

Faith

More Than Just Receiving

By Melanie Stone

Contents

1. The Surrender of Faith
2. Know Who Has Your Heart
3. Let Go of Control
4. Open Your Heart to Receive
5. Act from Dependency

Chapter 1

THE SURRENDER OF FAITH

Men and women have learned to trust in what we understand. We trust ourselves because we know we have our own best interests at heart. We trust our intellect – the things we've learned through our own experience and education. We trust what we've discovered about the world around us through science and medicine. We trust the technology that we've developed through invention and ingenuity. We trust in our skills to make us valuable in the work place. We trust in the accumulation of money so we have the power and influence to acquire what we need to live well. We trust our senses to understand the world we live in – the things we can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell.

While it is true that these things can help us live in this natural world, they are no guarantee that we can maintain control of every situation in our lives. We hope for the best, but whether our circumstances seem insignificant or insurmountable, apart from God, there is a fear within each person's heart that we will lose control of something that we care about.

From the beginning, God made us to find our life in Him. His love for us is incredibly strong, and His desire to care for us goes beyond our mental comprehension. He created the world for us, and then He put us in it. He knew we would need air to breathe, so God made an atmosphere with oxygen. He knew our bodies would require water, so He filled the earth with springs, streams, and rivers. He knew that we would need food to eat, so God made plants to give us vegetation. He filled the earth with sources of energy and elements of nature to be discovered and developed by mankind. We've depended on the world around us to give us the things we crave and require for living. Since what we need comes from God, we should also recognize that we need this great "need-meeter."

But instead, mankind turned away from God right from the start. Adam and Eve chose to live independently of God when they made the decision to disobey Him. That's what sin is – choosing to act independently of God. Since God is our life, turning away from Him brought death and all that goes along with it. We wanted independence, and independence is what we got. We were torn as we were separated from our union with God. Instead of exclusively knowing perfect love, we knew fear and pain. Instead of knowing only perfect peace, we understood lack and uncertainty. Fear, shame, and guilt permeated our thoughts and hearts. As a dependent creation, we began trying to live apart from God. We became self-reliant, trusting only ourselves.

However, God, as our Creator, knew what we needed. He made us to know life by knowing Him. God knew we needed to be brought back in relationship with Him if we were to know life again. Death was the result of separation from God, so to cross over that vast chasm, someone without sin had to pay the price. Therefore, God sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for our disobedience by dying on the cross. Then God raised Him from the dead.

A way has been made for us to turn back to God. To know God, we must completely surrender the control of our life and put ourselves in a position of absolute reliance upon Him. This is one perspective of what true faith is. Faith is more than just

believing; **faith is my total surrender of my life to His lordship.** Faith isn't standing on my own two feet; faith is sitting on the big, strong shoulders of the God who cares for me. When we choose to fully rely upon God, we find out what our worth is, we have a sense of belonging, and we know the security of being held in His love.

Unfortunately, many of us have been hurt by the people closest to us, and disappointed by leaders that we once admired. We also have known our own failed attempts at relationships and what it is to feel rejection. How is it that we could ever totally trust anyone, especially to give them every piece of our heart and soul? Before we can have faith in God, we have to know who He is.

Chapter 2

KNOW WHO HAS YOUR HEART

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

You can't trust someone if you don't know their character. Some people only have their own interests at heart. They may have selfish ambitions of promotion or financial gain. Perhaps they regard their pleasure or wellbeing more than their concern for you. Others may be genuine, honest, and caring. How do you know who is trustworthy? There is really only one way to get to know someone. You have to get close to them.

How do we get to know God? God is a Spirit. I can't see Him with my eyes or hear Him with my ears. I can't use my physical senses to know God. One way to know God is to **read what He has said in the Bible**. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” For example, James 1:17 says, “Every **good** gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” When I read this verse, I see that God is a good God, and He has good gifts to give (Matthew 6:25-34). In reading other parts of the Bible I learn that God is righteous and just, merciful and loving, faithful and true (II Timothy 2:13). I see that it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). I see that He keeps His promises (Jeremiah 1:12). God has a good character.

