

Fanning it into Flame
Sunday, January 15, 2012
Journey Essentials 2

In order to succeed in our journey of life, no matter what careers or vocations we choose, there are key character qualities, disciplines, and choices that pave the way. Because it is our life that we are living, the subtle temptation to do things in our own strength is always a heartbeat away. Last week we emphasized the need for the Spirit of God to lead us and guide us. The baptism in the Holy Spirit was something that Jesus emphasized before his ascension and that his disciples waited for and received in order to be his witnesses. Without the power of, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit we will be much more inclined to do things on our own. The mother of all the living found out the hard way that you can have the right motivation and end up with the wrong outcome if you ignore the things God commands. Eve listened to the voice of the serpent that made her doubt what God had told her and encouraged her to pursue her desire to be like God by taking a “short cut.” The result was a spiritual death that only faith in the sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus could remedy.

The journey essential emphasis this week is **faith**. **Hebrews 11:1-6 (NIV)** ¹ *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.* Another way this is translated is, *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.* There is a reality to faith that brings with it a confidence in things that cannot necessarily be verified empirically. The confidence we have is in the fact that we believe it. There is a “knowing that you know” to it. The writer goes on to say in verse 6, *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.* To have faith is to believe and to believe is to have faith. They are from the same root word in the original language. Believe is the verb and faith is the noun. I believe the reason we cannot please God without faith is because it is centered in a relationship with him. An aspect of faith is trust. When we believe in God we are putting our trust in him. We are taking him at his word. The more we know a trustworthy person the more we trust them. When we begin with God and are just getting to know him, we believe in him yet we can be very cautious. But the more we get to know him, we find ourselves taking greater risks because we know that his promises are true. He said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

When Jesus told his disciples something they needed to do, they said, “Lord, increase our faith.” His reply was that faith the size of the smallest seed could accomplish amazing miraculous things. The reason is that our faith is not to be in ourselves and our abilities, but in the one who lives in us by his Spirit. When you find yourself feeling like you need more faith, don’t ask for more faith. Ask the Lord to help you draw nearer to him. When you grow in your relationship with the Lord, your faith level will increase. Many people mistakenly think we have some kind of kinetic energy that is released and is accomplishing the results. While there may be an element of truth there, it is never to be our focus. He is the source of our strength. We do things in the name of Jesus. He is the source of genuine faith. It is a gift from God and yet needs to be cultivated by us. Our obedient response to what he says empowers us.

Revelation 21:6-8 (NIV)

⁶ *He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."* Notice the first two characteristics of those who will not inherit the Kingdom: the cowardly and the unbelieving. We are not to be those who hide our talent under a rock for fear of failure. We step out in faith trusting that God is going to lead us all the way. If we fall or fail in some way, God will pick us up and teach us through our failure. *He works all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose.* God delights in us becoming more like Jesus and taking steps of faith. He has called us to advance his Kingdom and do his will. It’s what we were created for and what will give us the greatest fulfillment in life. Let’s be people of faith knowing that *he who began a good work in you will accomplish it until the day of Christ Jesus.*