

Ten Things Every Believer Should Know About Faith (Part 1)

by Bayless Conley

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Today on *Answers with Bayless Conley*:

I dare you. I dare you to trust God for something. I dare you to take hold of a promise and begin to act upon it. And start where you are. Stretch your faith and watch it grow.

Hello friend, and welcome to the program. I'm going to be sharing something with you today that could literally change your life. We're going to be looking at some very simple faith facts, yet, to many believers, they're unknown, or they're overlooked, they're not applied. But that won't be the story with you because I know that I have your attention. If you got a Bible, grab it, we're going to get into the Word together.

Hi, I'm Bayless Conley. In life, we all face uncertainty. Whether it's financial troubles, relationship valleys, a health crisis, or just trying to discover your purpose, one thing is for certain; God sees you. He loves you. And no matter what you are facing, He has the answers.

What I want to be sharing with you today, at least we're going to begin with it, we won't finish, but we're going to be talking about ten things that every believer should know about faith.

And friend, faith is important because, without faith, it is not hard to please God, not difficult to please God, the Scripture says without faith, it is impossible to please God. The only kind of lifestyle that pleases God is a lifestyle of faith.

In fact, you could look at things this way, God has already, and it is true, God has already provided everything that we need by grace. Through Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, the grace of God is made available to humanity. It's made available to us as believers. Every blessing of God has already been provided by grace. Well, faith is the hand that reaches out and takes what grace provides. Faith reaches out and receives from the hand of grace. You could say faith is the key that opens the door to all of God's blessings, to all of God's provision; spirit, soul, and body.

Janet, my wife, and I, one time, we were really excited. Someone had made a cabin in the mountains available to us. It was wintertime, and we were looking so forward to having a few days away, just the two of us, tucked away in this cozy little cabin in the mountains. And so we drive hours to get up there, we find the address, find this beautiful little cabin. It was near a lake. And there was snow on the ground. It was cold outside. You could see your breath. And I remember walking up to the front door and having a sudden revelation. I had forgotten the key. The key to the cabin had been given to me, but I had forgotten the key.

So, we're standing outside shivering, knowing that inside of the cabin, there's a fireplace, there's wood. There are hot showers. There are warm beds. There's everything that we need to be comfortable and to be blessed, but we're standing outside in the cold because I don't have the

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key. And we even looked around at other cabins that were nearby, and you could see people sitting on their couch next to a rosy fire, and just the warmth was sort of radiating through the windows of their cabin. And here we are, shivering out in the snow.

And that's the way it is with a lot of believers. God has provided so much for them, and they look around and they see other people enjoying the blessings of God. They see other people walking in the things that God has promised, but they feel like they're out in the cold either because they don't have the key or they don't know how to use it. My friend, faith is the key.

So I want to share with you. As I said, we're just going to begin in this particular lesson, "Ten Faith Facts" or "Ten Things that Every Believer Should Know About Faith." And number one is this; God has given every believer a measure of faith. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, my friend, you have a measure of faith given to you by God. Romans 12:3, the apostle Paul, writing to the church at Rome. He says this,

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you . . .

(now notice this is to everyone, this is not just to a select few),

. . . 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.

God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Listen, you weren't left out when God gave out the measures of faith to individual members of the body of Christ. He has given you a measure of faith. It came with salvation.

My dad, bless his heart, he's been in heaven for a number of years now, but he did something very significant for all of our children, for all of his grandchildren. The day they were born, he opened up an account for them, and he deposited money in an interest-bearing account for each one of the grandchildren. And so by the time they were 18 and ready to go into college, that had accumulated and accumulated. So, it actually paid for most of their college education. Well, my dad did that upon the birth of every one of his grandchildren.

Well, friend, upon the new birth of each of His children, when we're born again, when we're born into the kingdom of God, God places a measure of faith. God has put faith in your heart. I'm telling you, if you believe in Jesus Christ, it is there.

You have enough faith to do whatever God has called you to do. You have enough faith to believe for whatever you need to accomplish the will of God for your life. If, you know, "If" is probably the biggest little word in the Bible. If you will develop and increase that measure of faith.

Which brings us to point number two, fact number two. Faith can be increased. God has given you a measure of faith, but it's up to you to develop it. It's up to you to increase it. Second Thessalonians 1:3 says,

³ We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly,

God wants our faith to grow, and He's pleased when it grows exceedingly. Well, how does faith grow? Number one, it grows by feeding it upon God's Word.

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Romans 10:17 says,

¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Faith comes by hearing. It goes by not hearing. Faith comes. One translation says faith comes alive by hearing the Word of God. The Word of God is faith food. It will feed and strengthen your faith, and it will help it increase.

