

It Matters
Faith Matters
Part 5

Intro: Everyone has faith. Everyone exercises faith on a daily basis. Faith is the basis for much of our actions. What do I mean?

- Your actions of driving to this building this morning were based upon the faith that we would be open and have services.
- You jumped in your vehicle and turned the key / or button having faith it would start
- You continue going to work having faith they will keep paying you
- Fishermen have faith otherwise they would never wet a line
- Hunters have faith otherwise they would never spend hours in the woods

Faith is a foundational human experience. We all have faith and exercise it daily. But how does faith relate to God? What does this faith look like? Let me put this definition on the screen

Faith defined: Biblical faith is **confident trust in God that leads to obedient action**. It is more than believing that God exists; it is relying on His character, His promises, and His Word, even when circumstances make the outcome uncertain.

Faith is trusting God enough to obey Him, regardless of circumstances or consequences.

This type of faith matters. Let's discover why.

1. Faith matters because it pleases God

Heb. 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." (NLT)

- Faith is not simply believing God exists, it's believing in Him. For example: When someone believes in you, what does that mean? It means they believe in who you are. They believe in your character, your heart, your motives, your potential, they believe in your worth, your purpose. It means they trust you completely. Believing in someone is powerful.
- Now let's apply this to our belief in God. The statement to believe that God rewards those who sincerely seek Him, is a statement asking if you believe God is worth it. If you believe in God, you believe He's worth your seeking. You believe in His character, His power, His work, His priorities, His Kingdom, His love. You believe it's rewarding to experience Him. It means you trust Him.
- When someone believes in you, it's pretty satisfying isn't it? When we believe in God like this, it pleases Him too!

- This is why Satan went after this belief in the Garden of Eden. Satan attacked the character of God. He convinced Eve God was withholding something good from them. He drove a wedge in her trust in God. Not His existence.
 - Summarize the conversation between Eve and Satan
- If Satan can erode our confident trust in God, our actions eventually follow suit. Satan doesn't always tempt people with wrong behavior. Satan wants you to doubt the character of God. He goes after your faith in God. Not your belief in Him. He makes you start wondering if it's worth it.
- Experiencing pain can do this. It could be loss, betrayal, grief, trauma of some kind, ongoing relational pain, finances, it really doesn't matter. But Satan whispers to us in the pain.
- Covid and the following couple of years after were by far the most painful years in ministry I've ever experienced. Those years were characterized by church shutdowns and intense relational conflict. (What it did to people – what it did to my staff – my team was devastating) I was ready to quit. Explain
 - I heard the whispers of doubting the goodness of God...His fairness...His justice. "I've served you my entire life. I've never turned my back on you one time," "I've done everything you've asked of me." Can I still trust you?
 - Maybe some of you are hearing the whispers too. You have pain that is creating fractures in your faith...doubts in your trust in God.
 - When we can cling to our faith even in the fires of life, this type of faith pleases God.

2. Faith matters because it produces results

Heb 11:7 "It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood." (NLT)
Explain context of Heb 11

James 2:17 "So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless." (NLT)

- Biblical faith is action not simply belief. We are to have a faith that produces results. This is the example of the entire chapter 11 of Hebrews. Example after example of the actions of faith. Explain
- James goes so far as to say that without these actions, we make our faith useless. Useless how? Useless in real life. Useless to make a difference. Useless to meet needs. Useless at representing God's heart to a broken world.
- Biblical faith does not simply impact us. This belief is the American version. Saying that your faith in God is a personal thing between just you and God is biblically wrong. Our faith impacts others. Our faith has ripple effects outward.

- If our faith is not impacting others, then we have a useless faith James is referring to. Of course our faith impacts us as individuals, but it should never be limited to that. I'll focus on the individual results in a moment, but let's look at broader results.
 - Faith motivates us to do things we would never otherwise do
 - Thus, the point of Heb. 11. The faith of these people prompted them to do extraordinary things. Actions that were out of the box, not normal for the time, things that seemed crazy to others, behaviors that required risk.
 - Noah – Abraham – Gideon – David
 - It still works this way today. Faith motivated a farm kid to become a pastor and start a church called Foothills. How? Because of faith.
 - You have no idea what you are capable of doing if you allow faith to produce results. You will do things you never thought possible.
 - Eph. 2:10 - summarize
 - Faith motivates us to assume responsibility for others in ways we wouldn't normally do. James 2:17. Faith makes us an extension of the character of the God. Since my faith is in His character, we extend this character to others.
 - For example: Compassion, mercy, forgiveness, grace, generosity, love. This is why we step in and help people. Faith compels us.
 - Why do we have a food pantry that feeds 4-5000 people a month? Because our faith compels us to.
 - Why do we have a Celebrate Recovery program? Our faith compels us to.
 - Why would be endure over 100 middle school kids every week? Because our faith compels us to
 - Why do we have a school in Guatemala with almost 200 kids? Because our faith compels us to.