We can also learn about God by **listening to our hearts**. We are spirit beings, and if we are seeking God, our hearts let us know what is true and what is not. And let's not forget about **the Holy Ghost!** He also will let us know, on the inside, what the mind of God is (I Corinthians 2:10-16). We need to continually develop ourselves spiritually so that we will be more aware of spiritual things. Time after time God will prove Himself to us. Our faith will increase as we have experiences with God.

We must become assured that He is a good God who wants to give us good gifts. He loves us. His love is not selfish or insecure. His love is generous and merciful. To have faith in God, to rely upon Him, we must know who He is. Faith is a personal thing. My faith is between me and God. I trust Him because I know Him, I believe Him, and I lean upon Him. He's **my** God. I listen and am blessed by listening to others teach about Him or testify of what He's done for them, but they can't give my heart away. I am the only one who can decide what to do with my heart just as you are the only one who can choose what you will do.

Chapter 3

LET GO OF CONTROL

Proverbs 3:5 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”

The surrender of faith involves letting go of control. When you rely upon God, you can no longer lean on yourself. You let go of what is familiar and secure to you in exchange for your trust in what God can do in and through you. The more you yield to God, the greater He can be in your life.

Jesus said we must become like infant children when we come to God (Luke 18:15-17). How is it that we must be like a baby or a toddler to know Him? Little children are dependent on the adults in their life to care for them. Without an adult, how would babies feed, provide, or protect themselves? Jesus was illustrating the need we have to rely on God.

We can learn about surrender by looking at the life of Abraham. In Genesis 12, when Abraham was 75 years old, God called him to be a great nation, but his wife Sarah was barren. So that a son would be born, Sarah told Abraham to have a son with her maid, Hagar. The son's name was Ishmael. Approximately twenty-five years after the initial promise, God fulfilled his word. Miraculously, Sarah had a son, and they named him Isaac.

Although Abraham loved Ishmael, Sarah demanded that Hagar and Ishmael leave the home after Isaac was born. Sarah did not want the son of a slave to share the family inheritance with Isaac. Isaac was the son of promise through faith. Ishmael was born because of self-reliance.

In Genesis chapter 22, God wants to know Abraham's heart. In the Old Testament, the only way for a person to have fellowship with God was to give the life of an animal in order to cover sin. When God calls to Abraham, God asks Abraham to offer a sacrifice, but He specifically asks Abraham to offer Isaac as the burnt offering instead of an animal. Abraham loved God and had faith in Him. Abraham tells the young men with him to stay behind, so that he and Isaac could go worship. He also tells the young men that they both he and Isaac would return. We get more insight into what Abraham was thinking when we read Hebrews 11:17-19. It says, *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead...”* Abraham knew God's promise was through Isaac, so he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead if Isaac were to die.

What we have to remember in reading this story is that Abraham was a real man with real emotions. He was an older man with one son in his life. He was a parent, a father who loved his son. There was nothing he had that was more precious to him. He took the wood, a torch, and a knife and walked up the mountain with Isaac. Isaac obviously knew about sacrifices because he asked his father, “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham replied, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.”

The surrender of faith means that we don't hold anything back from God. Abraham did not have anything in his life that was not surrendered to God, even what was nearest and dearest to him – his son Isaac. But Abraham knew the promise that God had made to him. He knew God had a plan for the nations through Isaac. Abraham didn't give up his son in fear of losing him; he was entrusting the life of his son into the hands of the faithful God he knew.

Just as Abraham lifted up the knife to take the life of Isaac, the angel of the Lord called out, *“Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me (vv.11,12).”* Then Abraham saw a ram that had been caught by its horns in a thicket. God provided Abraham with an offering as a substitute for Isaac. Abraham named the place, “Jehovah Jireh,” meaning “The Lord will provide.”

