

A Clarification of Faith

By Karen Gray

Introduction

Faith, what exactly do we understand when we hear the word “faith”? No doubt we’ve all heard our share of sermons on the topic, and I’m sure we all have our own idea of what that word means. However, there’s often some confusion because the word is used in various ways and contexts, and is often misused. In this teaching, I’m hoping to clarify a few things and also share with you some revelations that God showed me as I was studying the word. I want to also take a quick look at how the Jewish believers interpret faith, which thankfully, was in agreement with what the Holy Spirit was revealing to me. But firstly, I’d quickly like to differentiate between THE faith and having faith IN something.

THE Faith

In Jude verse 3 Jude tells us to contend for the faith,

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” – Jude 1:3 NKJV

In Jude’s case, he was referring: the teachings of Jesus, the doctrines and beliefs we hold as true. Why, because Greek Gnosticism (which relied upon “mystical knowledge” and held the spiritual as good and the material world as evil – see Wikipedia definition below) was proliferating all parts of the ancient world and had even crept into the church. It undermined the very fabric of the Word of God and bringing complete error, even ship wrecking people’s salvation journey. Jude rightly tells the flock to ensure that the Scripture and teachings of Jesus be strictly adhered to.

“Gnostics considered material existence flawed or evil, and held the principal element of salvation to be direct knowledge of the hidden divinity, attained via mystical or esoteric insight.” – Wikipedia

We are also encouraged to “Stand Fast” in the faith.

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” 1 Corinthians 16:13 – NKJV

In Philippians Paul talks about striving together for the faith:

“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” – Phil 1:27 NKJV

And in Colossians, Paul encourages the brethren that now they’ve come this far, to continue in the faith be steadfast, and not be moved from the gospel message that he preached to them.

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”
– **Col 1:21-23 NKJV**

And later in the same letter he talks about being established in the faith,

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” – **Col 2:6,7 NKJV**

In other versions it says to be "grounded". (Same idea.)

Paul talks about the maturing of the body when it comes into the unity of the faith:

“...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” – **Ephesians 4:13 NKJV**

That is, that we are of the one doctrine and one faith, not tossed about by other doctrines. Paul also instructs us to examine whether we are in the faith lest we fall short.

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified.” – **2 Corinthians 13:5 NKJV**

It is obvious from these Scripture verses that “THE Faith” is actually what we believe as a whole – the things that Jesus taught us, and our doctrinal beliefs. Extrapolating from there, we can see that the "faithful" are those who share that same faith – the ones to whom Paul and others are giving instructions, and who trust God enough to do them.

Have Faith IN God

OK! That’s THE faith out of the way. I believe you are very clear on that. I now want to look at what it means to have faith. You might be already quoting Hebrews 11:1 in your mind. Whilst that’s true of course, I want to first draw your attention to what Jesus teaches us about what faith actually is, after all, Jesus tells us to have faith in God. (Mark 11:22-24)

Was He telling us to accept a doctrine or reaffirmation of the things we believe? Not exactly, and this is where the confusion lies. Unfortunately, many of us are confused when it comes to an exact definition. We are like Donkey at the end of the first Shrek movie where he sings, “I’m a believer!” and then at the end of the song sings repeatedly, “I believe, I believe, I believe!!”

We think that if we could just talk ourselves into believing enough, we can make things happen, or say to God, “See, I believe enough that it’s gonna happen.” However, it’s not about self-talk or convincing yourself that you believe. When mere belief that things will

happen because we've convinced ourselves they will (and they won't), you'll be left wondering whether you really had faith in the first place. I can tell you now, that wasn't faith.

Nor is it about how much faith you have. How much faith do you require? Faith, the size of a mustard seed. Let's take a closer look now at this passage about mustard seed faith. Just to place this in context, Jesus had cursed the fig tree the night before and on coming passed it again the next day, Peter checks it out and remarks how the cursed tree has withered away. Let's pick up Jesus' response in verse 22:

"So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." - Mark 11:22-24 NKJV

Some of you will no doubt say to me, "Look there! It says you must believe what you say before you can have what you say!" Whilst that is true, it's not the manifestation of the thing spoken that your belief should be centred on, but in the goodness of God to produce it. It's God's character that's the issue here. Rather than say to yourself, "Wow! I don't think I could move a mountain! I don't think I have the faith to believe for that!", look to God and say, "If He said it, I believe in Him to do it."

