

Great Faith: What Does it Look Like?

Growing Faith, Session 2

Warm-up Question: When you think of a person with great faith, who do you think of?

The Faith of Jackie Pullinger

When I think of a person today with great faith, I think of Jackie Pullinger. As a young girl in Sunday school in England she decided she wanted to be a missionary, but forgot about it as she grew up, until she became part of a Small Group in a friend's home. One night she had a dream:

“I saw a vision of a woman holding her arms out beseechingly as on a refugee poster. I wondered what she wanted - she looked desperate for something... Then words moved past like a television credit: WHAT CAN YOU GIVE US?”¹

After a series of dreams and visions, Jackie decided that she would obey what she determined to be the leading and will of God, to work among drug addicts in Hong Kong's infamous Walled City, a place ruled by the terrible Triad organization. The trouble was that no one agreed with her. When she applied to every missionary and church organization she was refused help and finances. She was told that she didn't have what it takes to be a missionary. She didn't have the experience, the qualifications, and she was too young at age 22. When she talked with a vicar, he advised her to go anyway. She gathered up all the money she had and bought a one-way ticket to Hong Kong, China. There was no turning back, she was committed. When she got there she found a job as a teacher in a primary school in the Walled City, the most deprived and dangerous area of Hong Kong. It was ruled by the Triads, an organization similar to the Mafia. This was an area where even the police would not go, it was so bad.

In 1966, many of the inhabitants of the Walled City could only earn a living by slaving in sweatshops under terrible conditions. Many of the people there worked as prostitutes, sold drugs, or were on heroin or opium. Jackie was moved in her heart for them as she went to

work at the school. She would go up to them and tell them that Jesus loved them. She began a small youth club to reach out to the young boys who were part of the Triad gangs and taking opium and heroin. She began to see the boys become Christians one by one. Many were addicts. The people began to trust that she really did love them and that it was not just words. She lived among them. In a 1989 interview, Jackie said:

“I could walk down the street and see a hundred people chasing the dragon (shooting up heroin). You had to climb over their legs. I wanted something real to offer them....not just treatment in a center.”

Many of the addicts, as she would pray for them, were released from their addiction without going through the painful withdrawal. God was in their midst answering the prayers of Jackie and others that she led to Christ and trained. They opened a home to help those who wanted to try and quit heroin. This home was soon inundated with pleas for help and a place to stay. As she spoke of Jesus Christ, brutal hoods were converted, prostitutes retired from their trade, and heroin junkies found new power that freed them from the bondage of drug addiction. The Triad gang boss wanted a private meeting with her saying that he did not want his gang members being on drugs either, he wanted to support her in getting them off heroin and opium. Her response to the gang boss was uncompromising—she wouldn't help the boys get off of drugs so that they could go back to the gang. They were to follow Christ, not the Triad gang! To her astonishment, the gang boss renounced all claim to those who became Christians and he also guarded the youth club from other gangs who wanted to destroy the work. Hundreds discovered new life in Christ. The book *Chasing the Dragon* tells the whole amazing story exactly as it happened.²

If God were to grant you one request, what would it be?

The message of our Lord Jesus Christ is for us to go

¹ http://www.rejesus.co.uk/site/module/jackie_pullinger/P2/

² *Chasing the Dragon*, written by Jackie Pullinger and Andrew Quicke. Published by Regal Books.

and do as He did. It is first of all a “Come” message, and then a “Go” message. We are to come to Him and be saved. He said:

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

But it is not to stop there; we are also told to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). When animals were ploughing the fields together, a young, inexperienced animal would be yoked to an older wiser animal, which knew just what to do. They were joined by a piece of wood, a yoke that kept them together as they laboured together. Every Christian is to be involved with Christ, joined by the Holy Spirit, yoked together, in this mission to reach the world for Christ. We cannot do it without Him. He wants to work in us and through us; His burden is light, not heavy. Not all of us are called in the same way as Jackie Pullinger was, but many of us are hindered by the question that arises in our hearts as to how we are to go. How are we to provide for ourselves? Anything that God calls you to do, He will also provide. God hasn't got a problem with His economy. As we said in the last session, God has given each of us a measure of faith. It can be as small as a mustard seed, but our faith can and will grow as we step out and trust our heavenly Father. I have learned that getting out of the boat of security gets the eye and care of our God. He is pleased with faith. There is a quote by Johann von Goethe that has inspired me to step out in faith. He said:

“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.”

-- Johann von Goethe

I don't know Goethe's theology or where he was with God, but I think that there is an element of truth in what he says. He uses the word providence, which I would

replace with God. God moves when we definitely commit to something that is led and motivated by Him. All kinds of things happen, a whole stream of events and unforeseen incidents issue from our decision to get out of the security boat. Remember that God is outside of time and plans ahead of time for the decision you make when you decide to trust Him and be obedient to His leading.