We know that God provided another sacrifice when He gave us His only Son – Jesus Christ. God would not ask us to do something that He would not do Himself. He has asked us to surrender ourselves completely to Him, not holding anything back. God has done the same for us. Psalm 84:11 says, *“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* He didn't keep Jesus from coming to earth as the ultimate sacrifice. Romans 8:32 says, *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* If God would not withhold His own Son from us, would He withhold anything else from us that we were in need of?

God wouldn't use a miracle to control us like a farmer uses a carrot on a stick to persuade his mule. He isn't manipulating us to follow Him by keeping our desires just beyond our reach. Rather, He is waiting for us to completely surrender every area of our lives to Him. When we let go of control, it's His grace that takes us beyond our limits to provide all our needs.

People of faith can willingly let go of all that is dear to them because they know that God will not discard or mistreat the things they deeply care about. They know that because of His love, God will receive the things that are precious to them.

Is there an area of your life that you haven't given to God? If so, maybe it's because there is a part of your heart that has been hurt in the past. Perhaps you fear that if you open up that wound, you'll feel the pain of it again. You feel vulnerable in that area, so you've kept that part of your life guarded. God is asking you to trust Him with that part. When my daughters were young and would play outside, sometimes they would fall down and scrap a knee or an elbow. They would come running to me, crying and bleeding, and show me their wound, but when I would get close to it, they would pull it back. They wouldn't let me near it because they were afraid it would hurt even more if I touched them. As a mother, my heart went out to them, wanting to help them to heal, but their fear of pain kept them from me. How must God feel when He wants to heal us, but we're too afraid to let Him come near to our hurts? I Peter 5:7 says, *“casting **all** your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”* God wants all of you.

Or, maybe you might be holding back part of your heart because you've done something wrong in the past that you don't want to be brought back up again. You would rather it not be known, so you act like it didn't happen. It's like a man on trial who doesn't reveal everything so he doesn't incriminate himself. If people did know everything about you, there is

15

a fear of being judged and banished by them, but the love of God doesn't want to expose your sin; he wants you to give it to Him so he can cover it (I John 4:18). He is the judge,

and He wants to pardon you from any wrong that you've ever done. But He can't do that if you don't bring it before Him.

Maybe you feel that your all isn't presentable enough to give to God. There might be a part of your life that you're ashamed of, so you want to hold that back and hide it from God. I've done something similar to this when I've had people over for dinner. I want my house to be presentable to my guests, so I clean every room; however, there's always a drawer or a closet that I've stuffed with junk that I want to hide. How embarrassing it would be to have my guests to open the door to my closet or drawer and see the mess I'm hiding from them! In the same way, there might be areas of our life that we feel wouldn't measure up to God's standard, so we hide and close the door on those places in our hearts. God would never go anywhere in your heart that you have not invited Him into, yet for you to be free, He knows you need to open up every door of your heart and show Him what's inside. Faith knows that our acceptance isn't based on our perfection, but on His grace. Jesus died so every stain in our heart could be cleansed. God's love for us isn't based on us and what we've done; it is based on who He is and what He's done. Hallelujah! Jesus has said, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20)."* God will never go where you do not invite Him. Let go of control, open the door, and let Him in.

Chapter 4

OPEN YOUR HEART TO RECEIVE

Once we let go of our own control and yield our hearts to God, God wants us to receive what He has for us. Being able to receive is part of surrender. A yielded person is someone who has emptied themselves and is ready to be filled up with God. Someone who is not fully surrendered is still full of themselves and cannot receive all that God has for them. This person is usually trying to **get** something from God rather than being able to **receive**; there is a difference. Faith is not achieving; faith is receiving. God wants us to know His life. It's like a pipeline. If the pipe isn't in its place, it can't receive the flow. However, if the pipe is fitted into position, it is in line to receive what is coming through. When we surrender to the Lord in faith, we are in position to receive.