Not convinced then let's take a look at the parallel passage in Luke chapter 17 beginning at verse 5. The disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith, and Jesus responds by giving some teaching on the subject as well.

"⁵And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."⁶ So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

⁷ And which of you, having a servant ploughing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?⁸ But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" - Luke 17: 5-10 NKJV

Jesus' response to the question of having enough faith (or increasing one's faith) was that even a mustard seed of faith can move mountains (or in this case a mulberry tree). That is, it's not the amount of faith that's the issue here but what your faith is based upon.

Jesus then goes on to talk about servants. Now you might be inclined to think, 'Hang on a minute! He changed the topic without fully answering the question', but He didn't. He is following up with an illustration. That is, in the same way that you expect a servant to do

what he is told without having to feed him up, build him up, reward him, or encourage him to do so, so you don't need to bulk up your faith, or work it up somehow, in order for it to be done.

Likewise, when God tells you to do something, whether it's to command a mountain to be removed or to pray for the sick, you can be assured that the outcome will be in God's favour because He wants it done, and because His hand is on it to make it happen. Therefore, He will supply all that's required for you to complete the task. You just do it and it works. It has nothing to do with you. You are just the hands and feet that He uses. Sure, you show your badge of authority in Christ to the enemy, but in the end, you are just like the unprofitable servant, privileged enough to work with Him, but still just the servant after all. It's God who gets the glory.

Chain of Command

It's important to understand that there's a pecking order in the spirit realm. God and His word have the last say and are the ultimate authority. You have also been given authority and are seated with Christ in heavenly places. This authority is a result of the New Covenant. It's no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me, and just as He is, so I am in this world! Now even the demons are subject to us, and also the natural world must obey. But we are also under His authority. There's a command structure in place. Once we understand this, it can make things much simpler.

Consider the Roman centurion with the sick servant. He sent message to Jesus as He was coming towards his house, that there was no need for Him to actually visit to the house. He understood the command structure. He can tell his servants to go and they go. He himself was also under authority. If someone more senior than he told him to do something, he knew he couldn't argue the point, he had to go and do it. The centurion, likewise knew that Jesus had ultimate authority and power to back it up. If Jesus told the illness to go, it was out of there quick smart – no "if's", "but's" or "maybe's". Jesus then commended this man for his faith. He understood how it all worked.

Returning to our passage in Luke, this is what Jesus is trying to point out to the disciples. It's not the amount of faith they need. They had to change the way they looked at God, and His spiritual order. Faith is about His authority in the spirit realm, and knowing the will of God, and our place under Him. We are just the jumper leads. If God says, lay hands on the sick and they will recover, then He's the boss. What He says happens with no arguments.

Do we have faith that God is who He says He is, or are we putting our faith in how well or how much we believe. In Mark 4:35-40 it records that when Jesus took His disciples out in the boat to cross over to the other side, it had been a tiring day. The multitudes had been following them around, and as usual He had taught them and healed them and cast out demons. Jesus was tired enough to crash on a cushion and fall asleep in the back of the boat.

Then out of nowhere, a huge storm blew up, causing the waves to crash over the boat and the water to start filling it. Even though the disciples were seasoned fishermen, the storm became so bad that they became fearful, to say the least. When they finally remembered

that their Master was asleep in the back of the boat, the first thing they said to Him was, “*Don’t You care that we are perishing?*” It was like an accusation. Things weren't working out for them so it must be God's fault! Isn't He supposed to be looking after them?

