

LIVING AN AUTHENTIC FAITH, PART 7

...everything that does not come from faith is sin. (Romans 14:23, NIV)

CAN I SHOCK YOU WITH A FUN LITTLE FACT I recently found in an older article on the Internet? In 2007, a few seasons into the PGA Tour’s use of the amazing laser measurement program called ShotLink, Tour professionals missed 1,536 putts within three feet! Here’s the thing, though. There are an awful lot of those putts hit each season on the Tour. In fact, that year Tour players stroked 168,389 putts from that distance. Which means—we’ll help you with the math here—99.2 percent of putts from that close range fell in.

Confidence is a funny thing. Just when we’re 99 percent sure of something—*SURPRISE!* It works either way, of course. Not all tap-ins find the hole, but “impossible” shots sometimes do.

Faith, too, is funny like this. Just when a man (Job) has built his estate in righteousness, it all is taken away from him. And just when a woman (Tabitha) is being lamented as dead, life is miraculously returned to her.

So do we know what’s coming? Not always. Faith, we are told by the writer of Hebrews, is a function of being sure even without visual evidence. No wonder the father of the demon-possessed boy in Mark 9 cried out, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” It can be so hard to believe what we have not yet seen.

But it can also be hard to believe even though we have seen. The woman at the temple held only two coins in her hand. She had every reason to look at those pennies and say to herself, “I have nothing worthwhile to offer to God.” This woman did not let her quite obvious circumstances get in the way of her faith.

And then there is Job, whose conditions took the greatest of jolts—riches to rags was the story he could have written. And despite all he saw around him, despite his own frustrations and ignorance, he clung to God, just as he had in his wealth.

“So precious to God is the mystery of simple, naked faith,” Mike Mason has written, “that there are times when it is within his purposes to isolate it drastically, so as clearly to demonstrate that faith certainly can stand all by itself, cut off from every visible authentication of its worth.” Faith may be built up over time, but it is also exposed in the moment. Pray that your faith is authentic in every circumstance.

Opening questions What shot on the golf course do you most believe in? Where does this confidence come from? • What things provide the biggest challenge to your faith in God?

READING Matthew 6:25-34; Mark 11:20-25; Romans 1:8-12

Faith applied (Matthew 6)
According to Jesus, what applications should our faith have in our daily circumstances? How do you respond in your heart when you read of Jesus addressing people as “you of little faith”?

Praying in faith (Mark 11)
Consider Jesus’ instruction to his disciples about praying in faith. Does this kind of prayer seem possible for you? How might you pray with more faith?

Faith and community (Romans 1)
How does firm faith contribute to the community of believers?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2015 Links Players International. A 6-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/O8g-qBaPe-0>