

Ten Things Every Believer Should Know About Faith (Part 3)

by Bayless Conley

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Today on *Answers with Bayless Conley*:

Faith is not a panic button that you push when something goes wrong. It's not an escape hatch that you get through when things go the wrong direction. Faith is to be a way of life. The just shall live by faith. It's day by day, trusting God for everything. It's the way we live.

Well, friend, I am so excited. We are doing this series about some basic facts of faith. In fact, ten things that every believer needs to know about faith, you need to know these things. They can change your world. So if you got a Bible, grab it, just sit down with me and get ready for this word. It is going to transform you. Are you ready? Are you ready? Are you ready?

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.

I'm so glad that you have joined me. And I truly believe this series is foundational. It's incredibly important. The Bible says, without faith, it is impossible to please God. It's not difficult. It's not hard. It is impossible. The only kind of a lifestyle that brings pleasure to God is a lifestyle of faith. And so we've been looking at some basic faith facts, some fundamental things about faith that every believer should know.

And frankly, I am surprised sometimes by people that have been in the church for many years, and they know so little about faith. It's understandable when you've got a young Christian, a baby Christian that's just learning. And they may not understand certain things about faith. But when you find somebody that's been in the church five years, ten years, 20 years, maybe longer, and they still don't understand the basic principles of faith, that makes me scratch my head. I don't think that we can preach too much along the lines of faith. It's by grace through faith that we are saved. My friend, faith is how we partake of the promises of God. Faith is the kind of lifestyle that we need to have in order to please Him.

So, we've been talking about some of these things. And just by way of recap, first, we found out that God has given to every believer a measure of faith. He didn't overlook you. You weren't somehow left out. God has given to every believer a measure of faith. That's found in Romans 12:3. You have enough faith to do whatever God's called you to do in life. You have enough faith to believe for everything you will need to accomplish the will of God in your life if you will use that faith, if you will develop that faith, if you will increase it. Which brings us to the second thing we talked about in detail, faith can be increased. It should be increased.

Second Thessalonians 1:3 says, your faith grows exceedingly. Faith should grow. We found out that faith grows as we feed it upon God's Word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the

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word of God. Faith also grows by using it, just like your muscles. If you don't use them, they won't grow.

I remember, for a couple year period, I lifted weights. I may not look like it now, but for a couple years, man, four days a week, I was in the gym lifting weights. And I remember I went in the first day I joined this gym, and there's the owner of the gym. And he comes up and says, "Okay, Bayless, let's see what you can do." So I get down on the bench press, and there are 135 pounds on the bench press. And he helped lift it, and I couldn't get it off my chest. Man, it was embarrassing. I said, "A little help." And he had to lift it up.

Well, you know what? It was just within a matter of probably two months or three months I was using that same 135 pounds. That's what I warmed up with. And then I got to where it was fairly easy for me to bench press 200 pounds. Now I don't lift weights anymore, but I did it "religiously" for a while. But the thing was, my muscles were strengthened. They grew in strength. And our faith will grow in strength as we use it, as we apply it in the circumstances of life, and as we trust God's Word alone.

The third thing we found out is that faith without works is dead. Faith is expressed through corresponding actions. James 2:26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, even so faith without actions that correspond is dead also."

Friend, faith is an act. Your believing will determine how you act. Your actions, your speech are an expression of your faith.

And then we found out the fourth thing, Galatians 5:6. Faith works through love. Unforgiveness, bitterness, hatred, animosity, holding a grudge, all of these things will stymie your faith. They will keep faith from operating. Faith can never lift off the ground if you're holding onto bitterness, if you're holding onto a grudge, if you stay angry at someone. The Scripture says, do not let the sun go down on your wrath. We are to forgive even as we have been forgiven. Now, faith works through love. If I don't walk in love, faith has nothing to work through.

The fifth thing we found out, we actually spent a lot of time on this one, that faith is of the heart, the hidden person of the heart. It's with the heart that we believe. Not with our physical senses, not with our mind, but it is with our heart. And I would encourage you to go back and to listen to that one in particular because, again, we spent a lot of time on it.

And then we ended last time with this thought that faith rests on the evidence of God's word alone. His word is all the evidence I need. I don't need a feeling. I don't need a confirming word from someone else. My faith rests on the evidence of God's word alone. I love the Roman centurion who said, "Lord, speak the word only, the word only, and my servant will be healed." And Jesus said, "I've not found such great faith, no, not even in Israel."