Jesus then stood up and rebuked the storm, and turned and rebuked them for their lack of faith. They were dealing with the situation. As fishermen they must have dealt with storms before, but they hadn't expected/anticipated one to well up suddenly and swamp the boat. Why was this happening to them? WRONG question! What did they have faith in? Did Jesus ever say there would be a life without suffering or tribulation? No! BUT they should have had faith in Him. He should have been their first “go-to”. “Master what should we do?” should have been their reaction, rather than trying to fix the problem themselves first and then when they couldn't fix the problem in their own strength, blaming Him for not caring.

Personal Requests

OK, we might understand the spiritual command structure and that God has ultimate power and authority, but what if I'm personally praying for something in particular? How does that outwork practically?

There are two possible situations that will determine the answer to your request:

- a) It's promised in His Word,
- b) it's not in the Word.

a) When It's Promised in The Bible

If it's a promise in the Bible, then you can be sure that you have it when you ask for it, because God's word is absolutely true. He is faithful to His word, and therefore, it's yours because He said it is. You want healing, it's already promised, and He is faithful. The healing is yours. You can expect it when you ask for it. We can even picture it in your mind. It may not be instant but it's on the way. In fact, acting like we already have it, shows God that we trust Him and His Word as dependable and true, and He delights in that. In fact, as Christians we are expected to have faith in Him and His word.

Repeatedly, the Bible tells us to trust God, or to have faith in God. It also says to believe in Him, and to trust in Him. Suffice to say the list is quite long.

“But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” – Acts 3:14-16 NKJV

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.” – Romans 3:21-22 NKJV

“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” – Galatians 2:15-20 NKJV

“But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” – Galatians 3:22 NKJV

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” – Galatians 3:26

“Therefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints” – Ephesians 1:15 NKJV

“This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him.” – Eph 3:11-12 ESV

“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;” – Colossians 1:3-4 NKJV

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” – Colossians 2:11-12 NKJV

“So, they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.” – 2 Chronicles 20:20 NKJV

“Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”” – John 6:29 NKJV

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of God?’ He answered and said, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?’” – John 9:35-36 NKJV

“While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them. But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him” – John 12:36-37 NKJV

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;" - John 17:20 NKJV

"It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead"- Romans 4:24 NKJV

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" - Philippians 1:29 NKJV

"The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him." - 2 Samuel 22:31 NKJV

"And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all who were with them, for they cried out to God in the battle. He heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him." - 1 Chronicles 5:20

"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." - Psalm 2:12 NKJV

"Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD." - Psalm 4:5 NKJV

"But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name. Be joyful in You." - Psalm 5:11 NKJV

"And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You." - Psalm 9:10 NKJV

"Show Your marvellous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You From those who rise up against them." - Psalm 17:7 NKJV

"As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him." - Psalm 18:30 NKJV

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God." - Psalm 20:7 NKJV

"O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me." - Psalm 25:2 NKJV

"Keep my soul, and deliver me; Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You." - Psalm 25:20 NKJV

"I have hated those who regard useless idols; But I trust in the LORD." - Psalm 31:6 NKJV

"But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." - Psalm 31:14 NKJV

“Oh, how great is Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, Which You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men!” - Psalm 31:19 NKJV

“The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.” - Psalm 34:22 NKJV

“Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.” - Psalm 37:3 NKJV

“And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, And save them, Because they trust in Him.” - Psalm 37:40 NKJV

“He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD.” - Psalm 40:3 NKJV

“But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in You.” - Psalm 55:23 NKJV

“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.” - Psalm 56:3 NKJV

“Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah” - Psalm 62:8 NKJV

“The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory.” - Psalm 64:10 NKJV

“But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.” - Psalm 73:28 NKJV

“O Israel, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.” - Psalm 115:9-11 NKJV

“It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man.” - Psalm 118:8 NKJV

“It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in princes.” - Psalm 118:9 NKJV

“Those who trust in the LORD Are like Mount Zion, Which cannot be moved, but abides forever.” - Psalm 125:1 NKJV

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;” - Prov 3:5 NKJV

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.” - Proverbs 30:5 NKJV

“Trust in the LORD forever, For in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength.” - Isaiah 26:4 NKJV

Why does the Bible repeatedly say to have faith in Him, believe in Him and to trust in Him? Surely, because it emphasizes this repeatedly, we need to take notice! Our faith must be solidly in God, Himself, and not in how much faith we have in faith, or how much believe it will magically appear because we've prayed, or because we believe we do or don't deserve to have our requests answered.

