

Kingdom News

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever... (Matt. 6:13)

Volume 2, Issue 1

February 2007

FAITH

Faith that Works

When Jesus arrived in Capernaum a centurion (soldier) came to him. The soldier had a servant who was very sick.

And Jesus said to him. "I will come and heal him." (Matt. 8:7 KJV paraphrased) Wow, just like that. Jesus is going to go and heal the servant.

Can you see the power in that statement? There was not the slightest question of ability or authority in His tone. Jesus didn't ask how far away the servant was located. There was no wondering whether or not the servant could be healed. Jesus didn't ask about the illness. He did not care what the prognosis was. He did not ask if the illness had been deemed incurable or terminal.

He simply said, "I will come and heal him."

When I saw this I asked myself, what must Jesus have known, in order to make such an assertion? He must have known that He had both the ability (to go); and the authority (to heal).

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The Leadership Corner

Leadership Living, Inc.

Leadership Lifestyle

Did you know that God wants all believers to commit to a "leadership lifestyle" in their personal lives? It's true. All Christians are to be obedient followers of Christ. And in turn we are to be leaders to the world. "What world," you ask? We are to be leaders in each of our own worlds or environments. This includes our marriages and family relationships; our professions; and in our communities.

Having a leadership lifestyle means that as we embrace the truths of the word of God, our behavior illustrates what those principles look like to the people in our environments. Let me give you an example. One of my staff members recently came to me and let me know she'd made an error. She asked me how she should handle it. I instructed her to document what the error was, the steps our department will take to correct the error; and notify the key people that would be affected. My staff person looked at me in amazement and asked if I really wanted to let anyone know that our department had made the mistake. I let her know that admitting mistakes; taking steps to correct them; as well as learning from the mistakes are basic principles of leadership. Matthew 5:16 (KJV paraphrased) states that we, the believers, are to let our lights shine so that people will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Leadership responses to situations, like this, allow God to be glorified.

I look forward to sharing more leadership principles next month.

Leadership Living, Inc.
Joyce M. White, CEO

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Now if Jesus knows this (that He has both the ability and the authority) what could possibly have stopped him from going and healing? Nothing. And when we understand what He understands, nothing will be able to stop us, either. Imagine that.

The story goes on to show that Jesus also said to the centurion, "Go your way, and as you have believed, so be it done to you." And the soldier's servant was healed in that same hour. (Matt. 8:13 KJV paraphrased) Say what, in the exact same hour? Why? Why was the servant healed right away?

There are two reasons, both imperative and both interdependent.

- 1) Because Jesus said it.
- 2) Because the soldier believed it.

How powerful is that? If Jesus said to you, "Go your way..., go on about your life. And whatever you believe me for, you will have." What would your life be like? How would it be different?

One has to wonder how Jesus could make such sweeping statements like those. He opens up the whole world of opportunity, to us, with a promise. But supposed people believe Him for something ridiculous? Is Jesus obliged to accommodate? After all, He did say, according to your faith.

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Everything that God says or does is dependent on everything else that He has said and who He is.

It is vital to understand what Jesus means when He says things like "according to your faith;" or "as you believe, so it is...." If we do not take the time to understand, our faith in God becomes abused through misappropriation.

When Jesus talks about faith He speaks to a spiritual law that cannot be broken or distorted. That's why He doesn't have a problem making such sweeping statements, as "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God...and it will be given to him." (James 1:5 KJV paraphrased)

Before we discuss that law and explore Jesus'

statements let's consider a business concept that may be a little closer to home.

When companies are negotiating contract terms and conditions; within the document they should identify the state law by which the contract will be interpreted in the event of a breach or litigation. Before the contract can be ratified, both parties agree on the governing state, whose contract laws, both parties will honor in court. In many instances the state of Delaware is chosen.

IMMUTABLE LAWS

That being said, we revisit Jesus' statement' "...as you have believed so be it done to you...."

The reason He could make this statement without fear of being obligated to comply with ridiculous requests or beliefs is because He knows the laws that govern faith. It is time for us to come to understand these laws. Especially since the act of faith invokes an agreement between us and God.

In the Kingdom of God, the Law of Righteousness governs. The only faith that can be recognized before the Throne of God is faith that complies with the Law of Righteousness. It is the only faith that can, in any way, obligate God. When faith complies with the law, it imposes on God, obligation to give audience.

EXPEDIENT FAITH

When such faith is engaged, it gets immediate attention in the presence of God. We glimpse a few characteristics of acceptable or expedient faith in the following scriptures:

- ✚ James 1:5-7 (KJV paraphrased) "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without unbelief. Because he that comes in disbelief, is unstable, like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Do not let that man think that he will receive anything from the Lord."