My grandfather, his name was L B McLeod. He was a road builder in one of our states and was very connected with some of the shakers and movers in his state. He was also a cattle rancher, but he had a reputation. If L B McLeod said he would take care of something, you considered it done. His word was his bond. If he said it, it was going to be done. He did business on a handshake. If he gave someone his word, they knew he would not break his word. My own father raised me the same way. He said, "Son, don't be quick to give your word, be slow to give your word to another man, but if you give it, you keep it, or you die trying to keep it."

My friend, God is true to His word, and His word will hold you up.

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I remember listening to a story, or actually, I read the story. It was a guy that had moved to the Midwest. I think it was Minnesota. And so he's there, and he's never been in a place where they had such severe winters. And there was a lake near where he lived. And the lake had frozen over. So he went out to see how thick the ice was, and he couldn't tell. So he stepped out, just gingerly, a little bit on the ice. And with every sound, he would just freeze. He'd take another step, and if there was a sound and he would freeze. And he was afraid. And it had taken him probably 10 minutes, and he'd got maybe 20 paces out on this frozen lake. And he's just not sure it will hold him up.

And then, all of a sudden, he hears this big crashing noise. And he turns around, and down this old snowy road comes a pickup truck, and the whole back is loaded with firewood. And the pickup truck drove out on the lake, drove across the lake, and up a snowy road on the other side. He thought, "Here I am, just afraid the ice won't hold me up." And this truck, actually, it wasn't a pickup truck. It was a flatbed truck. I think there were two cords of firewood on the back. It just went straight across the ice. He suddenly realized the ice will hold me up. My friend, the Word will hold you up. Step out on it. You won't sink. The ice won't break. God can be trusted.

But, and this brings us to our seventh faith fact, your faith will be tested. Your faith will be tested.

First Peter 1:7 tells us that faith goes through a test. It says,

⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Our faith is much more precious than gold. Gold is going to perish. Our faith is eternal. And when your faith goes through this fiery trial, may it be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation, in other words, when Jesus Christ comes back. But the truth is your faith will be tested. You will go through a fiery trial.

Paul wrote to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:12, he said,

¹² Fight the good fight of faith

There is a faith. There is a faith fight. You see, between every promise of God and the fulfillment of that promise, there lies a wilderness. And that wilderness is the place where you will have the opportunity to quit, where you will have the opportunity to become discouraged and to quit believing. Between every promise and the fulfillment of that promise, there's a wilderness.

It's just like the Israelites. God gave them the promise you will inherit Canaan's land, the land flowing with milk and honey. But they had to go through the wilderness before they got to the borders of the promised land. They went through many trials and tribulations in that wilderness, where they had to trust God for provision and trust God for guidance.

And so it is with us. Our faith will be tested many, many times, friend. Most of the time, the answer does not come right away. You think about Joseph. God gave Joseph a dream. God gave him the dream that he was out in the field, and he had this shock of grain. The grain that's standing up and the other bits of grain come, and they bow down to his. And he realizes that it represents his brothers. And then he has another dream, and the sun, moon, and the 11 stars

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come, and they bow down before him. And he tells his father, and his father understands the dream. “You mean your mother and I and your brothers are going to bow down to you? I don’t think so, boy.”

But God was showing him that he was going to be in a place of authority, a place of influence, a place of influence even above his father and his mother and his own brothers. God showed him it what was going to happen. It was a promise of God given to him in a dream.

So what happens next? Joseph is thrown into a pit by his brothers. Some were planning to murder him, but they ended up selling him to some slave traders, some Midianites. And so, here he is, bound, led off by people, probably being whipped and beaten and screamed at in a language he doesn’t understand. He’s taken to Egypt, put on the auction block, sold to a man named Potiphar, and becomes a servant in Potiphar’s house. Things start looking up.

Potiphar’s wife takes a shine to him and tries to get Joseph to sleep with her. He won’t do it. She lies. “Hey, that Hebrew boy tried to rape me.” And has him thrown in prison. Joseph was in prison at least two years. You think about it. He’s given a promise from God, and everything that could go wrong it seems like it went wrong after that promise happened. But there’s no reference anywhere to Joseph giving up, no reference to him becoming filled with bitterness. He maintained his relationship with God. He maintained his trust. And in one moment, he was promoted from the prison to the palace. He was made the prime minister over all of Egypt. He saved the known world from starvation and saved his own family. And indeed, his father and mother and brothers did come and bow down to him.

But between the promise God gave him and the fulfillment of that promise, there was a wilderness. There was that space that we all go through where we’re tempted to quit, to give up on our dreams, to let go of what God has told us. And that’s whether we’re trusting God’s promises for provision, for guidance, for the fulfillment of a calling He’s put in our life, for physical healing, whatever it might be. Your faith will be tested. But I tell you, once you come through the test, I pray that your faith will be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

All right. Number eight. Eighth faith fact. Your faith will not always work for another. I want you to think about that. Your faith will not always work for another.