The First Car Example

For example: Imagine you are a young teenager and your father tells you he'll buy you a new car up to a certain value once you gain your license. Do you think, *'Well, I don't know about that. Perhaps I'm not good enough. Perhaps I haven't spent enough time with him. Or perhaps I'm the worst child he has and he merely tolerates me. Why would he give me a car?'*

NO!!! If your dad made you a promise, you'd be online checking out all the cars available under the money limit. You'd read up all the reviews and how much it would cost you to maintain. And when you found one, you'd probably go and check one out at the local car yard. Then once you have it settled in your mind, you'd be thinking about what it was going to be like once you had your car, and how it will change things for you.

More so, we can trust our Heavenly Father to fulfil His promises to us. He won't give us a scorpion when we ask for an egg. (Luke 11:12) The egg speaks of newness, promise and expectancy, and the scorpion – the sting of disappointment. He knows how to give good gifts to His people and He's far above any earthly father.

Not only do we trust Him because it's in His Word, but we can trust Him because we know Him personally. We know what He is like and how dependable He is. People don't just put their trust in any old thing. Their trust is built upon a foundation of experience and knowing a person's character. The more we know Him, the more we love and trust Him. This is where reading the word to renew your mind and understand how He thinks, and being intimate & worshipping Him personally are so, so important.

As briefly mentioned, we don't have "faith in faith", but have faith in the character and goodness of God. He said it, it's a done deal! Smith Wigglesworth said, "He said it, I believe it, that settles it!" It's all about Him – His truthfulness, His goodness and His love. It's not about us. Therefore, you believe you have them because of who God is and what He has said will come to pass, then you will have them.

b) When It's Not in The Bible

But what if it's not in the Bible? Obviously, you inquire of God if it is His will or not. Now if you have renewed your mind in the word, You will likely already have an inkling of what way the answer will fall. Most likely God will grant your request, because He is a Good and generous Father, but He also wants what's best for us. Therefore, we ask.

Once we know we have it – we know that we know that we know that God has answered, "Yes!" to our request – then we become grateful and act like we have it. We can call forth those things that are not as though they already were. We start to act like we have it in the

same way that the son with the promise of a new car is preparing to receive it on the day! We do this because it's a done deal. We can begin to act like it's on the way.

For example: When I order something online, I have faith that it will be delivered, because that's part of their promise/service once the item is paid for. (Well, there are obvious flaws in this analogy because people sometimes make mistakes, but on the whole, I know that it will be delivered.) Now, if God has said, "Yes!" to our request and we have made certain of this, what we've requested is in the spirit mail. We can act as though it's being delivered. We have those things that we requested and it's just a matter of time before it comes. Why? Because we know the faithful one with whom we've made the request, and know His answer and that His word is true and final. We can start acting as if it's in our hand.

What if God says, "No!" to your request? It's possible that what you are asking for is not in your best interests to have. We can't always see the bigger picture. We need to humble and submit to His will not ours –just like Jesus at Gethsemane. God's will was not to take the cup of suffering from Him. Jesus humbly accepted God's will instead of His personal request, even though He knew the amount of suffering He would have to endure.

I'm sure you probably already understand this much, but I'd like to now take a broader look at faith. We need a clearer definition. As previously mentioned,

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." -
Hebrews 11: NKJV

That is, faith must have legs. It's important act like you have what's coming to you. When you receive a prayer of healing, do something you couldn't do before - act like you are healed. If your back had been too sore to move before it was prayed over, try moving it, and so on.

Let's look at "faith" from the Jewish perspective: (This definition was given to me by a Messianic Jew, but I believe they have pieced it together from an article at <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/emunah-biblical-faith>)

Definition:

Faithfulness, faith - "Emunah". Pronounced: eh-moo-NAH,

Meaning: A relationship.

Origin: Hebrew is all about how we walk.