Doubting is when someone starts to lean on God, and then they go back to leaning on self again. They are double-minded, the Bible says, and they cannot receive anything from God (James 1:6-8). The blessings of God are flowing. God has already made the way for us to receive what He has to give us. It really is up to us to get into position to receive.

Our faith is a position of our heart, or our spirit. It isn't a mental assent or an emotional crutch. We turn over our lives to a great God that we can confide in. We trust Him and His Word from the spirit. God once told me, "The things of the natural are temporary; the things of the spirit are eternal." The things of the natural are subject to change. God and His Word will never change. The things of the natural must give way when we surrender to the truth found in God and His Word. (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 24:35)

We need to be eternally minded; we need to be spiritually minded. We want our attention to be on God so that we can apply His truth to our natural circumstances and see a change. There is a scripture found in II Corinthians 5:7 that says, "*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*" This verse is about perceiving spiritual truth through what we know in our heart rather than through our natural senses. Abraham is a good example. In Romans 4:19-21 it says that Abraham put his confidence in the promise of God rather than in his natural circumstance. It says, "*19) And not being weak in faith, **he did not consider his own body**, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20) He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21) and being **fully convinced** that what He had promised He was also able to perform.*"

God has given us promises in His Word. If God said He would do something, then we can put our faith in that. For example, if I told my girls that I would come home with ice cream, then they can put their confidence in the fact that they are going to have ice cream when their Mom comes home. If they know that I'm faithful to my word, they can put their faith in my promise to them. Faith stands on the promises. If I never gave the promise, the girls wouldn't have a reason to expect anything. Faith knows the promise and expects to see the promise fulfilled!

God encourages us to receive from Him, but the blessings are received according to faith rather than by our efforts. We receive the blessings of God in the same way we receive salvation. Ephesians 2:8,9 "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should*

boast.” The dependency of faith isn’t found only in the New Testament. In Habakkuk 2:4 it says, *“Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.”* And in Deuteronomy 8:3 it says, *“...that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* Just as our bodies are dependent on food to sustain physical life, we must rely upon God and His Word for our life in the spirit.

When we are surrendered to God, and we know what God wants us to have, we have a confidence in Him. I John 5:14,15 *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”* Faith will ask God for the promises because faith knows God will be faithful to care for us. God power is not limited (Numbers 11:23). Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37), and nothing is impossible with the one who believes (Mark 9:23).

If I have given myself over to God, then receiving from God is based on my surrender. I can’t doubt God, and I can’t doubt myself. To doubt myself is to be relying on myself. To doubt myself is to doubt what Christ accomplished on the cross for me. The Bible says that my faith is the substance, realization or assurance, of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). Assurance means “I can know for sure.”

We can have confidence in God when we know Him. We can know for sure that His Word is true. We can lean, trust, and rely on Him. He is a rock that we can stand on. His Word will not crumble or fall apart when we turn over all of our self to stand on His promises. God is trustworthy! His Word is reliable! We can go to God with full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:20)! Hebrews 10:35 says, *“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward!”*

When you are relying on God in full surrender, you will have patience to receive what God has promised you. You won’t throw away your confidence if you don’t see results right away because your hope isn’t just in the promise; it’s in the Promise Maker! Hebrews 10:36 says, *“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise; ‘For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’”* True faith has endurance. When you know someone is faithful, you will wait for Him. If the person you are trusting in has failed you before, you may give up waiting on them. But God has never failed you! Don’t get tired, and don’t give up (Galatians 6:9). Your faith will see you through to victory (I John 5:4). Hebrews 6:12 says, *“...do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through **faith** and **patience** inherit the promises.”* We don’t always know where we are at in our faith until we’re tested. James 1:2,3 says, *“(2) ...count it all joy when you fall into various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”* He is a rewarder of those who **diligently** seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Someone who is diligent will grab hold of the promise, and won’t let it go! If you are in faith, you will have patience, you will have peace, and you will have joy!