I hear people quite often, “Well, I’m just believing God for so and so. Or I’m believing God’s going to do this in your life.” Okay. That’s good. The apostle Paul wrote about mutual faith. And Jesus said if any two of you on earth agree concerning anything they ask, it’ll be done for them by My Father, which is in heaven. There is such a thing as mutual faith, where our faith becomes intertwined with another, and we agree together, and we ask God for something. That is thoroughly scriptural. But I can’t just walk into your life and say, “Well, I’m believing God for this for you.”

I can’t walk into your apartment and rearrange the furniture. I can’t walk into your home and correct your children. I can’t walk into your home and take this painting down and rip out the carpet. No. I don’t have authority in your home. And I can’t walk into your life and exercise my faith for you necessarily.

Now, there are certain circumstances where my faith may carry a young Christian, a baby Christian, someone newly come to the faith that’s just learning how to believe God, learning

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what belongs to them in Christ. But there comes a point where God requires each of us to believe for himself or herself.

We have three children and four grandchildren. I have four grandsons. Our oldest son is 38, and our twins are 35, our boy and our girl twins. Now, they work, they provide for themselves, they pay their own rent, and they are at the age where they should be doing that. If they came over and said, "Dad, feed me." And I've got to. "Okay, sit down." And I got to feed them. Something's wrong with that. I got a 38-year-old kid, and he's still wanting me to feed him, and he is still wanting me to change his diaper? And, no. No. They grow up, and they learn to do things for themselves as is expected.

The same thing is true spiritually. There may be some, and please don't get me wrong. I realize that we're the product of the kind of teaching we've sat under. And some of us have had very, very little teaching along the lines of faith. And consequently, we've stayed in a babyhood stage. But God wants you to grow. He desires you to grow.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, or the writer of Hebrews wrote, it says, "I've got things to say to you, but they're hard to be uttered seeing you have become dull of faith. You ought to be teachers by now, but you've become those that need the milk of the Word of God all over again. You are children and you should have been growing." God wants us to grow in faith. He wants us to grow in our understanding of grace. He wants us to grow in love. He wants us to grow in compassion. He wants us to grow spiritually.

Interesting. And I'll just use this as an example. In James 5, it says, "Is there any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him." All right. It says, "Let the sick person call." It said don't have someone call for them. The sick person themselves is required to exercise their faith. The sick person themselves is required to exercise their faith in God's Word, to act upon the Word themselves.

I've had many, many, many, many times people call and say, "Oh, pastor, can you come visit so and so and anoint them with oil? They're sick." And I say, "Well, I can, but I have a question." I said, "Are they so sick that they couldn't call themselves?" "Well, no, they could call." "Well, why are you calling for them?" "Well, I just want to help them." "Well, it's good that you want to help them, but maybe they should be acting upon the Word of God themselves."

It didn't say, is there any sick among you? Let someone else call for them. It said, let the sick person call.

Now, it's interesting. There are only four recorded times in the Gospels. Only four times where someone came on the behalf of another for healing, and healing occurred.

There was the Roman centurion who came on behalf of his servant. There was the Syrophenician woman who came on behalf of her young daughter. There was the nobleman who came on behalf of his son. And there was Jairus, who came on behalf of his daughter. Those are the only four recorded examples that we have.

And if you'll read in every single story, you'll find out that the person that was sick they could not come for themselves. This Roman centurion's servant was at the point of death. The Syrophenician's daughter, it specifically says she was a young daughter. She couldn't just go

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by herself. And it says she was grievously tormented by an evil spirit. She couldn't go herself. The nobleman's son, he came for his son, who was at the point of death. He couldn't come on his own. Jairus's daughter was at the point of death. She was only 12 years old. So, in each case, the person that was sick couldn't come for themselves. And the one that came, first of all, they had a personal relationship with the individual that was sick.

In each case, there was a personal relationship. It wasn't just, "Well, yes, I heard about this person, and I'm coming for my friend's aunt, or I'm coming for so and so's cousin that I heard he's going through this or that." The examples we have, and this is the reason, this is the extent of it that we're given, the person couldn't come for themselves. The person that came on their behalf had a relationship with that person. And thirdly, the faith of the person that came on their behalf is mentioned. Faith was mentioned every single time. The person that came trusted Jesus. I think we need to stay within the parameters that we are given.