"Emet" on the other hand means "Truth" - as in God is Truth. Unfortunately, this word is often confused by non-Jews as "Emunah".

In Genesis 15:6 What is the nature of Abraham's belief that God that was counted as "righteousness"?

"Tzedah", means "righteousness" or "justice" and is one of the attributes of the LORD God of Israel. God is called the "LORD our Righteousness", or the "Righteous Judge". There's also the Righteous God, and so on.

It is quite clear that Abraham's righteous belief was not as simply accepting God's statements as true, but by doing (Abram went into his wife Sarah, he walked into the future) Abram did what Almighty had said.

The "Emunah", walking out, spoken of here is more than belief that certain statements about God are true; it is belief in God, trust and reliance upon God, all of which call forth behaviour consistent with that stance of trust and reliance.

The meaning of "emunah" is neither new nor controversial; it is just not often applied. We, the body of Messiah, talk a lot about praying and proclaiming the Scriptures, but not physically walking that out. Examining the verses in context is enough to convince any reader that the basic root meaning of "emunah" is action to walk forward towards the face, the Panim of Elohim. Being a doer and not a hearer only. Forsaking what is behind and moving towards the face-to-face relationship we were born for."

We tend to get fixated on the "*I believe, I believe, I believe!!!*" part, instead of trusting in His authority and His desire to give you what you requested. We often forget to walk it out – to put legs on your faith. We get hung up on incorrect notions like, "Oh, I haven't prayed enough this week." Or "I had that unkind thought about that person yesterday, so God is probably miffed at me." They're just lies of the enemy. The enemy wants you to lose faith in God, and ultimately, in your relationship with Him. It doesn't happen in an instant but through a series of little disappointments.

Disappointments

Disappointments happen because our expectations are not fulfilled, or in this case, we may have had situations where our "faith" has proven fruitless and now wonder why it didn't work for us. After repeated attempts and disappointments we can become discouraged. The Bible even says that

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life." –
Proverbs 13:12 NKJV

Another way of saying this is that repeated disappointments can become discouraging to our faith in God. What if you did have faith and nothing happened? Sometimes, we've asked amiss, and/or are not willing to believe that God has said, "No!"

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." – **James 4:3 NKJV**

The Delays

However, more often than not, there are delays and we need to persist in prayer and not cave into disappointment. The devil wants you to doubt God's goodness and His good character. He'll try everything to make you give up and to make you lose faith. You can't afford to listen. You must continue to persist and have faith, no matter how long it takes. If

God has said it, we must believe Him – just like Abraham did, even if the circumstances in the natural are against us.

For example: During CoVid, the price of housing rose suddenly and steeply. This meant that many people with investment housing that were tenanted, chose to sell their properties in order to pay off their loans and make a profit from the inflated selling prices. The flow on effect was to cause a shortage of available rental houses on the market. Not only that, but for the houses still being tenanted, most landlords took advantage of the shortages and hike in market prices to raise rents by huge increments. This, in turn, forced many tenants out of homes, causing the demand for new accommodations to rise significantly in what had become a very shrunken rental market. (There were other factors that caused the housing shortage as well. Many lost their jobs because of vaccine mandates and had to break their current leases to find other cheaper housing. In Queensland, as soon as the borders we reopened, we also had an influx of people migrating from other states that had had extreme lockdown rules. Because it started at the start of the year, the market demand was higher due to the need for university students needing accommodations before the academic year commenced, and those families that were moving during school holidays for whatever reason, were also on the hunt for housing as well.)

Unfortunately, our landlord also wanted to raise our rent over \$230 per week at the end of our current lease. My husband works full-time, which meant it was left to me to find something cheaper. Although I had been to inspect several rental houses, and filled out copious applications, our applications were not even making it to the top of the assessment pile before the house was let to other people.

As the vacate deadline quickly approached, it became more and more apparent that we would have nowhere else to go. There were already many displaced people living in tents on the beach because even alternative accommodation like motels, or caravan/camping parks were completely full and simply not available.

