

6 Ways to Grow Your Faith

Whereas we can view hope as a mental expectation of something good, faith arises in our hearts. And it grows as we follow Jesus. How can we encourage the growth of faith in our own hearts and in others'? Let me give you some scriptural examples of what causes faith to arise. By the grace of God, I can say that I have had encounters with the Lord in every one of these examples. It works!

1. Faith arises by the preaching of the gospel. Remember the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). He also wrote: "And we also [especially] thank God continually for this, that when you received the message of God [which you heard] from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it]" (1 Thess. 2:13, AMP).

To learn more about the connection between the preaching of the Good News and the growth of faith, look at John 1:1, Romans 10:8 and Titus 1:3.

2. Faith arises through reading the written Word. The Word is powerful, and it causes the light of faith to shine (see Acts 17:13 and Psalm 119:105). On the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13–32) after Jesus' death on the cross, the disciples' hearts burned within them as faith burst forth. It happened as they heard the written Word explained to them (by the Word Himself!).

3. Faith arises in times of prayer. Prayer is not just our yapping to God. Prayer pauses in communion to hear what He has to say. God says, "Before they call, I will answer" (Is.

65:24, NKJV) and “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer. 33:3). Anytime you have received something from Him directly, your faith grows. With this dynamic in mind, read what God told the apostle Paul, and how His words built faith in Paul’s heart: “He [God] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

4. Faith arises by means of a word of testimony or an exhortation. When you hear an account of a “God thing,” what happens in your heart? Faith arises; it comes by hearing. When you hear a testimony about healing or some amazing breakthrough, what happens? Faith arises in your heart and at times also in the corporate atmosphere around you. You believe. This must be true! It works!

We are supposed to encourage each other in our faith, either by speaking words of exhortation and truth, or by sharing good testimonies about the power of God in action (see also Col. 3:16).

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:23–25).

For further scriptural support of how a word “fitly spoken” (see Prov. 25:11) can produce faith in someone’s heart, review the recommendations of Colossians 3:16 and also see John 4:29, about the birth of faith in the heart of the Samaritan woman.

5. Faith arises because of dreams, visions and supernatural

experiences. Dreams, visions and supernatural experiences except to raise faith represent a meshing of the supernatural realm with the human realm, and faith pulls them together. Thanks to Jesus' sending of the Holy Spirit such experiences are not in short supply, nor do they belong only to a few elite individuals:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17).

When Saul was knocked down on the road to Damascus, the extraordinary experience birthed instantaneous faith in his heart, to the point that the violent, anti-faith bounty hunter became faith-filled, compliant and obedient: "He, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?'" (Acts 9:6).

Much later, when the apostle Paul found himself onboard the ship in the violent storm, it was the words of an angelic visitor that brought faith-grounded peace to the apostle Paul and his fellow travelers (see Acts 27:22–25). These are only a couple of scriptural examples of faith arising from a supernatural encounter.

6. Faith arises because of the audible voice of God. Paul's and Ananias' experiences included each of them hearing the audible voice of God (see again Acts 9:4–6, 10). Interestingly, the voice Paul heard was loud, while the voice Ananias heard was soft. The Lord knew that Ananias did not require the same treatment as Paul. In each case, the words spoken by the voice furnished just the right type of faith for the situation. Obviously Ananias needed a different type of faith (quietly courageous and decisive) from the type of faith that Paul needed at that profoundly life-altering moment.

Whether we hear a fresh word from God or whether we read a

scriptural account of one, faith surges up inside us. Consider the effect of the voice from heaven that declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17), or the audible words that John heard on Patmos: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'" (Rev. 1:8), or:

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 22:7). And, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Rev. 22:12-13).

As soon as the meaning of the Word registers in the mind of the reader or hearer, faith rises up to meet it.

James W. Goll is the president of Encounters Network, director of Prayer Storm, and coordinates Encounters Alliance, a coalition of leaders. He is director of God Encounters Training, an e-school of the heart, and is a member of the Harvest International Ministries apostolic team. James is the author of numerous books and has also produced multiple study guides and hundreds of audio and video messages. This article was excerpted from his book *Radical Faith*, Chosen Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2011. Used by permission. All rights to this material are reserved.