

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FAITH?

JAMIE MCNAB

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I've been talking the last couple of weeks about faith. **WE NEED TO LIVE BY FAITH.**

SEEING WITH THE EYE OF FAITH (rather than relying solely on sight).
We have also seen **different levels or types of faith experiences — none ... little ... great ... weak ... strong ... ever-increasing.**

Let's continue to review the topic of faith further.

When we approach God in faith for something — what do we expect our faith to accomplish?

We have to watch out for a faulty concept — that we are trying to move God and overcome His reluctance.

The basic premise here is that God is remote ... reluctant ... unwilling — so we need to labour ... demonstrate great and powerful faith ... **to move Him to deliver on His Word.**

In practice ... **we often see people turn to complaining ... bawling and squalling to God — to move Him.** And ... **if that doesn't work — maybe get a church email campaign going** (maybe God will be impressed if numbers are big enough —give in?) 😞

We need to realise that faith isn't about convincing a reluctant God to act!

Psalms 145:8-9

8 **The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,**
Slow to anger and great in mercy.

9 **The LORD is good to all,**
And His tender mercies are over all His works.

God's disposition is to show favour! That is God's "natural default setting".

He is not stubborn ... awkward ... difficult to reach ... reluctant.
He is easy to entreat.

Matthew 7:7-11

7 **"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

8 **For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**

ASK. RECEIVE!

"HOW MUCH MORE"! THE FATHER IS A VERY GENEROUS GIVER!

God is described as our **HEAVENLY FATHER**. What would a "good" earthly father be like? Uncaring ... difficult? Needing to be bullied into helping?

Or: Easy to entreat? Generous?

Matthew 6:25-34

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. **Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?**

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet **your heavenly Father** feeds them. **Are you not of more value than they?**

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 “So why do you worry about clothing? (*Why do you worry at all?*) Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?**

31 “Therefore **do not worry**, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For **your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**

33 But **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

MUCH MORE!

Again: **Jesus refers to God as “Heavenly Father”**. **Already looking out for us. Already on “our side”**. No hint of having to engage in a wrestling match to “get God to move”.

God The Father would always win the “Best Dad” award. 😊

Hebrews 4:14-16

14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.**

15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses**, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

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

Jesus sympathises — understands. He’s been here ... experienced life as a human being — got the tee shirt!

Approach confidently. **WE WILL OBTAIN!**

GOD IS A FATHER — who DELIGHTS to have His sons and daughters come to Him for help.

1 John 5:14-15

14 **Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.**

15 **And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

CONFIDENCE. “WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE WHAT WE HAVE ASKED OF HIM”.

There is NO hint of a battle — an army of saints storming heaven?

Matthew 6:5-8

5 **“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men.** Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

6 **But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**

7 **And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.** For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

8 **“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.**

There is no need for vain repetition. In the sense of “badgering” God continually.

GOD KNEW OUR NEEDS BEFORE WE DID!! We are not telling Him anything new. 😊

One translation of **verse 7**: “Don’t babble on and on”.

It’s not a matter of wearing God down ... trying to “twist His arm” and overcome His reluctance.

(Of course ... if you've got a lot you want to cover with God — go all night if it's appropriate!)

But doesn't the Bible instruct us to be persistent — to “go on and on”? Almost become a bit of a nuisance?

Luke 11:1, 5-8

1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “**Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.**”

5 And He said to them, “**Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’;**

7 and he will answer from within and say, ‘**Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you**’?

8 **I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.**

The Persistent Friend?

Question: Is God like a reluctant friend? He doesn't want to help? Too comfortable in Heaven?

Do we have to bawl ... squall ... nag ... pester — eventually wear God down and He reluctantly agrees to help us ... to get us “off His back”?

It looks like it in the NKJV: verse 8 “persistence”. KJV: “importunity”.

The Greek word is: ANAIDEIA — impudence ... shamelessness (Thayers Lexicon).