✚ Heb. 11:1, 6 (KJV paraphrased) “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. But without faith it is impossible to please him; because he that comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He will reward our diligence.”

One characteristic of expedient faith is that it is not mixed with unbelief. Faith may be small, but it must be pure. Another is that expedient faith trusts the Giver. If you do not trust that God will deliver, don't pray; do it yourself.

It is our responsibility to understand what constitutes acceptable faith; and to apply the tenants of that faith. If we do this, there is NO reason “under the Son” that every prayer we pray should not be answered affirmatively.

FAITH or Fantasy

You have heard it said that “faith without works is dead.” (James 2:17, 20 KJV paraphrased)

By a law of our nature, if we really believe something, it moves you to action.

The reason God says, in the book of James, that “faith without works is dead (or worthless);” is because it is an irrevocable truth.

Faith moves people to action. In fact, it moves lots of people to action. Two of the primary people moved to action are you and God. If your faith does not move you to action, it is not faith. And it will certainly not move God to action. This I am sure of. By a law of necessity, God is obliged to be moved to action, upon the recognition of true faith; and nothing less. Dead, immobile “faith” is simply fantasy. And now you see why God is not moved.

HE HEARS AND ANSWERS

Is it possible, that over time we have been lulled to sleep, being told that sometimes God does not answer prayer? Or that sometimes we don't always get what we believe God for. This has lead to the mindset that “if we believe God for something and He doesn't deliver, it's not our fault. Perhaps, He simply doesn't want to do it.” Then that's on Him, right? Wrong, dangerously wrong.

Is it possible, that the reason it is easy to believe this is because it excuses us from our responsibility? God has provided everything we could possibly need, through Christ Jesus. His work is done. If unanswered prayer is not our responsibility, then whose responsibility is it? Perhaps a better question would be; who then has the most at stake if our prayers go unanswered? I suspect it is not God.

SAYS WHO?

Between you and me, let's be clear on one thing; we're not talking about Webster's definition of faith. We're not talking about **our** definition of faith. We are talking about God's definition of faith. Within the parameters of this discourse, faith is defined as nothing more (and nothing less) than the expression of hope or certainty with regards to God. It is the heart apprehending who God is; what He has said or done.

It is important to understand that faith comes from God. Meaning that faith was established by God; it issues from God and it represents an interaction with God. Granted, there are types of faith that can be had between, say, friends or relatives. The foundation of that type of faith is essentially circumstantial. Here we are not talking about that type of faith. We're talking about the type of faith that points specifically, to God and His promises.

FAITH'S CRITERIA

It is God's intention that we have access to everything that Jesus Christ has procured for us. And in many cases He wants us to have it immediately. This probably sounds quite different from what you may currently believe. And it is not without criteria.

✚ “Ask and it shall be given...For everyone who asks receives....” (Matt. 7:7-8 KJV paraphrased)

In these scriptures, the Lord goes on to compare Himself with earthly parents. Allow me to again paraphrase. He says, when a child makes a request of the parent, does the parent ignore the child? Or does the parent give the child something other than what is requested?

Notice here that the reference is made to a child asking the parent for bread or fish. The child is asking for something that, under the terms of the parent-child relationship is valid. The child is not asking for something that the parent has no obligation to provide. Likewise, our Father fully intends to deliver on His obligations as a faithful parent/governor. In fact, His part is already done. It is now up to us to ask for what (in the terms of our relationship with Him) is valid.

FAITH THAT COMMUNICATIONS

Faith is a communication with God. Successful communication between parties necessitates that:

- 1) All parties share a common language. Obstacles to successful communication increase in complexity when parties to the communication have multiple diverse native languages, such as Spanish, Hebrew, French, or Greek.
- 2) All parties make use of the same frames of reference and the same instruments of measurement. An architect designs a series of blueprints for a new residential development. The builder will probably not worry that the 3,000 sq. ft. single-family homes will come out looking like 5,000 sq. ft. duplexes. Why? Because the expectation is that the workers will interpret the blueprints and use the instruments of measurement that are common to the trade.

As you can appreciate, when both parties to a communication have a common language and a common set of assumptions, both the sender and receiver of information can reasonably expect that what is said is the same as, or close to, what is being heard.

So it is when we talk about faith. Since we are talking about having faith in God; it is imperative that we define faith in the same terms He has defined it. Our communication with God, by faith, does not begin until we approach faith on His terms.

By God's terms:

- ❖ Faith agrees with God.
- ❖ Faith knows that God hears.
- ❖ Faith only hopes for the things that God approves.
- ❖ Faith does not believe God for something that is contrary to the Law of Righteousness.
- ❖ Faith does not ask God to act out of character.
- ❖ Faith moves both God and us to action.

FAITH FOR WHAT?

