

VIRTUE 2

FAITH

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

—Hebrews 11:6

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.

—Jeremiah 29:11-14

Faith is when you trust God and His purpose in your circumstances more than the resources that appear to be available to fit them *as you understand them*. As Hebrews 11:1 states, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Faith is critical to the knight, so I encourage the reader to slow down and take some time to fully digest this section. Faith is so critical to God that He has gone so far to tell that it is *impossible* to even please Him without faith: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he

exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). And remember, a true knight’s first mission and calling is to *please the King*.

Before taking a biblical and historical look into how knights of old applied their faith, let’s first take a look at how faith can be practically applied in your life. Zechariah 4:6 states, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty.” This verse shows that faith is what we rely on to get through difficult times in our lives. Faith—our belief in Christ and in His power—is how to pull through challenging times in our lives. Not by our ingenuity, strength, own power, or anything else within us.

Zerubbabel was the civic leader of Jerusalem who was charged with the responsibility of finishing the work of rebuilding the temple. The work had already started but then was met with opposition and stalled. Zerubbabel needed encouragement to carry on the work. This simple (single) verse in the Bible explains just how Zerubbabel was to accomplish the work and the process given to him by God: he was to do so *by the Spirit of God*. The word that was given to him from the Lord was not “buck up” or “saddle up”—it was “rely on the Lord.”

The term *might* means a collective strength (e.g., the strength of an army). The term *power* deals with an individual’s strength. So God was saying to Zerubbabel: “Not by the resources of many or one, but by My Spirit. It will not be by your cleverness, your ability, or your physical strength that the temple will be rebuilt, but by the Spirit of God.”¹³ Consider these Scripture passages that encourage our reliance on God alone, and not our own might, power, or ingenuity:

Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but

of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:4-6).

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:10-13).

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you (John 15:4-7).

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord (Proverbs 21:31).

Next, let's take a quick tour through the Bible to see how a few warriors applied their faith in God in life, in battle, and in victory.

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GIDEON DEFEATS THE MIDIANITES

The story of Gideon defeating the Midianites (Judges 7:1-25) is one of the most profound examples of faith in the Bible.

Early in the morning, Gideon and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

But the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.” Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place.” So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three

hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. During that night the Lord said to Gideon, "Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp." So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed."

His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands."

When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands." Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

“Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’”

Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath. Israelites from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.”

So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they took the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They

pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.

Imagine—God reduced his army from thirty-two thousand to only three hundred so that Gideon would have faith in God’s victory and so “Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her.” Then, God said, “If you are [still] afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” As if that was not enough, God allowed Gideon to defeat an entire army of Midianites without even using their conventional weapons! Rather, God brought victory through breaking jars and torches . . . something I am sure they never learned in hand-to-hand combat training. And still, as if that was not enough, God “caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords” so Gideon did not even have to fight the battle! All that was left for Gideon to do was to chase down the remnants of the fleeing army and bring the heads of their leaders back to camp. Gideon had faith in God, and it was immediately rewarded.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

Chances are you have probably heard the story of David and Goliath. But let’s take another look.

He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. “Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!” David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have

defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands." As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David *ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him* (1 Samuel 17:42-48, emphasis added).

Did you catch that? You just read about how a humble, small, ruddy, teenage boy told a nine-foot giant that he was going to "strike [him] down and cut off [his] head." And as if that was not enough, he added that he would give the giant's carcass "to the birds of the air." Did David say these fighting words because he was a cocky, inexperienced, young teenager? No, quite the contrary. He said them because the giant was opposed to the living God of heaven and because David had completely invested his faith in God. He said it so that "all those gathered" would know that it was "not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

FISHING WITH JESUS

Luke unveils a less gory story of faith in his gospel, which he describes as follows:

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked

him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. *But because you say so*, I will let down the nets” (Luke 5:1-5, emphasis added).

Imagine Simon (later called Peter)—an experienced and seasoned fisherman—being told by Jesus to go back “out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” They had just returned from a fishing trip. They were all wrapped up—even washing the nets and putting the other equipment away. *Then* Jesus tells them to go back out. What humility and patience it must have taken for Simon to go back out into deep water and fish again that day. But he did, and he was blessed by his obedience, for they caught so many fish that “their nets began to break” (v. 6). A true knight obeys God and trusts Him for the outcome. True faith is acting on God’s ways and promises, *even when they do not make sense or feel good* (see Proverbs 3:5-6).

JOAN OF ARC

When Joan of Arc believed that she had received instruction from God, she acted. Consider this example:

Joan was just starting an afternoon rest, when suddenly she sprang up, waking her squire, Jean de Metz. “In God’s name, my counsel has told me I must attack the English.” She wasn’t sure where she should go, but quickly arming, she called for her horse and spurred it toward the Burgundy Gate. She heard someone say the enemy was doing great harm to the French, and indeed Joan could see the Frenchmen running back to the city, some wounded and bleeding. Without alerting Joan, Dunois had

launched an attack on the English fortifications at St. Loup, not quite two miles east of the city. The French were getting the worst of it and were in full retreat when Joan appeared. Seeing her with her white standard [banner] raised on high, the French gave cheer, turned back to the assault, and pressed on with such force that the English suddenly yielded. St. Loup was taken, and the palisades surrounding it were burned to the ground. One hundred fourteen English lay dead, and forty were taken prisoner. Though not a big battle, this was an important victory. It was the first time in a long siege that the French had captured an English fort. Had the French lost, the English surely would have gone on to capture the Burgundy Gate and to seal off Orleans completely.¹⁴

Most knights in today's world will not exercise their faith by defeating the Midianites, slinging rocks at giants, going fishing with Jesus, or launching attacks against English fortifications. But our daily battles are just as critical and real in God's eyes. God personally asked Gideon to reduce his army and trust more in Him. God filled and used the shell of a young man to defeat a giant warrior, but David himself carried out the act. Jesus, our very personal Lord, asked Peter eye-to-eye to throw the net on the other side of the boat. God pleads with us to rely on Him and trust.

REFLECT

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord.

—Proverbs 21:31

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.

—Psalm 20:7-8

Yet I will show love to the house of Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword, or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but by the Lord their God.

—Hosea 1:7

A knight without faith may not possess good habits of life, for by faith a man sees God and His works spiritually and believes in the invisible things. By faith, a man is enabled to have hope, charity, and loyalty and becomes a servant of honesty and truth. Lacking faith, a man will not believe in God's Incarnation, nor in His works or the things that he cannot directly see—which a man without faith may not understand nor know. Knights whose habits are shaped by faith often go into the land beyond the sea on pilgrimage and there prove their strength and knighthood against the enemies of the Cross and become martyrs if they die. For they fight to uphold the Holy Christian Faith. Also, on account of faith, clerics are defended by Knights from wicked men who, through fraud, rob and disinherit them insofar as possible.¹⁵

—Ramon Lull

The Knight who has no faith and practices no faith and opposes them who defend it is like a man

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to whom God has given reason but who pursues foolishness.¹⁶

—Ramon Lull

RESPOND

1. How is faith a form of trust?
2. Who are you trusting in your life? Do you have misplaced trust in someone or something?
3. How can we build more trust in God?
4. Why is faith so important for a knight?
5. How will faith benefit your life in the short run? In the long run?

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