Luke 11:8 (NIV)

8 **yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.**

Luke 11:8 (CJB)

8 **yet because of the man's hutzpah he will get up and give him as much as he needs!** (*Cheeky! Bold as brass*)

And ... in any event ... this isn't comparing the Father to a reluctant friend. **It's a contrast! God is the opposite of that!"**

Luke 11:9-13

9 "So I say to you, **ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

10 **For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"**

HOW MUCH MORE!

One of the problems with badgering God — seeking to overcome His supposed reluctance — **is the underlying assumption that the problem is at God's end?**

So we try to bring pressure on God — to persuade ... convince ... cajole ... brow-beat ... gang-up — until He "gives in"!

GOD IS NOT THE PROBLEM !

If your room light doesn't come on — you don't badger the electricity company. You check your bulbs and fuses.

If your TV doesn't display a picture — you don't shout at the broadcaster. You check your receiver!

If we're not seeing results from God — check your receiver.
Is it switched on? Are we in a receiving mode?

Faith is about receiving from God. Not our trying to push Him into performing something He doesn't want to do!

Matthew 21:18-22

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry.

19 And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “**Let no fruit grow on you ever again.**” **Immediately the fig tree withered away.** *(JESUS SPOKE TO THE FIG TREE. FAITH IS VOICE ACTIVATED!!)*

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?”

21 **So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.**

22 **And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”**

FAITH IS FOR MOVING MOUNTAINS — NOT GOD!!

We must ask “believing”. Not just “ask” — “fingers crossed” — or a huge email chain!

Verse 22: “Receive” = Greek: LAMBANO. **The meaning is not just “passively receive” — it includes an element of “actively take”!**

Greek Lexicon: **“To lay hold by aggressively accepting what is available or offered”** — to accept with initiative ... emphasising the assertiveness of the receiver.

Think of the Lady with the Issue of Blood. She took action — went out and laid hold of her blessing. She didn't just passively wait at home “to receive”.

Mark 11:20-24

20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, “**Have faith in God.** (Greek: *Have the faith of God*)

23 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**. (WE ARE AN “WHOEVER”)

24 Therefore I say to you, **whatever things you ask when you pray, believe** that you receive them, and you will have them. (“Have” — future tense!)

Verse 24: “Receive” = LAMBANO.

Mark 11:24 (NIV)

24 ... **believe that you have received it,** and it will be yours.

Mark 11:24 (TPT)

24 ... **I urge you to boldly believe for whatever you ask for in prayer—believe that you have received it and it will be yours.**

When do we believe we receive? When we receive? NO!! WHEN WE PRAY!! ASSERTIVELY BELIEVING — i.e. TAKING!

It’s no use shouting louder at God — if the problem is at our end — our “faith receiver” or “faith taker”! 😊

But it may take a while between believing and receiving. God may need to arrange certain things.

So ... our faith needs to be maintained to be effective. And this is at “our end”! Not God’s!

Hebrews 6:9-12

9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 **And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,**

12 **that you do not become sluggish, (don't give up!) but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**

THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE.

Patience — to be: steadfast ... constant ... enduring.

Hebrews 10:35-39

35 **Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. (Don't give up)**

36 **For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:**

37 “For yet a little while,

And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

38 **Now the just shall live by faith;**

But if anyone draws back,

My soul has no pleasure in him.”

39 **But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.**

Verse 36 — endurance: KJV and others: Patience.

Greek: Steadfast ... constant.

Basically: Believe ... then don't be moved by what our senses tell us. We remain constant — unchanging.

LET GOD BE TRUE AND EVERY MAN A LIAR.

A harvest takes time! Not all in one of day — no matter how much we want it! There can be delays for many reasons.

So: it is important to pay attention to “our end” — our **receiving** — rather than endlessly complaining to God about His perceived failures?!

And — **BE PATIENT! FAITH AND PATIENCE ARE THE TWO POWER TWINS.**