The deadline was set to a Tuesday in June and it was the Friday just prior to it. Now it takes a couple of weeks from the processing of applications, to obtaining the keys and shifting in. The agent waits until they have all the applications. (However, if there are numerous applications to check, they might only look at the first few, which I suspect was the case for the most part.) After the applications are sorted, what the agent considers the best prospects, are shortlisted and these application (after references and details are checked) are sent through to the owner to peruse and pick what they consider to be the best applicant. Then the applicant chosen is notified. At this time, the prospective tenant must pay the bond and 4 weeks rent in advance, then and only then when the money is paid, can the final stages commence. This includes the agent walking through the property while recording any previous damage, and imperfections in the property. A lease is then drawn up and handed with the entry report to the tenant to sign, and finally, the keys handed over. The usual time for this process is generally around two weeks. Unfortunately for us at this juncture, we only had 4 days to be shifted out and completely moved into the new place. It looked impossible. However, I wasn't panicking. I felt as if God had us in His hand, because He is a good Father.

On that Friday morning, for some reason I looked again at the rental ads. There was a newly listed house that might suit our needs, but they were not even offering viewings until the Tuesday by which we needed to be out of our current rental. Nevertheless, I rang the real estate agent on the off chance that we might be able to view it earlier. I explained the situation to her and she told me that she would discuss it with the owner and call me back. In the meantime, I sent through an application and our particulars. The following day we viewed the property, we were approved, bond moneys were paid and we collected the keys on the Monday afternoon. It was a miracle. It never happens that quickly!

I could have given up, but I believed in God's goodness. I could do nothing else. Did I have faith in my prayer request? No, I simply had faith in God's goodness despite what the situation looked like. However, that faith was tested to passed the eleventh hour - to a time that was no longer humanly possible.

Persistence

I've actually heard a person say, "If I've asked God for something once, isn't it a lack of faith to ask a second time?" That sounds logical except for the fact that Jesus told us to be persistent. (See how man's wisdom sometimes opposes God's) Why? Because there is an enemy who can block prayers and outcomes. Sometimes there's an unseen battle going on, and our prayers are part of the battle. The more we trust God for the outcome, even though it's being held up, the more likely the outcome will be positive.

Remember Daniel who prayed for 3 weeks.

"In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled....."

¹²Then he said to me, 'Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.'" – **Daniel 10:2-3, 12-13 NKJV**

The angel told him that God had given His answer the day Daniel asked, but the devil was delaying the outcome. Did Daniel stop praying after the first day? No! He kept at it until His prayer was answered.

Now since that happened to Daniel, it can happen to us too. It can be a battle – literally in the spirit realm, and we need to keep praying for the outcome. If we give up before we see the manifestation of our requests, we can empower the enemy by our negativity, and lose both the battle and the answer to our request. The devil will always try to stop the answer, or twist our thinking enough for us to abandon hope if he can.

Do I have a Scripture verse to back up that statement? Yes! Remember Zacharias when he was visited by the angel Gabrielle who told him that he and his wife would have a child, (John the Baptist). When Zacharias became negative and started to object to their old age,

the angel made him mute. John's miraculous birth was part of God's perfect plan and no negativity would be allowed to prevent things running their course.

Likewise, our negativity empowers the evil one to stop the answer to prayer. He's a master of deception. We often believe the enemy's delay over the goodness of God. We in essence say that God's word isn't true, or He doesn't love us because we are somehow faulty, sub-optimal merchandise, or worse, that Jesus didn't die for us, or God made a mistake when He chose us. Can you see how this is anti-faith, and slaps God in the face? Not only is this totally refutable in God's Word, but it displays a lack of understanding of God's character, and your own identity in Christ. Remember the Word says that it is no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you. If you now denigrate yourself, aren't you also denigrating Christ in you.

We must sometimes be like the persistent widow who keeps at it, and not be too quick to give up. At the end of the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8, Jesus questioned whether He, upon His return, He would find this kind of faith on earth. Why? Because this generation is the "now" generation more than ever before. We have everything at the click of a button. Patience is no longer a virtue to be prized. Nevertheless, we are asked to persist - to call forth those things that are unseen as though they were, and to trust Him and His goodness to us.