Now that we have some idea of what constitutes faith that is acceptable to God. What should we have faith for? This is a most important point; and may be in some ways disarming. True faith can only attach itself to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

✚ “According to His divine power, God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness...” (2 Peter 1:3 KJV paraphrased)

What God has provided for us by Christ Jesus, can only be apprehended by faith. And it is the only thing that faith can request of God. What has not been provided to us/for us by Christ Jesus cannot be apprehended by faith. There is no such thing as faith that reaches for something that God has not already provided.

And so we look at what Jesus has said, “I will come and heal him.” (Matt. 5:8 KJV paraphrased) He knows who God is and what He can do. And now you know too.

The degree with which we take hold of God, by faith, will determine who we are (character, integrity, etc.) and what we have (possessions, authority, opportunity, etc.)

What do you believe Him for today? ♦♦♦

CRITERIA OF OBLIGATION

Have you ever been approached by someone asking for spare change. While this might have been a bit of an inconvenience, it probably did not seem completely unreasonable, under the circumstances.

However, if a person asks you for a large sum of money, would you be inclined to give it? For some, your answer would be:

- ✚ “No, absolutely not;” or
- ✚ “No, because I don’t have it;” or
- ✚ “Maybe, but it depends on what they need it for;” or
- ✚ “Maybe, but it depends on who is asking;”
- ✚ And on what I presume would be extremely rare occasions the answer might be, “Yes.”

In either case, wisdom would dictate that we assess the situation before giving. Certain considerations would need to be taken, prior to making this type of decision.

This is equally true of God. But by what criteria does God make His determination? Here are a few:

1) As your own experience will attest, **it is necessary that our petitions or requests be heard.** It is important to understand that God is selective about what petitions or requests He gives audience to:

- ✚ “This is the confidence that we have in Him that, if we ask anything according to His will He hears us: and if we know that He hears us we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him. “ (1 John 5:14-15 KJV paraphrased)
- ✚ Now on the other hand, Proverb 28:9 (KJV paraphrased) says that “He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.”

While God is under no obligation to answer every prayer, He has however, obligated Himself to answer our prayers. And that, provided the prayers, petitions or requests meet the necessary criteria.

2) The request must be “Do-Able”

We must be cognizant of what we are asking God to do. Let’s not make the mistake that we are at liberty to ask just anything of God.

Let’s ensure that the requests we have before the Lord, do not ask Him to violate His Righteousness. Some examples of that would be:

- ✚ To ask God to give or do something for the sole purpose of satisfying our own desires. (Ps. 78:18 KJV) EVERYTHING God does must resolve itself in glorifying Him.
- ✚ To try and force the hand of God. (Matt. 4:7 KJV)
- ✚ To ask for God’s protection while intending to engage in presumptuous sin. When we expose ourselves to sin, we bind the hands of God.
- ✚ To override a person’s ‘free moral agency.’ Are we asking Him to make a person do or become something?

While these are just a few examples, if our request approaches any of these; then the request is not “do-able.” No need to ask.

3) Has the request been provided for, by Christ Jesus?

- ✚ 2 Peter 1:3a (KJV by reference) tells us that God “according to His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness...”

Okay, okay, how are we supposed to know what has been provided for us in Christ Jesus? Well, it is our responsibility to know what is freely given to us in Christ Jesus.

- ✚ 2 Peter 1:3b (KJV by reference) tells us that we can know what is given to us, through the knowledge of Him, who has called us to glory and virtue.

Our relationship with God is not just about us asking for things. It is about us getting to know the Giver of all good things. If we do not make it our business to know what God has promised in Christ Jesus; or to

know the laws that govern our relationship with Him; we will continually run aground in our petitions to (or interactions with) Him. We will continue to accuse Him of reckless abandonment; or worst yet we will stop communicating, altogether because of our frustration.

In Matthew 22:29 Jesus tells us that “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” In other words, we make unnecessary mistakes in life by not getting to know what the scriptures teach us about God and our relationship with Him.

Let’s not do that. Let’s instead learn how to interact with Him and experience a wonderfully intimate and fulfilling relationship. ♦♦♦

EMOTIONS

Food for thought -

“Emotions make good passengers; but poor drivers. It is safest when they accompany you, rather than lead you.” - JoAnn C White

What are you planning to accomplish in 2007?

By now, perhaps, you have determined a few worthy goals for 2007.

Be sure to ask the Lord’s direction and partnership in accomplishing them.

You’ll be pleasantly surprised by His resourcefulness.

Electronic Edition Coming

It is our intention to begin publishing electronic copies of the newsletter within the next few months.

If we do not already have your email address. Please send an email to KingdomNewsletter@yahoo.com and let us know which email address you’d prefer to receive your copy of the newsletter.

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