What is your faith compelling you to do? Because it will!

3. Faith matters because it changes us

- Faith saves us

Eph.2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (ESV)

We start this journey by faith when we accept and receive God's forgiveness through His Son Jesus. We are forgiven. We now have a relationship with Jesus. We are adopted into the family of God. We have an eternity that is secure. BUT this is simply the beginning.

- Receiving Jesus is not the end game. It's the start of the game. We are saved to a relationship. We are saved so we can follow. We are saved so we can partner with Jesus making a difference here on earth.

- BUT it is our faith that begins this journey. Many of you have stories of how your faith journey began. For some it was early in life. (Like mine) For others it was later. But the common thread is faith in Jesus saved us all.
- The church can overemphasize the beginning and neglect what else faith is supposed to do. What's that?

- Faith transforms us

2 Cor. 3:18 "So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image." (NLT)

- When the spiritual veil is removed we finally see our need for Jesus and the faith journey begins. But our faith makes us "more and more" like Him. Our faith progressively changes us. The faith that pleases God. The faith that produces results, transforms us to be like Jesus.
- Belief alone doesn't change anyone's life. This is the myth the church has to discard. It is the belief that if we give people biblical information and they intellectually agree with that information it will result in life change.
- Let me give you an example from my life. When I was a Sr, in HS, my youth pastor trained a few of us to share our faith with others. He began to take some of us with him as he visited new students who came to church and youth group.
 - Share story –
 - That faith experience changed me somehow. It literally impacted my character, my thinking, it gave me new desires. It accelerated my faith journey. Belief can't do this but a faith that is lived out and experienced does.
 - If your faith is not changing you maybe you simply have a belief. Faith needs experience in order to grow.
 - It's like working out. You're not in shape simply because you walk in a gym. You must exercise to see change. Your faith doesn't grow because you sit in a church. You must exercise it to see change.

4. Faith matters because it overcomes the world

1 John 5:4 "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith." (ESV)

- Why does our faith overcome the world? There are two systems – two kingdoms – The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world. We've been delivered out of this worldly kingdom, yet we still must overcome it. WHY? Because it is trying to influence us against God?

Faith overcomes the world's influence. The world is constantly trying to make your faith ineffective. It is constantly trying to erode your confident trust in God.

- Faith overcomes the world's temptations
 - How? By loving God more than the world. Faith keeps us loving God as more valuable than what the world offers (pleasure, possessions, pride)
- Faith overcomes the world's threats – fear
 - How? With God's presence. Our faith reminds us that God is always with us. We are never alone...never abandoned...never forsaken
- Faith overcomes the world's attacks – pain can cause us to doubt
 - How? By raising the shield of faith. We trust the character of God even when life is painful and unfair.
- Faith overcomes the world's deception -
 - How? With the truth of the word of God. We can evaluate everything we hear by comparing it to the truth in the bible.

Heb. 10:35 "So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you!" (NLT) Remember Heb. 11:6..." He rewards those who seek Him." We can't throw away our confident trust. Our faith!

5. Faith matters because it gives us hope

Heb. 11:1 "Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see." (NLT)

- Biblical faith is not a blind hope. It is not a mindless hope. It is not an anti-intellectual hope. It is a hope that is based upon a variety of factors. The hope that God is real. Salvation through Jesus is real. Heaven and eternity are real. Relationships are eternal. It is the evidence of things we cannot see. What evidence?
 - Faith is hope based upon history
 - The historical accuracy of the bible is unquestioned.
 - Faith is hope based upon facts
 - The evidence of archeology is proving the bible daily
 - Faith is hope based upon reason
 - Believing in a Creator is intellectually reasonable. The intricate design of our world and universe indicates a designer. Design = designer.
 - Believing everything came from nothing is blind faith.
 - Faith is hope in our very DNA

- He put eternity in our hearts ‘ That’s why human beings are religious.
That’s why humans always knew there was more beyond the grave.
- Faith is hope based upon shared experiences
 - How can billions of people have the same experience because of one person named Jesus?
- Faith is hope based upon a God you can know.
 - Jesus is a person we can know, follow, listen to, experience in our daily life.

Faith matters because it gives us hope in this life.

How’s your faith today?

- Maybe it’s time to move from a belief in God to a faith of confident trust and following Jesus?
 - For some this is your first time. Your moment to say yes to Jesus.
 - For others, this is your moment to move beyond just being saved and allowing your faith to become something that truly changes your life.

Prayer time: