

THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS NETWORK

Practicing Christian Community in the Marketplace

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ChristianBusinessNetwork.com

The Role of Faith in Lasting Success

Introduction:

My prayer is that this message would not seem like rocket science, but rather like rocket fuel to your faith.

Hang Gliding vs. Scuba Diving approach to this message

Opening Story: "Got to be in Quebec"

This story is told by the captain of a ship on which George Muller of Bristol was traveling. During his life he received more than 1,000,000 pounds from the Lord, without advertising—every penny came as an answer to prayer.

"We had George Muller of Bristol on board," said the captain. "I had been on the bridge for twenty-four hours and never left it and George Muller came to me and said, "Captain, I have come to tell you I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon." "It is impossible," I said. "Then very well, if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way. I have never broken an engagement in fifty-seven years; let us go down into the chart room and pray."

"I looked at that man of God and thought to myself, "What lunatic asylum can that man have come from, for I never heard of such a thing as this?" "Mr. Muller," I said, "do you know how dense this fog is?"

"No," he replied, "my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life." He knelt down and he prayed one of the most simple prayers. When he had finished I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to pray. "As you do not believe He will answer, and as I believe He has, there is no need whatever for you to pray about it."

"I looked at him and George Muller said, "Captain, I have known my Lord for fifty-seven years and there has never been a single day when I have failed to get an audience with the King. Get up, Captain, and open the door and you will find the fog has gone."

"I got up and the fog indeed was gone, and on that Saturday afternoon George Muller kept his promised engagement."

SUCCESS: Who understands what it means?

A. Epigrams of Success

Success is getting what you want out of life without violating the rights of others.

I would rather fail in the cause that someday will triumph than to triumph in a cause that someday will fail. [Woodrow Wilson]

B. How does the world define Success?

- A prosperous career
- A series of job promotions
- Victory over your opponents
- Plenty of money in the bank
- Notoriety in the business community
- Winning the game
- Climbing the ladder
- Achieving the goal
- Conquering the enemy
- Building the practice

C. How does God define Success?

Principle: SUCCESS is ultimately defined by who awards what rewards.

A Working Definition: Success is the pleasure and the approval of God gained by our faith in His character and our faithful stewardship of our God-given potential.

[The Kingdom of heaven] is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability... The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' (Matthew 25:14 ff)

D. How did Jesus exemplify Success?

I glorified You on the earth having [successfully] accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. (John 17:4)

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased". (Matthew 17:5)

LASTING SUCCESS: Has God made provision?

Question: Is it really God's desire and has He made provision for us to succeed as business people in the marketplace?

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:7-8)

May God give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. (Psalm 20:4)

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear [much] fruit – fruit that will last. (John 15:8, 16)

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (2 Peter 1:3)

Conclusion: God absolutely wants and has made every provision for us to succeed as business people in the marketplace, so long as business is not the measure of our success.

LASTING SUCCESS: Is this my ambition?

Question: Wouldn't you like to see your achievements and success bless many in this generation, leave a legacy for the next generation, and reward you for all eternity?

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. (Acts 20:22-24)

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." [Jim Elliott]

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24)

Living the Entrepreneur's Dream: Profile on David Browne, retired CEO of LensCrafters

FAITH: On what or whom should we base it?

As Christian, our Faith has EVERYTHING to do with the object of our Faith!

The very foundation of our Faith is God's Faithfulness. (Read Psalm 103)

God can be trusted because He is wholly SOVEREIGN and He is wholly GOOD!

Faith begins with the character of God, is sustained by the faithfulness of God, and results in the pleasure of God.

The tragic experience of Dr. Amy Castillo (USA Today - April 4, 2008)

Living a life of faith means never knowing where you are being led. But it does mean loving and knowing the One who is leading. It is literally a life of faith, not of understanding and reason—a life of knowing Him who calls us to go. Faith is rooted in the knowledge of a Person... (My Utmost for His Highest - March 19th)

We can no more comprehend our future than we can control it, and we can no more control it than we can comprehend it. So we are left with three choices: (1) Trust in ourselves, (2) Trust in someone or something else, or (3) Trust in the faithfulness of God.

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Questions: In the challenging circumstances we face in business every week, we are forced to ask:

- Is God wholly worthy of my trust?
- Do I really trust Him?
- Will I fully trust Him?

FAITH: Who understands what it means?

A. Epigrams of Faith

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible, and receives the impossible.

Faith is to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable.

Faith is idle when circumstances are right, only when they are adverse is one's faith in God exercised. Faith, like muscle, grows strong and supple with exercise.

Don't be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps. [David Lloyd George]

A little faith will bring your soul to heaven; a great faith will bring heaven to your soul. [Charles Spurgeon]

Faith is to believe what we do not see; and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.

Faith in God is indispensable to successful statesmanship. [Abraham Lincoln]

B. How does the world define faith?

"Just Believe"

"Stop trying and start trusting"

"Seeing is believing"

"Just take a blind leap of faith"

C. How might we define Faith?

"Faith/Belief/Trust" are synonymous nouns

"Having Faith/Trusting/Believing" are synonymous verbs

A Working Definition: Faith is our response to the grace of God to trust in the character and the promises of God as conveyed in the Word of God.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Faith is a reflection of and our response to the character of God as we know Him.

Faith by its very nature must be tested and tried. And the real trial of faith is not that we find it difficult to trust God, but that God's character must be proven as trustworthy in our own minds. (My Utmost for His Highest - October 31st)

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you. (Psalm 9:9-10)

Question: How different would our faith be if we were to spend 60 seconds in the very presence of God?

D. How does Hebrews 11:1 define Faith?

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (NASB)

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. (Holman)

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (NIV)

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. (New Living Translation)

Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things we hope for, being the proof of things we do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]. (Amplified Bible)

Now faith is the substantive assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of activity not seen. (Original Greek)

*This faith (in Hebrews 11) is seen as the relationship to the commands and promises of God which made possible the acts and behavior of the person concerned. [It is by faith that] what is hoped for becomes a reality piece by piece in the contemporary world... Faith bestows on that which we hope for the full certainty of future realization. Faith bestows on what we do not see the full certainty of proof.
(The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology Volume 1, p. 714)*

Hebrews 11:3 - By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen has been made from things that are not visible.

FAITH: What role does it play in the Christian life?

I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. (Matthew 17:20)

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (Romans 1:17)

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." (Galatians 3:11)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20)

We live by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7 - NIV)

We walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7 - NASB)

But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." (Hebrews 10:38)

When we choose to walk by SIGHT rather than by FAITH, is it because we would prefer to TRUST in what our SENSES tell us rather than what our SAVIOR tells us?

FAITH: What role does it play in lasting success?

A. Faith is essential to win the Approval of God

Hebrews 11:2

For by [faith] our ancestors were approved. (Holman)

For by [faith] the men of old gained approval. (NASB)

[Faith] is what the ancients were commended for. (NIV)

Examples of Faith (Hebrews 11:4-5)

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By this he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through this.

By faith, Enoch was taken away so that he did not experience death, and he was not to be found because God took him away. For prior to his transformation he was approved, having pleased God.

Example of Abraham - the Father of our Faith

Abram believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)

Abram believed the Lord. And the Lord accepted Abram's faith, and that faith made him right with God. (Genesis 15:6 - New Century Version)

For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. (Romans 4:3)

Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. (Galatians 3:6)

So the Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend. (James 2:23)

Worldliness is not the trap that most endangers us as Christian workers; nor is it sin. The trap we fall into is extravagantly desiring spiritual success; that is, success measured by, and patterned after, the form set by this religious age in which we now live. Never seek after anything other than the approval of God. (My Utmost for His Highest - April 24th)

B. Faith is essential to win the Pleasure of God

Hebrews 11:6

Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him. (Holman)

And 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 seek Him. (NASB)

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. (NIV)

Examples of Faith (Hebrews 11:7-19)

By faith Noah, after being warned about what was not yet seen, in reverence built an ark to deliver his family. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; he who had received the promises was offering up his unique son, about whom it had been said, "In Isaac your seed will be called." He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead, from which he also got him back as an illustration.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the short-lived pleasure of sin. For he considered reproach for the sake of the Messiah to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since his attention was on the reward.

Remember: The ancients were not commended by God *before* they exercised faith, but *because* they exercised faith!

C. Faith is essential to win the Race Marked Out for Us by God

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

FAITH: Why are we so reluctant to trust God?

If we *do* believe that God is wholly worthy of our trust (trustworthy), then why are we so reluctant at times to yield our “control” of decisions and circumstances over to Him?

Why is it that we can trust Christ with the most important decision in life - our eternal destiny - and yet resist or refuse to trust Him with far less important decisions in life?

- A. Because Faith is often risky.
- B. Because Faith is often costly.
- C. Because Faith is often scary.
- D. Because Faith always requires us to abandon our comfort zone.
- E. Because Faith always requires us to relinquish our sense of control.
- F. Because Faith always requires obedience and action.
- G. Because we fail to recall the many promises of God made on our behalf. (Matt 6:25-34)
- H. Because we fail to recall the many miracles of God performed for our behalf. (Num 14:1-12 / Matthew 14:22-32)

Factoid: The only thing Jesus ever rebuked His disciples for was a lack of faith.

FAITH: What kind are we willing to exercise?

- A. No Faith - We choose to retain the highest possible measure of control over our circumstances and destiny. “I am the captain of my ship and the master of my fate.”
- B. Circumstantial Faith - We choose to yield the smallest measure of control over to others required by other more important choices.
- C. Cautious Faith - We choose to yield a measure of control over to others accompanied by an equal measure of concern as to the outcome of my choices and circumstances.
- D. Confident Faith - We choose to yield the majority of control over to others because their character, competence, and commitment outweigh the potential risk of loss.
- E. Complete Faith - We choose to yield the entirety of control over to others because they have proven that they are wholly worthy of our complete trust - wholly trustworthy.

Rest in God alone, my soul, for my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I will not be shaken. My salvation and glory depend on God; my strong rock, my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts before Him. God is our refuge. (Psalm 62:5-8)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:4-5)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20)

FAITH: What can we do to increase it?

1. Get to know the God of all eternity. (Isa 40:28 ff.)
2. Get to know the God of human history. (Exodus 34:6)
3. Get to know the God of your journey. (Psalm 73:23-26)
4. Ask God to strengthen your faith in Him.

“But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:21-24)

Conclusions:

1. Faith is the supreme confrontation between all that we believe about God and all that we value about ourselves.
2. Our faith is determined by who’s on the Alter, and who’s on the Throne? (Rom 12:1 / Psalm 103:19)
3. So, what’s it going to be?
 - A great adventure toward the Land of Promise as we learn to trust completely in the character, power, and faithfulness of God to lead us every step of the way?
 - A choice to remain in or return to the Land of Comfort where life is “predictable”, where business is “controllable”, and where our faith in God is “manageable”?
4. How much more could God have done, and how much more must God still do to earn our complete faith and trust and belief in Him?
5. What’s the role of FAITH in lasting success? *Faith is the sine qua non of lasting success!*
6. Our daily reminder: US coinage - “In God We Trust”
7. Our primary Call to Action:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:4-5)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

8. Eugene Roberts YouTube Video