



"Unless there is an element of risk in our exploits for God, there is no need for faith."

—Hudson Taylor

27-Jun-14

Simple Faith

Two curly-haired children stood in front of their father as he knelt down to hug them. They were dressed in their best clothes: Jimmy in dark pants, white shirt, suspenders, and bowtie, and Jenny in a pink dress, white shoes, and ribbons in her golden hair. It was not every day that they went down to the train station to see their father off on a long trip.

Daddy was talking. "I'm going to be gone for a while—I don't know how long, but I'll be back before you know it. I have to take care of some business out of the country, and once that's done, I'm coming home to stay. So, mind your Momma and do your chores to help her out. You'll both probably be a foot taller when I get back, but I *will* be back, I promise."

He gave their mother a kiss and a long hug, and then he was gone. The train pulled out of the station, and they waved like mad as they watched it chug away. Soon, there was nothing else to see, so they sadly returned home, changed clothes, and went about their daily routine.

Days passed, then weeks, then months. Daddy's business overseas seemed to be taking longer than he had thought. Momma told them not to worry, that

he would be back with them before they knew it. If they just kept themselves busy, the time would go faster, she said. So Jimmy and Jenny plunged into their school work, did all their chores, read long books, played with the neighbor kids, and grew like beansprouts.

Yet, Daddy still had not come home. As they often did, the children sat on the porch swing in the cool of the evening just before bedtime, watching the fireflies come out. Jenny suspected that Jimmy was down, and he proved it a few minutes later. "I don't think Daddy's coming back," he said. "If he was, he'd be here already. He's forgotten about us."

"That's not true!" said Jenny fiercely, almost shouting. "Daddy said he would come back, so he is coming back!"

Jimmy just shook his head, saying, "How do you know? You're just a little girl."

"So what if I'm a little girl!" she yelled. "Daddy promised! He'll be back soon, just you wait!"

They had similar arguments over the next weeks, Jimmy always doubting, Jenny always certain that their father would arrive home soon. She looked for him everywhere, expecting him to be walking up the drive when she peeked out the front window or be at the train station when they went into town. Jimmy mocked her for a silly goose, but she never wavered in her certainty that their Daddy would come back just as he had said.

Then, suddenly, he was home. They woke up one morning and stumbled out to the kitchen for breakfast, and Daddy was there, kneeling in front of them, giving them the biggest, longest hug that they had ever had! He told them how much he had missed them and how he had wanted to come home sooner, but things had just not worked out until the last few weeks. Then he had hurried back to be with them again for good.

Jenny shed tears of pure [joy](#), refusing to let her father go, but Jimmy was bawling like a baby, choking out, "I'm sorry, Daddy! I'm sorry!"

"What do you mean?" Daddy asked, concerned. "There's nothing to be sorry about."

Wiping away tears, Jimmy said, "I didn't believe you were coming back. Jenny said you would, but it had been so long, and you weren't here, so I thought you would never come back to us."

"Well, here I am!" Daddy said. "Now you know you can trust my word."

While this may be just a story about a little girl's simple [faith](#), it captures the essence of the biblical concept of faith. Sometimes, we tend to make things a bit too theological and difficult, wanting to know all the facets and permutations of a doctrine, but when it comes down to the nitty-gritty of faith, it is trusting Him, taking [God](#) at His word and believing it. In its most basic form, faith can be expressed in the sentiment, "If God said it, that's good enough for me!"

We grapple with the definition that the author of Hebrews pens in [Hebrews 11:1](#): "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We look in various Bible translations for one that will make it plain, something like "Now faith is being sure of what we [hope](#) for, being convinced of what we do not see" (*New English Translation*). We delve into the Greek words for a clearer picture of the author's intent. We pore through commentaries for learned opinions about the verse—and we may still come away scratching our heads.

We know from verses like [Hebrews 11:1](#) that faith is not simple in all its theological ramifications, but in its everyday use, it is not difficult. While He does not use the word "faith" on this occasion, it is what [Jesus](#) alludes to in [Luke 11:28](#), "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" His declaration is reminiscent of the times when people—usually Gentiles—came to Him for healing and simply believed that, in saying the sick person would be healed, all was well. That was the case when the centurion asked Him to heal his servant, and Jesus "marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel'" ([Matthew 8:10](#)).

The apostle Paul, speaking of the faith of Abraham, calls him "the father of us all" ([Romans 4:16](#)). What marked the greatness of Abraham's faith? Paul answers for us in [Romans 4:3](#), quoting [Genesis 15:6](#): "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." The patriarch trusted God's promise that his descendants from the then-unborn [Isaac](#) would be as the number of stars in the heavens ([Genesis 15:3-5](#)). God's promise was good enough for him. It would happen just as God had said.

His faith in God's Word sustained him when, years later, God tested him: "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and . . . offer him . . . as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" ([Genesis 22:2](#)). How could his offspring be as numerous as the stars if Isaac died before having children? So, when Isaac asked where the lamb for the offering was, Abraham answered in faith, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (verses 7-8). He went so far as to bind his son and raise the knife, knowing, in faith, that God would intervene or perform a resurrection so that His promise would not be broken.

Such is the simple faith God desires us to display in the course of our daily lives. Paul teaches that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" ([Romans 10:17](#)). Faith comes and grows when we hear God's Word and believe it, trusting God to do as He has said. So David writes in [Psalm 37:5](#): "Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." That is a promise we can count on!

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Faith \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Most of us would like God to respond and instantly gratify our desires. Consequently, we find operating by faith extremely difficult. We think that God does not seem in all that big of a hurry. We look at time differently than God does because, like Abraham, Moses, and Gideon, we do not trust that

He has things under control. As we encounter our own Red Seas, our faith gets exercised and toughened. In His infinite patience, God, as the Master Teacher, uses His time to instruct us so that, despite frequent failure, we will eventually grow in faith and get turned around. Faith is the quality that a person exercises between the time he becomes aware of a need he hopes for and its actual attainment. Like a muscle, the more we exercise faith, the more it grows. God will manipulate our experiences to make both our weakness and His power clear.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Faith—What Is It?](#)

by Pat Higgins

How important is faith? What is the faith God requires us to have? Pat Higgins explains that faith is simple in concept, but difficult to display in our lives. Nevertheless, we must exercise this gift of God to pass the tests that are sure to precede the return of Christ.

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