

Living A Life Of Faith
Living the Far Better Life (Part 4)
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Today I want to talk to you about living a life of faith. What would it look like if you were living a life of faith? How does that work? How does living a life of faith feel? How does it act? What does it do? How do you know the difference between somebody who is living a life of faith and someone who is not? How do you know if you are living a life of faith or not? Faith is a word we use a lot in church. Faith is a word that conjures up all kinds of ideas. It's such a big word that it's hard to grasp sometimes what it means. If I say, "You need faith everyday of your life" what would that mean to you? For some of you it would simply mean that you need a positive attitude every day of your life. For others it would mean that you need to think about God and the Bible every day of your life. Some of you may be thinking, "Faith who? Faith Hill, the beautiful country music singer? Yea, I could take a little more of her in my life." What you think of when I say "you need faith everyday of your life" is dependent on how you define "faith".

I'd like to help you think about that this morning and maybe help you get a clearer picture of what faith looks like. I'm not interested in giving you another definition of faith so you can be smarter or more knowledgeable. I want to give you a clearer picture of faith so you can have more faith in your everyday life and be a person of faith each day of your life.

There is a passage in the book of Proverbs that is for many people, including myself, a favorite. This passage gives us a picture of what it means to be a person of faith in everyday life. It's from Proverbs 3:5-6. It reads, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all of your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*" This passage doesn't just give a definition of faith, but it tells us what it is and what it isn't, and it also tells us the benefits of being a person of faith. What I want to do is walk through these simple verses with you and see what they can tell us about faith.

The first line is "***TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART.***" What does it mean to trust? When you really think about it, to trust someone or something involves another four letter word, and that is RISK. **FAITH INVOLVES RISK.** Trusting anyone or anything can be risky business. I'll bet there are people here today who don't trust anyone with your true feelings and thoughts about things, and for good reason. Trusting someone is risky. One summer I took a group of high school kids to Colorado to backpack in the mountains. When we first arrived at the base camp we were given our gear and then put through a series of group building exercises. One of the exercises involved standing up on a platform and falling backwards with your body stiff and straight into the arms of the people in your group. When I did it I didn't have a problem. I just went for it. I wanted to know if I could count on my group before I went up on the mountain with them. I was going to have

to rely on them to survive and I wanted to know now if I could or couldn't trust them. There was one member of our group who couldn't do it. Our guides kept making her try over and over until she finally trusted us to catch her.

Having faith involves risk. Just being alive involves risk. Ecclesiastes 10:8 says, ***"There is risk in each stroke of your ax."*** Whatever you do in life, whatever work you do, every time you do anything, there is risk involved. And there is risk involved in any relationship, especially your relationship with God. You have to trust that He is there even though you can't see Him. And having faith is an all or nothing kind of thing. Jesus said, ***"Love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."*** Loving God like that is what faith is all about, but it's risky. Is it worth the risk? You better believe it is. The biggest mistake we can make in life is to play it safe with God and never really take the risk of trusting Him.

FAITH ALSO INVOLVES GIVING UP CONTROL. That's risky. We want to be in control of our lives. We don't want to trust God with our lives. Jesus said, ***"If you try to keep your life for yourself you will lose it. But if you give up your life for Me you'll find true life."*** (Matthew 16:25) We've got to risk giving ourselves completely to God. That's what faith looks like. Faith is risking. Think of Peter in the boat when Jesus appeared to the disciples, walking on the water. The storm raged all around him, but Peter had faith and was willing to risk sinking into the sea when he stepped out of the boat to join Jesus. Faith is risking, risking that Jesus is who He claims to be and that He can save you and give you the support you need everyday of your life to face the storms and the battles you'll inevitably face. **FAITH IS RISKING THAT GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY.**

The second line is ***"LEAN NOT ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING."*** This is very hard, isn't it? We have to be in control, and we have to understand so we can be in control and make proper decisions. Proverbs 14:12 says, ***"There is a path before each person that seems right but it ends in death."*** How many of you have had the experience of thinking that you were absolutely right about something, only to find out that you were absolutely wrong? How many of you are able to admit that you've had the experience of thinking you were absolutely right only to find out that you were absolutely wrong? That's not easy to admit. To admit that means you have to admit that you can't always rely on your own understanding. It means admitting that your ability to understand is sometimes flawed and that you can't rely on your own understanding by itself because it could be wrong.

When Charles Kettering was CEO of General Motors, he would call his engineers in for a meeting and he would have his secretary stand at the door with a box saying, ***"Leave your calculators and slide rules here."*** He did that because he knew if he let his engineers come into the room with slide rules and calculators and he asked them to consider a new design or a

new solution to a problem, they would pull out their slide rules and calculators and say, **"No, that won't work. It can't be done."** They would refuse to hear him out.