And truly, faith comes unconsciously as we feed upon the Word of God. Just like, say this was a cup of water, it's not, it's a cup of tea, but if it were a cup of water, I wouldn't have asked whoever brought this to me, please bring me a cup of water, make sure you bring the wet with it. No, the wet comes with the water just automatically. And friend, faith comes from hearing the Word. It is unconscious. But there's something else that must be done.

You need to act upon your faith. It is increased by hearing the Word, and it is also increased by using it. Just like the muscles of our body, they need protein, and they need exercise if they're going to increase. Now, we don't grow suddenly new muscle sets, but we can develop and strengthen the muscles we have.

Now some people have actually done that. I remember I was teaching a Bible study back in 1978. I was thinking about this actually just last night. I am probably about 10 pounds heavier than I was in 1978. That was a long time ago, more than 40 years ago. I'm probably 10 pounds heavier, and I actually would like to get rid of those 10 pounds. But I'm about 10 pounds heavier than I was. And I was thinking about it. There was this skinny little kid that used to come to the Bible study, just as skinny as a rail. But you know what, if you looked at him probably five years after that Bible study in '78, six years, seven years, I put on 10 pounds, not all muscle, but he put on 80 pounds from the time he was in that study, and it was all muscle. He became a bodybuilder. And he would eat protein-rich foods, and he was in the gym every single day. And I'll tell you what, he became a specimen. He looked like an Adonis. He was just—his muscles were huge. He was cut like a V. Well, he developed his muscles by using them. The same thing is true with our faith.

We have thousands and thousands of Christians that have heard and heard and heard, but they've never done. And their faith really isn't much stronger than when they started. You have to get out and do something. You have to use your faith.

I dare you. I dare you to trust God for something. I dare you to take hold of a promise and begin to act upon it. And start where you are. Stretch your faith and watch it grow.

Start small. Remember as well that according to Proverbs, wisdom is the principal thing. Therefore get wisdom. So I'm not saying by using your faith that you go climb out on a limb and saw the limb off and say, "Okay, God, I'm trusting You to catch me." No. That's presumption. That's foolishness unless God told you to climb out on that limb.

But there are areas in each of our lives where we can and should begin using our faith when it comes to relationships, our health, our material supply, when it comes to obedience to God, and doing what He's asked us to do. It will take faith for you to follow God and to obey Him.

So there are areas that you can immediately begin to use your faith in. Which brings me to the next point, the next truth about faith and all of these things actually they hook together. We're dealing with them individually, but we need to understand that these things work together.

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All right. So number three is that faith without works or without actions is dead. Faith without works is dead. James 2:26 says,

²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Now you see my body; it's animated right now. You know why? It's because I'm in here telling it what to do. But, if the real me, I'm a spirit being created in the image of God, I will spend eternity somewhere. This body's just the house I live in. This is my earth suit. It is temporary. It is death doomed. I realize that. But the person on the inside, man, I am alive. I am alive. I have fellowship with God. I love God from my innermost being. But the moment I leave my body, my body is dead. Just as the body without the spirit, without the real person in there, is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Another translation says, "Faith without actions that correspond is dead." If you truly believe, you will act in line with your beliefs. Faith is an act. Faith is expressed through action.

What you believe you will act upon. You want to know if I have faith? Watch what I do. It's a testimony to what I believe. What you do or what you don't do is a testimony to what you believe or what you don't believe.

Think about the story of Noah. We're told that he is one of the examples of faith. In the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, by faith, Noah prepared an ark, being warned of things not yet seen, the Scripture says.

Well, the Bible does tell us Hebrews 11:1,

¹ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

If I can see it, I don't need faith for it. God told Noah it's going to rain, and you need to build a huge boat. Well, you know what? Noah got to work. And for the next 100 years, Noah built the ark, and he did it by faith. Not because he saw storm clouds rolling up on the horizon. Not because he felt raindrops falling on his head. Not because there was thunder and lightning. No, because God had said it's going to rain. And so, Noah, by faith, began to build the ark. He began to prepare, and he did it for 100 years.

My friend, faith makes preparation. Faith has action. And by doing so, Noah saved himself and his family because he acted in faith.

When God tells us something, whether we can see evidence or not, we should respond and act upon it. That is simple faith.

I remember talking to a woman one time, and she was distraught. She said, "Pastor, I really feel that I am called to be a teacher of the Bible." She said, "I feel like God's put in my heart that I'm going to teach women's conventions and women's meetings, and I'm just so frustrated. I'm so depressed." I said, "Well, what's the problem?" She says, "Well, there are no doors open for me. I get no invitations, and I can see nowhere to go, but I've got this thing inside of me. I know God's asking me to teach, but I've got nowhere to go." And I said, "All right. Let me ask you a question. How many sermons have you prepared?" She said, "Well, none." I said, "Have you made a syllabus that you can use to teach people?" She said, "Well, no, I haven't done that either." I said, "Well, why should a door open up for you if you've made no preparation? If you

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believe God has called you to teach, then you better get busy writing your messages out, make yourself a syllabus, prepare by faith.”