Can you think of a time in your life where a whole stream of events happened in your life due to a good or bad decision?

The Fruit of Faith

Last week we talked about faith growing as we acquire information and knowledge of God through His Word. But is it all about knowledge? Do we need to have twenty years of Bible study before we can receive anything from God? Of course not! There are many thousands of stories that we can read of God responding to young Christians as they step out in faith. I well remember hearing from a pastor near me in England, telling of a couple of new Christians who had gone to a training and equipping meeting on how to heal the sick. They learned that sometimes when God comes on a person to use them in healing, they will have itchy hands. This one particular lady had another alongside her with a terrible pain in her back, but instead of an itching in her hands, her feet itched. So she got her friend to lay on the floor with her back upwards, as she prayed and put her itchy feet on her friend's back, only to see God move in a wonderful instantaneous healing of her friend's back. One can have great faith without knowledge of God and His word. In the Bible there are two kinds of faith that are spoken about. There is the gift of faith and the fruit of faith. Let's look at the fruit of faith first:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23, emphasis mine).

The word that is translated faithfulness above is the Greek word “pistis,” the word that we learned last week is mostly translated into our English word faith. What the word of God is saying is that our connection to God through the Spirit of God makes us one with Him (1 Corinthians 6:15, 17), and the fruit of that relationship is similar to that of the life giving sap of a Vine and its branches (John 15:1-5). The Vine with its root in the

ground is an example of Christ. We are the branches that will bear the fruit of this relationship. The attributes and character of Christ will flow into and through you as an outflow of your oneness with Christ. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says that the fruit of faith, among other things, is something that will grow the longer you are connected to Him and walking in step with His Spirit.

The Gift of Faith

The gift of faith is a divine gracelet or impartation, a supernatural belief and ability to do something way beyond a person's ability.

⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit... (1 Corinthians 12:7-9 Emphasis mine).

This divine gracelet of the gift of faith may come for just one incidence in a person's life, when he or she is in need of God to show up like never before, or the gift may stay with you for the rest of your life. It can come in the middle of sheer desperation, such as the woman with the issue of blood, who reached out and touched the hem of His garment and was healed (Luke 8:43-48). It most often comes to a person as an inner knowledge within his being, of something that God wants to do. When Peter healed the crippled beggar at the Gate Beautiful, we are told that Peter looked straight at him, as did John, and then reached out his hand to help him up to his feet, with the words, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6). With those words, we read that instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong and he jumped to his feet. I'm sure that Peter and John were as surprised as the crippled man when he got to his feet absolutely well. How did that happen? This was not Peter or John's own faith at work here. Only a few weeks earlier Peter had denied he even knew Jesus. This was a divine impartation of the Spirit upon him showing him exactly what to do. This, I believe, is what Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, sought to communicate when he wrote: "Peter looked straight at him, as did John" (Acts 3:4). This was a fixed gaze where the Spirit was showing them both what to do.

How can we expect the gift of faith, a divine impartation of faith, to come to us? What do you think it will

look like, and how will you recognize it?

Two Examples of Great Faith in the Gospels

In the gospels there are two incidences where Jesus commended two individuals for their great faith. I tend to believe that they were both examples of a divine gracelet of the gift of faith. Let's see what we can learn from them:

¹ When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ² There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³ The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵ because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶ So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷ That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "**I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.**" ¹⁰ Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well (Luke 7:1-10, Emphasis mine).

What was it that so pleased the Lord about this man's faith?

The passage tells us a lot about the Roman centurion's character. He probably had a number of servants due to the fact that he was an officer in the Roman army with over a hundred men under his command, yet he cared for this one that was sick. We can assume, therefore, that this man was a kindly soul. He was willing to spend his relational capital that he had gained with the Jewish elders of the town because he loved the nation of Israel and had built the city a synagogue with his own money. He used this relational capital, not on himself, but on his servant, asking them to beg Jesus to heal his servant. How many slaves would have loved to have a master such as this centurion? When you travel to the ruins of Capernaum in Israel, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, you can explore the remnants of the synagogue. There seems to be an indication (Verse 6) that the centurion

was told, perhaps by another servant, that Jesus was on His way to them. At that point, when the centurion realized that Jesus was on His way to his house, he realized that a Jew could not come under his roof and stay ceremonially “clean.” We see something similar that happened in the ministry of Peter, the apostle, when he was sent by the Lord to the house of Cornelius, another Roman centurion, who was living in Caesarea. The Spirit of God came in power upon those that were there, as Peter broke with tradition in entering the house. He was severely criticised for entering the house of a gentile (Acts 11:2-3). One wonders if it was the same man or a friend that was influenced by the story of the servant’s healing. We read of a similar tradition among the Jewish leaders when they brought Jesus before Pilate, prior to the crucifixion. They would not enter the palace of the Gentile Roman governor because it would have made them ceremonially unclean, making them unfit to eat the Passover meal (John 18:28). For this reason, I believe, the centurion sent another delegation of friends to meet Jesus on the way, saying that he understood delegated authority, and that Jesus need not come into his house. His leadership role under the chain of command of the Roman army led him to believe that Jesus only had to speak the word of healing and that His spiritual authority over sickness would be exercised over his servant. This man put the pieces of pie of his knowledge into his plate of faith, and stood in faith on what he believed. What were the pieces of pie (See session 1) that he brought to bear in the situation at hand? He brought into the ingredient mix of his faith:

