

The Key to Faith That Demands Results

“And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith” (Matt. 13:58).

I’ve been a Christian for 20 years, and I have wrestled with this question the entire time. Yet in one moment of struggle, the answer suddenly became frighteningly clear.

But wait, I’m getting ahead of myself. First, what is the question? The question is this: “Why is faith necessary for God to move?”

Admit it: You’ve had the same question or some variation of it. If God is God, why does it depend on my belief? Being a natural skeptic, the issue has always been a source of great frustration for me. Whenever I want God to move, I try to summon faith, like Dorothy tapping together her ruby slippers: “I believe. I believe. I believe.” Then, if God doesn’t move, which seems to happen far more than He does, I’m left feeling guilty, like it’s my fault. If only I had had more faith.

Yet secretly, I’m also resentful. “God, why is it my fault? I tried to believe.” Can anyone relate?

Now fast-forward to my moment of epiphany.

Things had been going very badly for a long time. On the heels of trying to start a new church and failing miserably, I felt like God was saying it was a redirection. When I prayed and read my Bible, I kept getting the sense that God was going to take me in the path of my heart’s desire, which was to share with people the insights He had given me into the Christian life. To me, this desire meant writing, but I was having a hard time believing it.

You see, I'd been writing for some time, and to put it mildly, I had experienced very little success. My first two books had barely sold enough to pay for lunch at McDonald's, and I couldn't imagine trying again. Financially, emotionally and even physically, I was totally spent; the faith to believe God's promises was hard to come by.

Then one night, after a good long pout about my circumstances and the absurdity of what I thought God was saying, I asked myself the question, "How in the world am I to go on writing? There is no way that it could finally lead to any success." And then that still, small voice offered a reply: "Of course nothing can happen if you don't try."

The response was so simple, I was left speechless.

I didn't want to go on. I didn't want to try again. I didn't want to believe. But if I didn't, there was, obviously, no chance. And it occurred to me that this answer was about more than just my writing; it was also the answer to my question about faith.

What I had always failed to understand was that real faith is an action. Think of it like this: There is a locked door that you want God to open. Faith is not sitting across the room, looking at the door and repeating to yourself with your eyes closed, "God, I believe you can open the door. God, I believe you can open the door. God, I believe you can open the door."

Then you open your eyes, only to be disappointed that the door is still closed.

No, real faith is walking over to the door and turning the handle.

Now, it is true that God could open the door even if you don't get out of your chair, but maybe He did something different. Maybe He unlocked the door, but because you didn't get out of your chair, because you wanted something easier than walking across the room, you never found out.

Or maybe God would have unlocked the door but He didn't bother because He saw your lack of genuine faith, and He had better things to do.

Could it be that faith is necessary because it shows God we are serious? And could it be that much of my disappointment with God is due to the fact that I don't want to do the hard work of real faith—getting out of my chair, crossing the room and actually turning the door handle?

Now, I've been a Christian long enough to know that "crossing the room" faith doesn't always meet with an unlocked door. But honestly, how many times have I really tried?

I want to be a person of genuine faith. I want to be a person who walks across the room and turns the handle. And, yes, I want to be a person who walks across the room and turns the handle even though I've turned the handle a hundred times before only to find it locked. For maybe this time the door will open.

Perhaps, like Abraham or the men lowering the paralytic, God only moves when we've shown Him that our faith displays the action of real belief.

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