon out of a boy. He said *Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

The issue here is not about how hard you try, or how big or small your faith is; it is about who your faith is in.

You can believe as hard as you like and have as much faith as you possibly can but no mountain is going to move unless God says the word! Huffing and puffing, and even saying 'in Jesus' name' isn't going to make any difference! (Try it! Go outside and command some mountain to move from A to B!).

But if your faith comes from hearing God say 'Move' that mountain has to move! Even a mustard seed of faith that is sourced in God is enough. The mountain must move. Why? Because God says so!

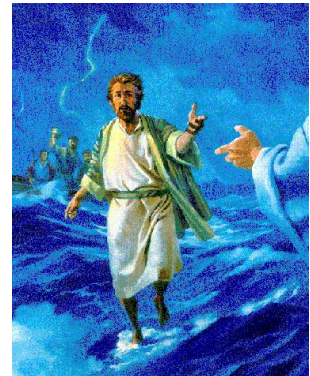
It's tragic when Christians get condemned about 'lack of faith'. We so much need to realise that God wants to be Lord in our lives and that God's will is central. When God says something is to happen it will happen! That's when *'nothing will be impossible for you'*. v21.

But when we try to make things happen (no matter how good our motives might be) we are not acting in faith. Always remember *God is the author and finisher of our faith*. Hebrews 12:2

Misconception 3: Stepping out in faith

Another misconception is that we can 'step out in faith' and God will come through and do wonderful things. This is based on Matthew 14:22-33 where Peter stepped out of the boat, and walked on the water.

Peter said 'If it is you' just after Jesus said 'It is I'. Not much faith there! The crucial moment was when Jesus said 'Come'. When Peter heard that word, he believed it and obeyed. That's how he was able to walk on the water. As long as he believed and obeyed he was fine. As soon as he doubted he got into trouble.



Often 'stepping out in faith' is used when

- we don't know God's will so we try something to see what will happen
- we are trying to get God to do what we want to happen
- we are trying to choose between two options. We try one and if it works out it must have been God's will; if it doesn't the other option must have been God's will.

More often than not this is 'presumption' not faith and is very like 'claiming' things', 'believing for' things, or putting out fleeces (which God was angry about. See Judges 6). In all of these the initiative is with us, and we try to get God to do what we want.

It should be the other way round! God should be telling us what He wants, and we obey Him. That's genuine faith!

We are quite likely to get into trouble if we 'step out in faith' when it isn't God's will!

Jesus said *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.* John 15:7,8

Genuine faith always has its source in God. His word is communicated to us; we believe it and act in obedience. This is how we can 'bear much fruit' in our Christian lives, and how we can bring much glory to our Heavenly Father.

Discussion questions

Are 'believing' and 'having faith' the same thing?

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (rhema) of God. Romans 10:17. Is hearing a rhema from God the only way we can get faith?

We walk by faith and not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7. What does this mean?

Have you ever tried to 'work up' faith? What happened? What did you learn from this?

Read Mark 11:22-25. What do you learn from these verses about exercising faith when you are praying?

What do 'stepping out in faith' and 'claiming things by faith' mean? Is they real faith, or are they presumption?

Read Hebrews 11. What do you learn about faith from the 'heroes of the faith'?