

## **HAVING FUNCTIONAL FAITH**

A number of times we have heard teachings on Faith and though it seems there have been many sermons on it, it is one topic that continuously needs to be revisited In a life of a believer because of its importance and significance.

As we start a new year, we have things that we are trusting God for, some of us are believing God for promotion in the work place, financial stability, believing God to get married, our children to do well at school. In order for that to take place we need to exercise Faith and believe God that those things will come to pass.

**In the Cambridge dictionary one of the meanings of Faith is Useful or working. So when talking about functional faith this means Faith that is useful or Faith that is working. It is Faith that has a purpose.**

**According to Strong (E-sword) one definition of faith is the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) in God.**

If we read from the Word of God, Faith is defined as:-

**Hebrews 11:1 New King James Version (NKJV)**

**11 Now faith is the <sup>[a]</sup>substance of things hoped for, the <sup>[b]</sup>evidence of things not seen.**

**Hebrews 11:1 New International Version (NIV)**

**11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.**

Commentary on Hebrews 11:1 life application study bible defines faith as the conviction based on past experience that God's new and fresh supplies will surely be ours. It is being confident and certain.

This morning as I start this sermon I would like to find out if your faith is working? Have you been exercising Faith in your life or have you found yourself in a state of unbelief which is a place where your faith has not been working.

As I start this sermon I want you to know right from the beginning that each and everyone of us has received Faith from the Lord

**Romans 12:3 New King James Version (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith**

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The context of Romans 12 :3 was in relation to spiritual gifts when it speaks about the measure of faith but it brings out the fact that we have been given a measure of Faith. I want to clarify that the measure of Faith does not mean that everyone was given a different level of Faith. We were all given Faith but what makes it differ from one individual is how much we exercise it.

So today I would like us to go on a journey where we are able to help our Faith become functional and move from a place of unbelief to a place of belief, confidence and assurance which is a place of having Faith.

### **How Faith becomes Functional**

#### **1. Faith works when we are able to hear from God first as he speaks to us.**

##### **Hebrews 11:7-8 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>7</sup> It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.**

**<sup>8</sup> It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.**

Faith involves being in an intimate relationship with God where we are able to hear him speak and direct our lives

Hebrews 11:7 - Noah got a warning from God and he was able to hear it because of his relationship with God. He was able to hear clearly what God was saying about the flood.

Hebrews 11:8 Abraham was able to hear from God and left his home to go to another land. Because of his relationship with God he was able to get clear instructions from the Lord to leave his land

#### **2. Faith works when we obey God**

**Hebrews 11:7** Noah obeyed God despite having never encountered a flood before. **He chose to obey God although it was something new and different** that had never happened before was taking place which was the whole earth becoming flooded.

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Hebrews 11:8 Abraham obeyed God and went out not knowing where he was going into a **new and foreign country for him**

### **3. Faith works when we judge God as being faithful**

**Hebrews 11:11 New International Version (NIV)**

**<sup>11</sup> And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she<sup>[a]</sup> considered him faithful who had made the promise.**

Faith works when you are able to view God as being a promise keeper and that he keeps his word.

Faith should not be based on presumptions but on viewing God as being Faithful in keeping his promises

**Considered means believing** and it showed that Sarah **believed** that God was faithful

It is important that someone believes that God is faithful and that what he promised will come to pass.

Believing happens before there are any tangible things that are being seen in the natural.

Do you believe that God is faithful?

### **2 Peter 3:9**

**9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

Context of 2 Peter 3:9 was when Peter wrote that in the last days mockers would doubt the promise of Christ coming back again and so contrary to man's perspective the coming back of Christ was not slowness but wanting everyone to come to repentance because God's timing is different from the timing of men. The same applies in our lives we should have Faith and believe that God is a promise keeper and delay does not mean denial.

### **Numbers 23:19**

**19 God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?**

Context of Numbers 23:19. Balak was King of Moab and he called Balaam who was a seer to come and curse the Israelites who were camped in the plains of Moab about to go into the

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Promised Land. Instead of cursing he Balaam actually blessed the Israelites as he even emphasized that he received a command to bless and not curse as shown in verse 20. God had promised the Israelites the land of Canaan and that he would fulfill it

In our own lives we should believe the promises of God that whatever he has spoken will come to pass. Faith should lead us to a place where we believe that his Word will be fulfilled in our lives because God is Faithful and he is a Promise Keeper

It is important that one is persuaded and convinced that God is Faithful and he works on one's behalf.