Now some people say, “Well, just when God opens the doors, I know God’s going to open a door.” Not if you don’t prepare. Why would He open the door if you don’t take any steps of faith?

I remember when I was a brand new Christian, and I’m very, very young in the Lord, and I’m going to this Pentecostal church. And I had this terrible skin condition. It was just all over my body. I’d have to wear long sleeves. I literally felt like I wanted to tear my flesh off. It was so uncomfortable and just unsightly, and I just got no relief from it. It just itched and itched. And I had had it for quite a while. And I was up—I actually lived above a bar, above a pub, in a little one-room apartment. I didn’t even have electricity. I used to sit up there and read by candlelight.

So I had this Bible that I had purchased at a yard sale for 35 cents. And I’m sitting up there one night. And I’ve got my candle out. And I’m reading. And I’m reading in the book of James, chapter 5. “Is there any sick among you?” I said yes. It said, “Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will heal the sick. And if he’s committed sins, they will be forgiven him.” And I about went through the roof. I thought fantastic. Is anyone sick? I qualify. I said if I just call for the elders of the church, and they’ll anoint me with oil and pray the prayer of faith over me, I’ll be healed. I thought fantastic, but then my heart sank. Remember, I’m a brand new Christian. And I thought to myself, what’s an elder? I wonder if our church has those. I don’t even know what they are.

And so, I went down and made a call on the phone booth, and this will let you know how old it was ago. We didn’t obviously have mobile phones, but it cost a dime to make a phone call. So I put a dime in the phone booth and called a friend of mine that went to the church, the one person that I actually knew and had their phone number. And I said, “Look, I was reading this. I’ve got this terrible skin condition. And James says if you call for the elders of the church, they’ll pray the prayer of faith over you anointing with oil, and you can be healed.” I said, “I believe I’m going to be healed, but I’ve got a question.” This person said, “What is the question?” I said, “Do we have elders in our church?” She said, “Oh, yes, we have elders.” I went, “Fantastic. Tell me who an elder is.”

And she told me who one of the elders was, and my heart sank again. He was an old farmer that went to the church, and he scared me. In fact, if I saw him in the church, I would sit on the other side of the church as far away from him as I could get. One of the things I did every time I went I would look to see where he was, and I sat as far away geographically as you could get from him because he would pray in the services a lot. And when he prayed, he would jerk. His neck would jerk back and said, “Oh Lord, we thank You for Your Word. Lord Jesus, we praise You,” and he would just sort of do this jerking thing. And it freaked me out. And I thought of all people that have to be an elder; it’s him. I thought, oh well.

So, anyway, I looked up his number, and I called him out at his farm. I said, “Hey, my name’s Bayless. I go to your church. You may not know who I am. You may. I’m the guy with long hair.” There wasn’t any other males with long hair in the church. I said, “I got this terrible skin condition. I was reading in James chapter 5. And it said if you’re sick, I said I’m sick, it said to call for the elders of the church, and they’ll pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord, and you’ll be healed.” I said, “I was told you’re an elder. Is that right?” He said, “Yes, I am.” I said, “Where is your farm?” I said, “I’m coming.” He gave me the address to the farm. I said, “Okay, I’m on my way.”

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I hung up the phone. I drove out to his farm. And I still, with fear and trepidation because the guy still freaks me out. I remember knocking on the door. He answers the door. He's got his farmer clothes on, and he said, "Thank You, Jesus." And he sort of jerked when he said it. But he had a bottle of oil in his hand, didn't even invite me in right there on the threshold of his front door. I just closed my eyes and lifted my hands, and he poured that oil on my head, put his hand on me, and prayed the prayer of faith.

Now I know you don't have to feel anything as an indicator that God is working, but I felt something. When he touched me, and when he put that oil on me, it was like electricity went down, hit me in the top of the head, went down through my body, through my feet, came back up, and went out my arms. I felt it. And I thanked him and went my way. And there was no physical change. I looked, and all the scaly red itchy stuff was still everywhere. But within 24 hours, it all cleared completely up. I was healed and have been healed to this day.

But my point in that, I found a promise, and I acted on it. I didn't even think twice about it. I didn't wonder will this work or not. It's just like, God said it. I'm a brand new believer. Nobody had told me that you can't do that, or that doesn't work, or that was just for the early church, and that's all passed away. Nobody had told me anything like that yet, and there are doubt peddlers all over the place.