God's Timing

I need to also add here, that sometimes delays are really about God's timing. This one is a little trickier. As humans, as soon as we catch the ball, we want to run with it. Instead of waiting to hear God also say, "...*but not yet*", we start assuming it's for now. Then we get upset and disappointed because we don't have it straight away. We seldom sit down and ask God, "*Did you mean 'yes' for now or later? Do I have to wait? Do I need to do something like prepare for this, first?*"

This is especially relevant if you know that God has called you to the ministry or to the mission field. There are obvious things you need to do to prepare. Perhaps attending Bible College, or applying for a passport, and so on.

Now I Have It, Now I Don't

While not really a delay per se, but can cause disappointments nonetheless, there are times when a person is healed and a day or two later experiences those same symptoms back again? God is not an "Indian Giver". Those symptoms are a lie, tailored to convince you to accept the illness back. As soon as you agree, you've handed the invitation to the infirmity to make it true, and it greedily accepts and barges his way back in the door.

I remember being told of a young woman (I knew this woman and the preacher involved) who had had constant kidney problems, who was prayed for during a church meeting. She was miraculously healed, but a couple of days later she puffed up like a balloon again, and all the symptoms returned. Thankfully she was at church again when it took place. They prayed again for her, only this time nothing happened. That was odd. Why was the infirmity

back and now why wouldn't it leave? They'd prayed in the same manner the first time and saw a great healing take place.

Given the seriousness of the condition, they were about to set out for the hospital when the pastor, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spun around pointing at the young woman and cried out angrily, "This is a lie!" Immediately, the swelling disappeared and her kidneys were normal. The infirmity wasn't really back. The evidence was false. No wonder praying was fruitless. She was already healed. The evil spirit behind this was just deceiving the person into speaking it out.

The keys avoiding possible disappointments are to keep praying until we get the answer, but also to also thank God continually for the manifestation of the answer after you've received confirmation that it's God's good pleasure to give you what you've asked for. Then even if the enemy wants to convince you that you don't really have the answer after it has already manifested, you just tell him he's a liar, and to keep thanking God for the answer. In the end, it's all about trust in God.

Trust/Faith in God is Part of Love

Just how much we love someone can easily be seen in how trust them. The more we know them and have life experiences with them, the more trust is nurtured and grown. In the case of trusting God, it's built on knowing and loving God well enough to do so. How can we say we love God and then say we don't trust His love for us?

In Luke 11, Jesus tells us that asking God for something is like going to a friend at night to obtain some bread to feed a late visitor to your home. Now a normal friend might object because of the lateness of the hour, and that he's in bed and so is the family, but on your insistence and persistence, he'll get up and give you what you've asked for because he is your friend. Jesus is our friend as well. In fact, closer than a friend. Therefore, He tells us to keep knocking until the door is open and we've received what we've asked for.

It's like asking your earthly father for something, (though remember that our heavenly Father is far superior to our earthly ones). Our earthly parents may know how to give good things to their children even if they are evil, but our heavenly Father is all good, and knows how to give good gifts (Matthew's version 7:11) and even the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13) to those who ask Him. We just need to keep on knocking, be persistent and realise what is taking place in the spirit realm, trusting in God's good character, not our bad one. We CAN trust Him above everything else – just like a child trusts his father to give him what he needs and to take care of him. We can have faith like a child.

How can We Ask in Complete Trust?

When Paul wrote in a letter to Timothy, he reminds Timothy to pray without doubting, but he was also referring to worshipping God as well.

"I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;" – 1 Timothy 2:8 NKJV

Note: that lifting up holy hands suggests that we are praying with adoration, praise and worship, because we know that God is good all the time, no matter how things might appear. Praise and worship break the yolk. When we delight ourselves in God, He gives us the desires of our heart.

“Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” – Psalm 37:4 NKJV

Besides which, praise and worship in the midst of turmoil demonstrates our trust and faith in God, and it pleases Him greatly. It can also give us a peace knowing that everything is bound to work out. So, there’s no down side, only plusses.

How Does Faith Work in the Prayer Line?