My God tells me to trust Him, not anything or anyone else. He wants me. He wants my heart. He wants my focus to go beyond the miracle so I can know the Miracle Maker. Hebrews 12:2 says, *“looking unto **Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith...”* He wants me to look for my Healer to find my healing, my Provider to find my provision, my Shepherd to find my direction, and my Redeemer to find my salvation. He is interested in our relationship. He wants me to know His companionship and communion. Wow, the Almighty God wants to be my friend...and He wants to be yours. Incredible, isn’t it?

Chapter 5

ACT FROM DEPENDENCY

Faith is a position rather than a possession. When Jesus said, “*According to your faith be it unto you,*” He saw more than their ability to believe, He saw their desperate dependency upon God when they called out to Him. Faith is more than just believing. In James 2:19, it says that even demons believe that there is a God. We need to do more than just believe. We must surrender our lives to the Lordship of Jesus (Romans 10:8-10). Demons don’t do that. When you are fully yielded to God then you will go beyond believing to action. Faith doesn’t need to make something happen. Faith rests in the knowledge that it is already done and then acts on that fact.

After James 2:19 is verse 20, “*...faith without works is dead.*” Imagine yourself standing next to a friend. You say, “I believe in this friend. I believe that if I were to fall, my friend is willing and able to catch me.” But you still aren’t in faith until you fall backwards. You fall backwards, and you are out of control. You are totally abandoning what is secure to you, trusting someone that you know to be faithful, and knowing they will come through for you. That is faith. Faith is surrender. Believing is part of faith, and action is part of faith. They both are based on your personal position of a trusted surrender. Someone else can’t believe for you; someone else can’t act for you.

If you are truly relying upon God, then doing what He asks you to do will come supernaturally naturally! Just like fruit off a tree, your words and actions will come out of your heart. If your heart is relying and trusting in God, then you will say and do what you believe. If something is in the way of what God says is yours, remove it! Tell that thing it has no place standing between you and what your God has promised you. Jesus told us to speak to our obstacles in faith, and the words of our mouth would cause God’s will to come to pass (Mark 11:22-25). We should follow Christ’s example. He commanded the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk. We do our part by calling it done because we know in our hearts what God’s will is (Romans 4:17).

God isn’t just looking for action; He is looking for your dependency in obedience to Him. Have you ever noticed in the Word of God, that God required different people to do different things before their miracle would come? For example, there was a king by the name of Naaman who God told to dip in the river seven times. After the king yielded to God’s word, he was healed of leprosy. No where else in the Bible do we see God asking someone to dip into a river seven times. This was personal between God and Naaman. This was about Naaman relying on God and acting on his surrender. God didn’t ask Naaman to copy someone else’s obedience. God wanted Naaman’s heart, and He wants your heart.

Some people try to walk out the motions of faith without dying to self. Action without surrender isn’t faith either. Actually, if we’re trying to do good works in order to get something from God, what are doing? We’re back to trying to be in control using our actions to manipulate God! We want to please God by giving Him what we think He wants, so that, in return, God will give us what we want. We should go to church because we want to bless God, serve others, and be edified. We should pray because we long to be with God in conversation and experience as well as see God’s will accomplished on the earth. We should read the Bible because we want to grow in our relationship with God and learn how to lead others in the same knowledge. But a

manipulator will go to church, read the Bible, pray and confess scriptures because they think if they please God enough, they'll get what they want. That's not faith. That's control.

We can't earn a miracle by doing good things. We aren't getting any paybacks from God. We don't put God in a position of owing us rewards because of our actions. Only faith, only surrender, will bring results. Faith is what pleases God. *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him..."*

Your faith will grow as you get to know God better (II Thessalonians 1:3). When you've walked with God for some time, you become more and more convinced of His faithfulness. His love is proved to you over and over so that you can be strengthened in your dependency on Him. To be in faith, you have to know God, you have to let go of control, you have to open up your heart to receive, and you have to act on surrender. When you are relying on the God you know and love, there isn't anything or anyone that can take that away from you! He is **your** God and He will come through for **you!**