

How to Develop a Great Faith Matthew 8

Introduction:

1. How many of you have ever grown something (a flower, bush, tree, garden, muscle, business, etc.)?
2. If you are a believer today, God has given you something that He expects you to grow. According to **Romans 12:3**, God has given you the measure of faith. But it is your responsibility to grow your faith. **2 Thessalonians 1:3**
3. In the Christian life, it is vital to possess a strong, vibrant faith.
 - Without faith you cannot please God. **Hebrews 11:6**
 - Through faith we overcome the world. **1 John 5:4**
 - Through faith we overcome Satan. **Ephesians 6:16**
 - Through faith we overcome sin. **Romans 14:23**
4. Did you know that Jesus spoke of people with "great faith" and people with "little faith?" Let's see examples of this in Matthew 8 (vs. 5-10, 23-27). What is the difference between a great faith and little faith? How would Jesus describe **your** faith?
5. Regardless of what your faith is today, every believer can develop a great faith. How do you develop a great faith even when you have little faith?

First, by focusing on Christ instead of your circumstances

1. I remember several years ago when the Patriots won their first Super Bowl. The Bills beat the Patriots at the beginning of that season 31-0. The next time they met, the Patriots beat the Bills 31-0.
 - Did the circumstances change? Not really - it was the same players, coaches, etc. The Patriots are what changed and the way they dealt with the circumstances.
2. Let's apply this to our lives. We have all dealt with problems and adverse circumstances since childhood, and we always will. This fact won't change, but what needs to change is us!
3. In Matthew 8, you see two encounters with adverse circumstances.
 - A centurion (military officer) - has a close friend grievously tormented and ill.
 - The disciples - in the middle of a terrible storm at sea.
4. The centurion is said to have great faith; the disciples are said to have little faith.
5. What was the difference? The centurion focused on Christ and mastered the circumstances, while the disciples focused on the problem and allowed the circumstances to master them.
6. Because the centurion was fully focused on Christ, he was filled with peace. Because the disciples were focused on the problem, they were filled with fear.
7. The apostle Paul was in prison for preaching the gospel of Christ. Even supposed believers were turning on Paul and trying to make his situation tougher, yet notice Paul's determination in **Philippians 1:20-21**. He was fully focused on Christ.
8. This was the key to Paul's faith. He was not focused on his circumstances, but He was looking unto Jesus. **Philippians 3:14, 20, 4:13**

Second, by truly believing God's promises

1. If I were to personally promise to give you one million dollars after the service this morning, you would probably not believe it (you're thinking Monopoly money). But if I were to promise to take you out to eat after the service, you would believe that.
 - What is the point? A promise is really only as good as the one making the promise and his ability to fulfill that promise.
2. I hold in my hand a Bible - it is called God's Word.
 - It doesn't contain the Word of God; it is the Word of God.
 - It is inerrant, infallible, absolutely perfect, and 100% pure - no mistakes or errors.
 - **2 Timothy 3:16** tells us that it is inspired (God-breathed). It pulsates with divine life.
3. God has made promises in His Word. Many times people make promises and they don't keep them, but God is completely faithful. He always keeps His promises.
4. Of course you must rightly divide God's Word as you study it. You must ask yourself, "Who is God making this promise to?" Is it a promise to a specific person, a nation, Israel, or the church, the body of Christ today?
 - If I write Deniece a note with a promise to take her out to eat for lunch and Larry reads the note, he can stand on that promise all day long, but it won't do him any good because the promise wasn't made to him.
5. But if want a great faith, study the 13 letters that Paul wrote to us, the church. Read the many promises and believe them utterly.
 - God's Word will work **in** you when received as God's Word **by** you.
1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:3
6. Let's look again at this story in **Matthew 8:5-10, 13**.
 - This man is going through a trial, but he isn't sitting at home biting his nails.
 - He went straight to Jesus. vs. 5-6
 - He received the Word of Jesus. vs. 7
 - He believed Jesus' Word utterly. vs. 8-9
 - Jesus commends him (vs. 10), and his friend was healed (vs. 13).
7. But many times, instead of believing God's promises, we reason. **Matthew 16:6-8**
8. When we begin reasoning about something that we should believe, this is a warning signal. Faith doesn't reason with God's promises, faith trusts and obeys God's promises.

Third, by understanding the depth of God's commitment to you

1. Many Christians struggle with their faith because they fail to understand just how committed God is to them.
2. Here in this text, the disciples failed to see how committed Christ was to them. Therefore they woke up Christ and said, "We're going to all die."
3. Christian, at salvation a great change took place. You were placed **in Christ**.
4. These are two very precious words. Every time you see the words "in Christ" (and you see them for the most part in Paul's letters), they explain something that God has already done for you or something He has promised to do for you.

- Let me give you an example from Ephesians 1 & 2 (1:3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 2:5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 18, 22).
 - This is only two chapters! Do you see the level of God's commitment to you? You are His child. God has invested all that His Son is, **in you!**
5. Once this really sinks in, it will take the fear and anxiety away. You suddenly realize, "I can trust God in every situation in my life. He is totally committed to me."
 6. When you are secure in your relationship with someone, you have faith in that person. As you grow more secure in your relationship with Christ, you will find that your faith will grow incredibly.
 7. The only way to grow in that security is to read God's Word. Read Romans through Philemon (3 chapters a day and you will read them in a month), and underline every time you read "in Christ", "by Christ", "through Christ."

In Conclusion:

1. There is not a believer in here who is incapable of building a strong faith.
2. You can make a choice to implement these principles and begin to build a strong faith.
3. But please understand that your faith won't magically grow. It will only grow as you look to Christ, take in His Word, and grow in your understanding of His Word.
4. My prayer is that all of you will be able to look back a year from now and say, "Wow, my faith has really grown!"