1. His knowledge that healing was a spiritual thing and that distance was no problem to God.
2. He was not worthy even of Jesus walking into his house, but he knew that God acts out of mercy, not worthiness.
3. Not many of us would put something in the way of Jesus coming to our house. If Jesus was on the way, most of us wouldn’t care about any difficulties. Yet this man put himself in the shoes of Jesus and was concerned for His entering into the house of a gentile.
4. His faith assured him that healing for his servant was certain, that it would be done even if Jesus didn’t actually lay hands on his servant. This was great faith!

¹ Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1).

He was willing to take a risk, especially as Jesus was already on His way to the centurion’s house. What if Jesus did turn around and not come to his house and his servant had not been healed? What if Jackie Pullinger had got to Hong Kong, and couldn’t even get a job and an apartment. It was risky to use all her money to get there. John Wimber, the man God used to start the Vineyard churches, used to say, “Faith is spelt R.I.S.K. Faith can be a risky thing. It can be scary to step out on what one thinks God is saying to do. What if you step out in faith and it was just assumption on your part? It is good to ask yourself, what is the worst case scenario if you are wrong about something that you sense God is saying for you to do? Ask yourself, “Is this biblical?” Do I have an example in scripture? Would this bring glory to the name and character of Jesus? What would your pastor or church leaders think of this step of faith? Would this risky step bring humility to my soul if I am right or wrong? Would it foster a sense of pride in self? What would the enemy gain from whatever step I take? Would this step of faith perhaps bring someone closer to Christ? Can I take this step and remain hidden in the eyes of men? Am I doing it to glorify self?

Example Two of Great Faith:

²¹ Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” ²³ Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” ²⁴ He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” ²⁵ The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. ²⁶ He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” ²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸ Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Matthew 15:21-28).

We often interpret Jesus’ quietness towards us when we ask him for something, as reluctance on His part. Many times God wants to take us into a new realm of faith by leaving our prayers unanswered. Andrew Murray, the great teacher and writer on the topic of prayer and faith, once said, “When the Lord is to lead a soul to great faith he leaves his prayers unheard.” I think Jesus’ response, or lack of it, to this woman, was designed to bring out

her faith. Notice that verse 22 says that she “came to him.” And yet, when she was apparently rebuffed by Jesus with the words “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel,” we are told that she came even nearer and knelt before Him (Verse 25). Jesus gave her what she needed because she persisted in her faith. He was obviously delighted with the woman’s persistence and faith. Some people would have been put off by Jesus’ apparent coldness to her. The Canaanite woman, although she was not a Jew, was given deliverance for her daughter on account of her persistent faith.

What do you think Jesus is referring to with the words “the children’s bread?”

Notice that Jesus says that healings and deliverance are the “children’s bread.” Bread is a picture of the staple diet of the Middle East. Perhaps to a person from China or Japan, he would have said, I am the rice of life, instead of “I Am the Bread of Life.” To a person who is under the covenant of God, every blood bought child of God that has given his life to Christ, this is the staple food of the kingdom, the supernatural moving of God in healings and deliverance! This is normal daily bread for the child of God. This woman, being a gentile, was outside of the covenant of God, whereas, if you have given your life to Christ, you are under the covenantal promises!

What was it about her faith that Jesus commended? She would not give up! God allows some situations in life to test our faith. We often give up before we get what we need. Our God loves to see us exhibit faith

in Him. In the early 1800s, here in America, a man by the name of John Derby heard of a gold strike on the west coast of America. He borrowed some money from some interested friends and staked a claim. He found a vein of gold and mined it successfully. He had paid back his friends and covered his investment when the gold ran out. He decided to get out while the going was good. He sold the mine to a man who carried on digging where John Derby had left off and hit the biggest gold mine in the West. If only Derby had carried on and persisted. Don’t give up—receive God’s blessings, for you are under the covenant of God with all its blessings. Begin to step out into risky faith. Both of these examples of great faith were for people other than the ones who stepped out in faith. Most of us live with needs. Both of these individuals trusted God to meet the needs of others who could not intercede for themselves. To close, would you click on this link below and watch the six minute YouTube video of Jackie Pullinger.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb3S-tLaKZo>

The picture below is a recent picture of the place where Jackie Pullinger still carries on her work with drug addicts in Hong Kong.

Prayer: Father, please change me to be one that will honor you with my faith. Help me to hear your voice clearer and live a life of faith.



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