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***Living By Faith***  
***Hebrews 11:1-3***

What does it mean to ***live by faith?***

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen.

As we read all of Hebrews 11 we see that  
Faith is a ***firm trust & belief***....even when you don't see any proof...  
Faith is ***obedience***....even when you don't understand it....

A man stopped to watch a Little League baseball game. He asked one of the youngsters what the score was. "We're losing 18-0," was the answer. "Well," said the man. "I must say you don't look discouraged." "Discouraged?" the boy said, puzzled. "Why should we be discouraged? We haven't come up to bat yet. I have faith!"  
Stan Toler, *God Has Never Failed Me, but He's Sure Scared Me to Death a Few Times* (Honor Books, 1995)

We demonstrate faith in ***all kinds of things***—every single day.  
Faith in a doctor who writes a prescription, and a pharmacy that fills it.  
Faith in a farmer who grows produce,  
and a supermarket that purchases it and sells it to us.  
Faith in our teachers, our daycares, our friends, our family, our jobs....

We also have faith in some ***funny things***....

Luntz Researchers found that Americans believe some wild stuff:

--that Elvis Presley is still alive: 10%

--in reincarnation: 30%

--in ghosts: 39%

--that aliens have visited earth in the past 100 years: 53%

--that the U.S. government is currently involved in cover-ups and conspiracies:  
74%

Luntz Research, cited in George (12/96). Leadership, "To Verify."

So we demonstrate faith—everyone demonstrates some kind of faith.  
 But the question is, do we live out our faith in THE most important thing?  
 And the most important person—our Savior Jesus Christ?

That kind of faith is less common.  
 Especially for us, well-off Americans.  
 We have money and possessions and luxuries that **prevent us** from having to  
 place our total and complete faith in God.  
 We can live in the **illusion** that we can have faith in **ourselves**---  
 In our ability to provide for ourselves, in our own comforts, in our own  
 luxuries....forgetting that it is but by the grace of God that we are here.

But in times of **trial or trouble**, that's when the question of faith becomes real.  
 Then, will we have faith in **God?** in **Jesus?**  
 Or will we try to maintain faith in **ourselves?**

When who we **are** and what we **have** can't change our circumstances,  
 Then we come to the real question of faith.

And what is faith?  
 Faith is the assurance of things hoped for---it is a firm **belief**.  
 It is the conviction of things not seen—**trusting** when you can't see.

**Paul and Samantha** were living an ordinary life.  
 Having taken early retirement, they enjoyed their days with one another.

Paul has a dream one night, more vivid than any other dream in his whole life—  
 and God speaks to him. God tells him to move Samantha from Tulsa to California,  
 and not to settle, but wait for further instructions about exactly where they  
 should live.

God also says something really strange. God says that Paul will end up with a  
 large family, a living legacy, and his faith in God will be passed on through the  
 generations. It doesn't make any sense because Paul and Samantha have  
 endured decades of infertility, and now are well past that point in life. There's  
 always been a note of sadness with other couples because they were unable to  
 have kids of their own.

But the next morning Paul knows in his heart what he must do. He doesn't understand it, but he knows he should obey this call. Their house goes up for sale, and they take off for the west coast, not knowing exactly where they are going, but certain that God is directing them.

Years pass, Paul has an affair and a child out of wedlock, but Samantha feels like maybe this child is the one the dream is talking about.

Then one night in California, years later, Paul invites some friends of friends who are passing through town over for dinner—three guys—very religious guys, and one of them oddly predicts that Samantha is going to have a baby, a comment which sends Samantha laughing to the floor.

Life goes on until Samantha comes down with a flu that won't go away, and then a doctor's appointment where they receive some unexpected news—she's pregnant—well past the time she thought she could conceive. When the baby is born they name him Isaac, which means laughter, and they continue to live amazing lives of faith—so much so that Paul becomes a giant of faith to generations of his family.

Sound *familiar*?

The names and dates and some details have been changed, but the story is Abraham and Sarah from the book of Genesis. The same story told in Hebrews 11.

Abraham is called *Father Abraham* because of his amazing faith—a faith that he lived out by believing in God's promises, obeying God's words, and following God's call.

He is the epitome of living by faith.