So, thank God if I can help you with my faith, especially if you're a young Christian. I can hold you up and trust you while you grow in the things of God. But God wants you to grow yourself. He wants you to get into the Word of God. He wants you to have a faith relationship with Him yourself. It's important to understand your faith will not always work for another.

And you may be the one that's watching me right now, and maybe this challenges you. It may just be that God is requiring you to believe yourself. You've been saved long enough. And you know what? If you'll get into the Word, faith will come to you. God is faithful. He will walk with you. He will teach you.

All right, our ninth faith factor is this faith is a lifestyle. Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:7, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38 all say that the just shall live by faith.

Faith is not a panic button that you push when something goes wrong. It's not an escape hatch that you get through when things go the wrong direction. Faith is to be a way of life. The just shall live by faith. It's day by day, trusting God for everything. It's the way we live.

It's not just some tool we use that we pull out of the cellar or bring from the garage when we're in trouble, and then we put it back and never use it. No. Faith is a lifestyle. The just live by faith. We live by faith. We walk by faith.

Learning to go to God first, submitting your life to the authority of His Word in every area of your life. Obedience to His will is not just about getting things. The just live by faith. And no other lifestyle is pleasing to God. Without it, you cannot please Him.

So friend, again, this is not some parachute, escape button, a magic wand that you use when you're in trouble. Yes, faith will help you when you're in trouble. But your faith, if it's not a lifestyle, it's probably not going to work if you only try and pull it out and dust it off when you're in a crisis. The just shall live by faith.

Our whole life should relate back to God. I should submit my marriage and the way I love my wife to the authority of God's Word. I need to be the kind of husband the Scripture tells me to be. I need to be the kind of father that God tells me to be. I need to be a steward of my finances, and I need to give God my first and my best the way it's outlined in Scripture for me to do. I need to gather together with saints and not forsake the assembling of myself together with other believers, as the Scripture declares we must do.

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And so, all of these things, they have to do with faith, obedience to God, aligning my life with the will of God, and walking by faith, knowing that God sees me and that He's given me instructions in His book, in the Bible for living every day. And when I do that, when I submit all areas of my life to Him in faith, then when the crisis comes, yes, my faith in His Word will certainly work.

All right, the tenth thing that I want to share, and this is so important. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. Hebrews 12:2 says,

² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith

Another translation says, "Looking away from everything else that distracts, stay focused on Jesus. He's the author. He's the finisher. He's the developer of our faith."

As you look to the Lord, He will perfect the deficient areas in your faith. And again, this is about having faith in a Person. I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have faith in God and in the declarations that They made. But ultimately, it's not just about a principle. I understand the principles of faith, but this is not just about me working a principle. This flows out of a relationship that I have with Jesus Christ. He's the author. He's the finisher. He's the developer of my faith. And as I keep focused on Him, as I have a living, breathing, walking, talking relationship with my Savior, and as I learn about Him through His Word and through times of prayer, He will develop my faith by His Spirit and through His Word. He'll help me shore up the areas where I'm weak in faith. He will help me strengthen my faith. And as well, He helps us develop our faith through ministers.

The Bible says that the five-fold ministry has been given by God for the perfection of faith that we might stand a fully mature person in Christ. Ephesians talks about that. In 1 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul writes, he says,

¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

Paul realized that God was going to use him with the Thessalonians to help perfect that which was deficient in their faith. God uses ministers. God uses something like this.

I don't think it's a coincidence that you're listening to me right now. If you've been listening to this message and to the previous ones where we talked about these basic foundational things of faith, I'm sure that it has helped you to shore up some weak areas in your faith. To help perfect. That word "perfect" means to bring to maturity some areas that have been deficient in your faith. God uses pastors. God uses Bible teachers. God uses ministers as well as our personal time in the Word and in prayer. You need to be connected to a Bible teaching, evangelistic church that's not ashamed of the name of Jesus, that loves the Word of God. It'll help you grow in your faith. It'll help you develop your faith.

The New English Bible. It says, "Our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom faith depends from start to finish."

Let's look to Jesus and trust Him to expose the flaws and deficiencies in our faith and to help encourage us and to help us to grow our faith in His precious name.

Friend, thank you for joining me. You just need to know God loves you. Maybe nobody in your world tells you that, but I want to tell you. You are loved. God loves you. He's not against you.

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He's for you. He wants to help you. And for what it's worth, I love you too. I pray that God's richest and best be yours always. Amen.

We're grateful for the friends and partners who make this program possible. For more information and inspiration, visit BaylessConley.com. Our prayer is that God's richest and best will be yours always.

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