We do that to God all the time. We rely on our own understanding, our own ability to reason and we refuse to hear God out. We say, **"We can't do that. We've never done that before. That won't work."** There are times when we must leave our limited reasoning skills and our flawed thinking out of our decisions and rely on God to show us a better way. It's not that God wants us to be unthinking or unreasonable people. It's just that He wants us to rely on Him, because so often His ways are beyond our ways and his thoughts are beyond our thoughts. Like when Jesus said, **"If you want to be great you must be the servant of all."** I'm thinking, wait a minute. Great people have servants. But that isn't the way God defines greatness. His ways are beyond our understanding. They take faith to grasp.

A man was flying on a plane and he found himself sitting next to Mother Teresa. They began to talk and at one point Mother Teresa asked the man if there was something he needed that she could pray for. The man said, **"Yes, I would really like to have clarity and understanding in my life so I can know what I'm really supposed to be doing and be confident in my ability to make decisions."** Mother Teresa said, **"I'm sorry, but I can't ask God to give you that, but I can ask Him to give you faith to rely on Him to lead you in the decisions you make."**

FAITH IS RELYING ON GOD. It's turning to Him for clarity and understanding. It's leaning on Him. It's saying, "Lord, I could make this decision without you, but I don't want to because I want to do it Your way." But how do we do that? How do we rely on God in our everyday living?

One very real way is to rely on God has to do with our money. Proverbs 3:9 introduces a principle for us to follow when it comes to our money. It says, **"Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops..."** In other words, we are to honor God by giving Him the first part of our income. You may be thinking, what does that have to do with faith? I thought this was a message on faith. It is! Faith is something that is very personal and it is very practical. When we have faith enough to give God the first part of our income then He will make sure we have what we need. God says, here's the principle, you give me the first part of your income as an act of obedience to me, and I will make sure your **"barns are full to overflowing and your vats brim over with new wine."** (v. 10) In other words, when you honor God by giving him the first part of your income, he makes sure the rest of your income more than covers your needs. That's the attitude of faith. That's how faith works and that is what faith looks like. Faith is relying on God. Malachi 3:10 tells us, **"Bring to the storehouse a full tenth of what you earned. Test Me in this', says the Lord almighty. 'I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour out all the blessings that you need.'"**

This is where the slide rules and the calculators come out. We just don't think it's possible for us to give up ten percent of our income and do all the things we need to do with the remaining 90 percent. We don't trust Him. We aren't willing to rely on Him to keep His promise to provide for us and bless us for our faithfulness. **Faith is relying on God.**

The third line reads, "IN ALL OF YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM." What does it mean to acknowledge God? If a friend walks into the room, you acknowledge him or her by waving. If it's a dear friend you haven't seen in a while you might greet that person with a hug. If the President of the United States walked into the room it would be proper to acknowledge him by standing. When God is present in your life (which He always is) how do you acknowledge Him? Over and over again in the Bible we are told to **acknowledge God by obeying Him.**

In Proverbs 28:14 it says, **"Always obey the Lord and you will be happy. If you are stubborn, you will come to ruin."** Why does God want us to acknowledge Him through obedience? Why? -because it will make us happy people! It's when we are stubborn and insist on doing things our way rather than God's way that we are miserable and unhappy.

The Bible says that people who ignore God are storing up God's wrath until the day of judgement. And on that day it's not going to help for them to cry out, **"I didn't see you there. I didn't mean to fail to acknowledge You."**

So how do we acknowledge Him in all of our ways? Colossians 3:17 says, **"Everything you do or say should be done to obey Jesus your Lord. And in all you do, give thanks to God the Father through Jesus."**

What is the one area in your life where you may not be acknowledging Him? What's the one area of your life you haven't allowed God into? Maybe it's your finances. Maybe it's your relationships. Maybe it's your secret habits. Maybe it's the use of your time. Maybe it's your leisure time. Maybe it's your work place. God wants us to acknowledge Him in all of our ways. There isn't one area of our lives that we are to hold back from Him. We are to give Him 100 percent of our lives. What is something you may be holding back? Give it to the Lord and acknowledge Him by obeying Him. **Faith is acknowledging God by obeying him.**

The fourth line of today's passage reads, "HE WILL MAKE YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT." What does that mean? I'll tell you first what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that you'll have a perfect life. It doesn't mean that you'll never have any problems, any bumps or bruises along the way. But it does mean that if you trust Him and lean on Him and acknowledge Him in all of your ways, you will get to where God wants you to be in the shortest amount of time. You've heard it said that the shortest distance between two places is a straight line. That's very true. God wants you to get to where you can be a model of Jesus Christ by the way you live, by your character, by your faith. If you can trust in the

Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all of your ways acknowledge Him, then he will get you to where He wants us to be in the shortest amount of time. You see, God is not interested in making our lives easier, smoother or less difficult. He's interested in making us people of faith, who can mirror and reflect the character of Christ.

That place where God wants us to be is a place filled with joy and happiness. Psalm 34:8 says, *"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in Him!"* That's the way to the far better life. *"He is a faithful God, who keeps His promises and is merciful to thousands of generations of those who love Him and obey His commands"?* (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Some people describe the step of faith as a leap into the dark, a leap into the unknown. But I would like to leave you with this thought. **Faith is a step in the right direction.**