My friend, you make the Word of God your final authority, not the word of the doubt peddlers in your sphere of life. I acted on the Word, faith was released, and it reached out, and it took hold of the grace of healing that God had already provided.

All right. Let me cover, at least in this particular lesson, one more thing with you. It's this. Number four, faith works by love. Faith works by love. Galatians 5:6 says,

⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

You can't be a great person of faith and be ugly to people at the same time. Faith works through love. Unforgiveness, bitterness, and hatred will stop faith dead in its tracks. Actually, faith will never get off the ground if you don't walk in love.

When I was a teenager, I had some friends that were into falconry. In fact, they went out, and they caught falcons. Some of them caught sparrow hawks. Some caught what we call a California red-tail hawk, which is a very big hawk. And they trained these hawks, and they would hunt with them. And so, here's the guy, he's got this leather bracer across his forearm, and he has this big hawk on the bracer. And he's got a little leather thong tied to the hawk's leg and to the bracer. And he would go out and hunt with it. And the hawk might see a rabbit and would flap and flap its wings, but it couldn't fly because its leg was tied with that little leather thong or that leather strap.

It wasn't until he would untie that thong on the hawk's leg that the hawk could fly. And that's the way our faith is. It can't fly up to God and come back with an answer if we're in unforgiveness or if we have bitterness in our hearts. Our faith is bound. And as hard as you might try to get your faith to produce something, it will not produce until you forgive.

I remember listening to a man, years ago, tell a story about his grandfather. And his grandfather had really, really been wronged by a certain group of people. I mean, the things they did were

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terrible. And he said, “Grandpa, tell me. I know what was done to you. I know how you had to live as a little boy, how you were mistreated.”

He said, “But I’ve never heard one word of anger, one word of bitterness from you about those people. You don’t talk about it. You’re not resentful.” I’ve never forgotten what he said his grandfather told him. He says, “Son, when you refuse to forgive people, you tie yourself to them.” He said, “I didn’t want to be tied to those people, so I forgave.”

You might be tied to someone that has wronged you. Friend, it’s keeping your faith bound because faith works through love. You can forgive. Don’t have your faith chained to someone that you refuse to forgive. You need to love and forgive the way Christ has loved you and the way He has forgiven you.

If my faith was not working, if it was not producing results, that would be one of the first places that I would look. I would ask myself, have I allowed bitterness to enter into my heart? Have I allowed unforgiveness to find a home in my heart somewhere? Do I have a grudge against someone? And then I would forgive them. Immediately I would forgive them. Jesus, in those great verses where He taught about faith, Mark 11. He said, “What things whatever you desire when you pray, believe you receive them, and you shall have them,” that was Mark 11:24. Verse 25, “And when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone forgive them that your heavenly Father may also forgive you.”

Friend, unforgiveness, bitterness, hatred will stop your faith. It’ll keep it from working. Faith works through love. But if you’re not working in love, faith has nothing to work through.

There was a lady in our church. I was teaching about forgiveness in connection with healing one Sunday night. And I didn’t know her story, didn’t really know her. I’d spoken to her. But she came back the next week and told me that God had convicted her. She said, “I’ve been bitter against my father for many years.” I never asked her what her father did or failed to do for her, but she said, “I’ve been bitter. I’ve held a grudge against him. I went home last Sunday night after hearing that message. I called my father up. I hadn’t spoken to him in years. I said, ‘Father, I just want you to know I forgive you.’ He didn’t expect it. He said, ‘Thank you, baby,’ and she said, daddy, I want you to forgive me. I’ve been bitter against you all these years. He said, ‘Of course, I forgive you.’ And she said, what you don’t know, pastor, I’ve had a migraine headache for 15 years without cessation. Every minute of every day for 15 years, I’ve had a migraine headache.” She said, “I take a handful of medication. It barely minimizes the pain at all.” She said, “I woke up Monday morning after calling my dad and forgiving him Sunday night,” she said, “and I have had no pain in my head,” and then she burst into tears. She said, “I’ve had no pain in my head all week,” and she said, “Pastor, you have no idea what it’s like to have pain in your head for 15 years and to wake up with no pain.” The key for her was to choose the way of love, to walk in love.

My friend, the love of God has been poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:1. You can forgive if you’ll choose to, and I pray that God would help you do so in the mighty name of Jesus.

Well, friend, I hope that you got something from the message. And I am so excited to continue on in this series.

And I just wanted to say a big thank you to those of you that support what we’re doing to help take messages like this around the world in multiple languages. Those of you that support us in

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prayer and with your financial giving are making this possible. Lives are being changed through the truth of God's Word. So may He bless you richly in the mighty name of Jesus. And we will see you next time.

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