In your mind you may be still questioning what happens in the prayer line. Whose faith does God respond to before we see a miracle happen? Is it the pray-er’s responsibility to have faith, or the one being prayed for? Is it the congregation's faith? How does that work? Is it all three? Is it the gift of faith, or perhaps a special gift of healing that's in operation? What faith is it? Who is responsible to have faith? I would say that God simply responds to faith. Period!

We can find examples in the Bible of each.

Sometimes God responds to **a single person’s faith**. Consider the woman with the issue of blood (Matt 9:20-22). This was her last hope. She was an unclean outcast. She had to keep away, but she knew that He was powerful in God – the Messiah. Therefore, she only really needed to touch His garment. She didn’t need long winded public prayers over her. She just needed Him.

Likewise, blind Bartimaeus outside Jericho (Luke 18:35-43), cried out when he heard that Jesus was passing by. He knew Jesus could heal him and he was determined not to let this moment pass by.

We know that sometimes miracles happen because of the faith of the **one praying for another**. Jesus raised the dead on three occasions. It was His faith that raised them – obviously it was not the faith of the dead person!

Peter and John’s faith healed the lame man as they entered the gate beautiful on their way to temple (Acts 3). The man expected to receive funds, not healing, but the faith of Peter and John healed him.

Consider also those who come **together in agreement** in faith for another (intercessors) – like the paralytic who was let down through the roof in Matthew 9:2 and again in Mark 2:5. The Word says that when Jesus saw their faith He responded. It was the paralytic’s friends that were expecting a miracle. Jesus responded to their faith.

Likewise, Jesus also stated that where two or more agree about what they ask the Father for, it will be done for them. (Matthew 18:19) James also instructs the church to call for the

elders to anoint and pray for the sick, and that same prayer of faith will heal him. (James 5:14)

Praying together has power. I was part of a Spirit led intercessory group for many years and can testify that we saw God answer many prayers. It was powerful. That's why we should seek to pray together often – especially as the days grow darker. If you're praying in a group, then you can stand on that promise Jesus gave us, namely:

“Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.” – Matthew 18:19 NKJV

Sometimes, however, it's a **God ordained moment** when the Holy Spirit intervenes. Just like when Jesus raised the dead man because He had compassion on the young man's mother (Luke 7:11-17) who was weeping as the funeral procession drew near.

Likewise, God can give us a compassion to pray, or the gift of faith. It's like a sudden, “You just know that you know that you know that God's got this. It's a given.” When God wants it done, He empowers us to trust Him.

But in any of those cases, it's not the amount of faith you have, but that you trust in One who is able to do the impossible, because we know Him and His character personally. Our eyes are fixed on Him alone, and not on our performance or worthiness, or merely the receiving, or how much faith we happened to have, therefore! Our faith is squarely in God.

Wrapping this up

- Faith is primarily about trusting in God's character. We know Him and trust both Him and His word.
- If it's in the Bible, you can pray with assurance that you'll receive because He said it, and His Word is absolute truth.
- There's a chain of command. God is the Ultimate power. There is no one above Him. God says it, it's a done deal.
- If it's not promised in the Bible, you can pray to find out whether it's within His will. If He answers, yes, we can pray knowing that He will grant us our request, because we know He is true.
- If we know it's true, we can put legs on our faith
- If the answer is "No!" we must be like Jesus and humbly accept God's will above our own.
- Sometimes when we pray the enemy tries to delay the answer enough for us to give up. If we give up, we won't receive. Conversely, if we keep persisting in prayer, our prayers empower the angelic forces who are bringing our answers.

- Have child-like faith that worships God in the waiting, and says no to negativity about God. God delights in our faith.
- God simply responds to faith no matter who is involved:
 - Pray-ers (one laying hands)
 - Receivers (one being prayed for).
 - Intercessors (Two or more are gathered).
 - Gift of faith moments.

God responds to them all, either solely or together in a group. He just loves the fact that we are prepared to surrender all and trust Him. It speaks of our love for Him, and He delights in it.

My final word is to have faith in Him. Be like a child with his dad. ☺