### **4. Faith works when we don't have so little Faith**

**Little Faith is when there is a lack of confidence and trust in the Lord.** Little faith is not trusting in the Lord. It is having unbelief. That is not believing that God can make things to happen. It is having weakness of faith. Let me read some passages of scriptures that describe this

#### **Matthew 14:28-31 NLT**

<sup>28</sup> Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

<sup>29</sup> "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the strong<sup>[c]</sup> wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

<sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

In this scripture Peter doubted and that caused Peter to start sinking.

There is a need to move from a place of doubt to a place of believing. Do you doubt God?

Doubt from the oxford dictionary means a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction. **Doubt is a place of unbelief.**

Are you sinking in your life because you doubted as Peter did?

#### **Matthew 17:14-20 New International Version (NIV)**

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<sup>14</sup> When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. <sup>15</sup> “Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. <sup>16</sup> I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

<sup>17</sup> “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” <sup>18</sup> Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

<sup>19</sup> Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

<sup>20</sup> He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, 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 disciples also had a lack of belief and conviction and could not heal the demon-possessed boy.

**The bible offers an alternative for believers and that is we need to Trust in the Lord and not have so little faith**

**Proverbs 3:5-6 New Living Translation (NLT)**

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup> Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take

**Trust involves**

- **Being confident and secure in the Lord**

It is knowing that he keeps you from falling or being trapped

**Proverbs 3:26 New Living Translation (NLT)**

<sup>26</sup> for the LORD is your security. He will keep your foot from being caught in a trap.

**1 John 5:14**

**14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us**

The confidence that is referred to in 1 John 5:14 is defined as the freedom in speaking, openly, frankly and with confidence. Confidence therefore goes hand in hand with boldness.

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When you are confident you are able to freely let the Lord know what you are going through without any reservations knowing fully well that he will come through for you.

- **Being bold in the requests that are made**

Boldness is there when one knows that they are accepted and loved by Christ

### **Hebrews 4:16 New King James Version (NKJV)**

**<sup>16</sup>Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Parrhesia is the word boldness in Hebrew 4:16 and confidence in 1 John 5:14. Boldness and confidence are therefore defined in the same way which means openness and frankness that one has when approaching the Lord with any requests.

### **5. Where should my Faith level be for it to work?**

### **Matthew 17:20 New King James Version (NKJV)**

**<sup>20</sup>So Jesus said to them, “Because of your <sup>la</sup>unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.**

The context was when the disciples could not cast out the demon from the demon possessed boy.

When Jesus was talking about Faith as a mustard seed it was not in relation to the quantity of the Faith but it refers to the quality of the Faith.

Jesus was actually referring to the genuineness of faith. That is rather than being in a place of unbelief, being in a place of believing God.

**It is important to start believing in God.** It is important to move from a place of unbelief and start believing that God is Faithful. As we start believing in God mountains will be moved i.e. difficult situations will be changed e.g. sickness, financial difficulties.

As I conclude this message, I want to address the question, .

### **How do you strengthen your Faith?**

#### **1. Consistency in reading the Word of God**

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Go back to the basics of reading the Word of God consistently. If there are times when you have neglected consistently reading the Word let those times pass and make an effort to daily read the Word of God as this strengthens your word base in particular you get to know more about the Promises God has laid down for you in his Word.

The first place where God speaks to us is through the Bible which is the Word of God and you can only start seeing and believing from what is written in the Word.

**Psalm 119:105 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.**

Let the Word of God lead and guide you.

### **2. Pray to God**

It is important that as a believer you pray with belief. Do not doubt but believe. Prayer is also a sign that you believe in God as it is communicating with him. Prayer also brings intimacy with God.

**Mark 11:24 New International Version (NIV)**

**<sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**

Prayer is an action and by praying and believing, you are exercising Faith and your faith becomes functional.

### **3. Guarding what you say**

It is important to guard what we say as it also either strengthens or weakens our Faith. If everyone is speaking negatively about the country are you going to be a part of it or actually say what you believe what God is doing in the nation.

If everyone is speaking about the country having no jobs are you going to just join in when you are trusting the Lord that he will give you a job.

If you are sick start declaring Psalm 91 that speaks of a long life and do not believe that your life will be cut short prematurely.

**Mark 11:23 New International Version (NIV)**

**<sup>23</sup> “Truly<sup>[a]</sup> I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them.**