

What It Means To Have Faith

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. We live in confusing times – many things have been redefined

1. Religious has become intolerant
2. Sexual immorality has become an alternate lifestyle
3. Husband/wife has become significant other

B. Same is true with spiritual things

1. Especially is this true when it comes to the word “faith”
2. We don’t define this word biblically any more, accepting instead a pop-theology idea
3. Most people have bought into the idea that faith means just believe

C. Today, I want us to think about this idea because it is at the heart of our relationship with God

1. It determines our view of scripture and what we do with it
2. It determines our relationship with the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ
3. It determines our view of becoming and living as a Christian

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE FAITH?

A. Most people assume that faith means “believe” and that “believing” means you have faith

B. Faith and belief are surely related – connected to one another

1. No one has faith who does not believe
2. But, just because you believe it doesn’t mean that you really have faith – at least not in the biblical sense

C. Illustrations

1. Starving man goes into a restaurant – believing that food will help him live isn’t enough – he must eat to live
2. Car keys – do you believe this key will start my car? Believing so, might be important, even necessary, but real faith is exercised when you take the key, put it into the ignition and start the car with it

D. Faith is always belief coupled with action

1. Hebrews 11:6 -- And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. NASU
2. This is one of the best verses in all the Bible to explain faith in practical terms
 - a. if you want to please God, you must believe that he is (exists)
 - b. but your belief also understands that God rewards those who seek him
3. Believing in God is wonderful – it’s a start, it’s the foundation, the beginning place, but God rewards the seeker and that’s action, not just belief

II. FAITH IS A MATTER OF TRUSTING GOD

A. We use faith all the time

1. We get information
2. We believe that information
3. We act on that information

B. Illustration

1. You get a job
 - a. you will be hired to perform a certain function
 - b. you will earn a certain salary
 - c. you start work – payday comes – what guarantee do you have that you will be paid anything?
 - d. it's all on faith that your employer is credible and honest
2. Trust is a major issue in faith

C. This makes faith in God all the more amazing

1. Psalms 4:1-5 -- Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah. But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him. Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD. NASU
2. Proverbs 3:5-6 -- Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. NASU

D. It becomes interesting to examine how we treat God and his word

1. Question: do you believe in God?
2. Question: do you believe the Bible is the word of God
3. Hopefully your answer was, "Yes!"
 - a. but if you stop right there, it's not any better than a man who believes that eating will keep him from starving, but does not eat and starves
 - b. or any better than believing your car key will start the car, but don't use it and the car just sits in the driveway
4. Faith requires that we put it all together – belief, trust, and action – that's real faith

III. JESUS AND THE WISE MAN

A. Mt 7:24ff – there is a fundamental principle here missed by many

B. Characteristics of the wise man

1. A hearer
2. A believer
3. He trusts what he's heard
4. He acts on that which he believes and trusts
5. In doing so, he builds something solid, safe and secure
6. He is a man of faith – this is the difference between the wise man and the foolish man

C. Characteristics of the foolish man

1. A hearer
2. A believer – probably because Jesus doesn't identify lack of belief as his problem
3. Does he trust – we don't know, but this isn't the question either
4. The crux of the issue is that he doesn't act – for whatever reason
5. His lack of action is what makes him foolish and what builds is not consistent with what he heard, and it fails miserably

D. Heb 11:6 is the wise man's verse

Hebrews 11:6 -- And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. NASU

IV. TRANSLATORS STRUGGLE TO COMMUNICATE THIS SENSE OF THINGS IN SOME KEY PASSAGES

A. John 3:36 -- "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." NASU

1. There are two different Greek words used in this verse, and most modern translators acknowledge the difference in meaning between the two
2. That's why they include both ideas of believing and obeying as important eternal life

B. Hebrews 3:12-19

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME." For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. NASU

C. In both passages, there is an important connection between belief and obedience, between Belief and the consequent action one should take when he trusts that which he believes

CONCLUSION

- A. Do not be fooled into thinking that believing something to be true is enough, even if what You believe is true.
- B. The man or woman of faith – one who would be wise – acts on his beliefs
- C. What do you need to do today – what action needs to take place in your life to make your Beliefs real?