He didn't have the Bible we have or the church community we have, and yet he lived by faith.

How do we *live* by faith?

Do we believe and trust enough to follow God's guidance and direction?

Or do we choose to stay steady and secure in our own world,  
not venturing out unless we can SEE what's ahead?

Unfortunately, most people prefer security and familiarity  
instead of faith.

Did you know that the Bible passages are very clear about the people  
when they had to cross the Jordan River with Joshua,  
and God didn't part those waters for them until they had  
actually *put their feet into* the rushing water?

How much easier and simpler it would have been for God to part the waters and then asked them to walk through...  
 but no, God asked them to step in **FIRST**,  
*then God parted* the waters.

Faith requires us to **step out!**

Faith requires us to BELIEVE!

Jesus tells us in Mark 11:24 to pray and believe: when you pray believe that you have received it, and you will receive.

Television journalist Larry King describes three farmers who gather daily in a field during a horrible drought, down on their knees to pray.

One morning an uninvited stranger approaches and asks the men what they are doing. They respond, "We're praying for rain."

The newcomer shakes his head, "**No, I don't think so.**"

The first farmer says, "Of course we're praying. Look around, see the drought. We haven't had rain in more than a year!"

The outsider says it **will never work.**

The second farmer jumps in and says, "We need the rain; we aren't asking only for ourselves, but for our families and livestock."

The man says "**You're wasting your time,**"

The third farmer can't take any more, and in anger he says, "Okay, what would you do if you were in our shoes?"

The visitor asks, "**You really want to know?**"

The three landowners answer, "We really want to know!"

The guest announces, "**I would have brought an UMBRELLA!**"

Larry King, *Powerful Prayers* (Renaissance Books, 1998), p. 243;

Faith is **BELIEF! It is TRUST!**

Do we bring an umbrella when we pray for rain?

Or do we stayed dressed for a drought in case it doesn't work?

Faith doesn't mean that we hold back, and hope we can really take care of it ourselves in case God doesn't.

Faith is trusting that **God can handle it.**

The story goes that a man was in the desert for a long time, and was very very thirsty. He stumbled upon an old abandoned house, walked in and sat down to

rest. He saw this old hand pump in one corner of the house, went over and starting pumping as hard as he could. All he got was squeaking sounds and dust. He walked back over and sat down. He then saw a jar and a note attached to it. The note read you have to use the water in the jar to prime the pump. He then had a decision to make.

Should he drink the water in the jar or should he take a chance and do as the note asked. He decided he would do as the note read but only part of the water. He poured in some of the water and began to pump. All he got was the familiar squeaking, and one drop of water. He quickly poured in the rest of the water from the jar. He began pumping again and soon there was all the water he could want. He filled the jar back up and added to the note, it really works but **you have to give it all away.**

Rev. Melvin Shelton, sermon entitled, Abraham: A Faith that Satisfies, Nov 2005.

Faith isn't easy—it is hard to truly live in faith. To let go and believe.

We hear stories like Paul and Samantha, and frankly we say—

ok, I think I'll **stick with my life** the way it is thank you.

But the choice is not life, calm and collected, the way we want it,

Or upside down with God.

Life isn't what we expect either way---but with God, we have a pilot,  
a plan, a leader, and someone who loves us leading the way.

In my favorite devotional, ***Streams in the Desert***, last week LB Cowman told of a man—a churchgoing man, head of the Sunday School program, an officer in his church, but as he said, someone who *'had never really yielded his life to God with a definite act of the will...why? "Because I thought my own plans would be thwarted, my hopes surrendered, my chosen profession abandoned....and I was afraid...I failed to see the better things God had for me, so my soul was running from God. And then came the message once again: My child, you can **trust the Man** who died for you. If you cannot trust Him, whom can you trust? Finally that settled it for me...I realized that the Man who loved me enough to die for me could absolutely be trusted with the total concerns of the life he had saved.'* You too can trust Him to lead you down the path that is the very best in this world for you.

*Streams in the Desert*, August 1, pg. 295

That's the bottom line, friends. That's our **Good News** of the gospel.

We can trust the one who died for us.

We can have faith in Him, faith in God, we too can live by faith. Amen.