

Faith

The theme of “faith” weaves its way through all of Scripture. It was faith that led Noah to build an ark for 120 years. It was faith that caused Abraham to be willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. It was the faith of a Roman Centurion who believed that if Jesus just uttered the word, his son would be healed.

In fact, Hebrews 11:6 states that it is impossible to please God without faith. What is it about “faith” that makes God smile? Faith requires us to look beyond ourselves for answers. Faith drives us to look to God and place our hope and trust in Him. Faith also pleases God because it creates an opportunity for him to reveal his power.

Jesus reminds us, “What is impossible with men is possible with God”. Our faith, no matter the size, puts the wheels of heaven into motion.

II Kings 4 provides a tangible illustration of faith. This chapter opens by introducing us to a grieving widow of a nameless prophet. Her grief over his death is superseded by the realities of the life she is left with. He has left her in debt and with no means of providing for her two sons. In ancient days creditors could repossess your children just like a car you stopped making payments on. She had not only lost her husband, but was in real danger of losing her sons to slavery.

In desperation, she cries out to Elisha who asks her “What do you have in your house?” With a little embarrassment, she reveals the hopelessness of her situation. She says “Your servant has nothing there at all, except a little oil.”

Elisha then gives a curious response. He tells her to go to her neighbors and gather as many empty jars as possible. He even adds “Don’t ask for just a few”. He then instructs her to go inside her house, shut the door, and begin to pour oil into the jars she has collected.

This seems like a strange suggestion, but her situation is hopeless. What does she have to lose?

What she does in that next moment reveals her faith. Every house she went to was a step of faith. Every request for a jar was an expression of faith. She knew she only had a little oil and that it would require a miracle for all these jars to be filled with oil. Her faith put the wheels of heaven into motion as God prepared to do the impossible. Every jar she collected gave God greater opportunity to reveal himself and his power.

Imagine the scene as she closes the door of her house. Jars are stacked everywhere. Jars of every size and every shape sit in her house. Standing beside her are her two sons. They are about to witness up close and personal a miracle that they would tell and re-tell hundreds of times during the course of their life. In fact, this great testimony of faith continues to live on in the pages of Scripture.

This widow then looks into the one jar that is hers. In that jar is a small amount of oil. Her faith wavers. Was this just the wild idea of Elisha or was this really from God? Her heart begins to race and she picks up her jar and begins to pour oil into an empty jar. She tilts her hand and the oil rolls over the edge of the jar and begins to pour into the empty jar. She looks into her jar and there is still oil. It keeps flowing until the first jar is full to the brim.

She stops, looks at her boys and they all three simultaneously grin at one another. They are amazed at what has just taken place. However, the widow doesn't linger long. She takes another jar and again slowly begins to fill it. And then she fills a third jar. And a fourth. And a fifth. Jar after jar is filled and she looks around the room, she sees God's gracious provision.

She asks her son to bring her the next jar. But he replied that there were no more jars. The Bible says that it was just then that the oil stopped flowing. God's provision matched her faith exactly. Not one drop more, not one drop less.

Let me ask you, what are you trusting God for? Sadly, the more years people serve in ministry, the less risk-taking faith they demonstrate. We can begin to rely on our experience, our skills, and our planning to win the day. Yet, without faith it is impossible to please God.

Would you dare to still believe the word of the apostle Paul? *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,"* Eph. 3:20 (NIV)

Idea...

Let me suggest passing out a jar to everyone on your staff team or the team of people you lead in ministry. Have each person write out a few God-honoring goals that they are willing to pray for and trust God for. Take a few minutes to share some of these as people are willing.