

Romans010700-010812  
Bridge of Hope  
January 8, 2012

## “Why Faith?”

With the coming of a new year we are starting a new series that I hope will impact the rest of the year and for years to come. Today we are going to begin to take a look at the topic of “Why Faith?” It is going to revolutionize your life if you put into practice the things that we are going to be talking about. In preparing for this series I have experienced a new surge of faith in me. I hope it will do the same in you.

Paul answered the question of why faith this way in **Romans 1:17** (NIV) *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is **by faith** from first to last, just as it is written: “**The righteous will live by faith.**”* According to Paul the righteous are people who live by faith from the start to the finish. This means that we are to live our lives by faith, always by faith.

So that brings up the question for us to think about: **WHY FAITH? WHY DO YOU THINK GOD WANTS US TO LIVE BY FAITH?** (Discussion)

As we explore this subject and look at numerous statements about faith we will then be able to discover what God is expecting to see accomplished by a life of faith. Once we discover this we will then need to become a people of faith, the kind of people who bring pleasure to God. And when God is pleased good things happen.

Now here is something that I have discovered about faith, faith is about our love for Jesus. Yeah, I really believe that faith is about loving Jesus.

*If you believe you will place faith in that.*

*If you trust you do so because you believe.*

*If you hope you are placing it on what you trust.*

*Relationships are built on trust and hope is best expressed in relationship.*

*Love is best experienced in relationship.*

*Faith in Jesus is really about our love for him.*

In essence, what you place your faith in is what you love. And Jesus wants us to love Him most so He asks us to live our lives by faith in Him. One of my favorite verses in scripture says it this way in **Hebrews 11:6** (NIV) *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.* The way for us to bring pleasure to Jesus is to love Him and that means that we will live by faith. As a Christian I want the favor of God to rest upon my life. I want Him to smile upon me and bless me with all the promises He has for my life. And so it is necessary for me to grapple with the subject of faith because faith is about loving God back which makes Him smile upon my life. So faith is about loving which opens the door for Christ’s favor to come in my life through His blessings.

Are you still with me on this?

The time is now to become a people of faith. Yes, it is time for you and I to overcome the failures and victories of the past and live as a people of faith today. The time is now for us to start where we are and move to what Jesus is calling us to live. In our last message we discovered that faith is

about the substance and evidence of obedience. And so living as a people of faith is about our loving Jesus as we acknowledge Him through lives of obedience. Trusting Him, we move forward by faith in all that he asks of us.

To get started with our first thought in this series lets take a look at a passage of scripture that gives us a starting point of faith in Jesus. Paul wrote to the church in Philippi in

**Philippians 3:7-14** (NIV) *But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, **but that which is through faith in Christ**—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. **But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

Here are a couple of starting points for “why faith?”

- **WHY FAITH? BECAUSE LIVING BY FAITH REQUIRES US TO FORGET THE PAST.**
  1. **WHY DO PEOPLE FIND IT SO DIFFICULT TO FORGET THE PAST?** (discussion)
  2. **Before we are able to move forward in faith we have to be willing to forget.**
    - We have to forget the things that have held us back or have hurt us in the past.
    - We have to let go of the security of yesterday in order to embrace the fruit of the future.
    - We cannot live on what was, good or bad, as we choose to move forward in faith.
    - So that means that we have to be willing to forget what is behind us so that we are not held captive by anything other than Christ Himself.
  3. **Paul said, forgetting what is behind and straining to what is ahead.**
    - The truth is we will never strain to what’s ahead if we aren’t willing to release what was.
    - And this isn’t just about the bad things that happen, for there are plenty of good things that hold us just as captive to the past as there are bad things.
    - **Hebrews 11:1** (NKJV) *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*
    - This is about what we hope for which is most often something that we do not have or at the very least want to continue to have
      - If we have it, then we don’t want to lose it and the future doesn’t always let us in on that secret, we have to live by faith.
      - If we don’t have it, we would like for God’s promise to find its way to our life and the future doesn’t always let us know if it’s coming, we have to live by faith.
    - Paul is saying that the way faith works in our life is to let go of that which was in order

to be able to reach for that which is ahead.

- The author of Hebrews is saying that faith is filled with substance of things hoped for because it is filled with Jesus Christ.
- Because we know Jesus we can trust Him and the expression of our love for Him is to live by faith in Him.

#### 4. WHAT IN 2012 DO YOU NEED TO FORGET, LEAVING IT BEHIND YOU?

#### • WHY FAITH? BECAUSE LIVING BY FAITH DEMANDS WE PRESS ON.

1. **WHAT IS IT THAT KEEPS PEOPLE FROM MOVING OR PRESSING FORWARD?** (Discussion)
2. Sometimes I think people have the wrong idea about things like faith and pressing on, they talk almost as if there will not be any obstacles or difficulties along the way.
  - And this simply isn't true.
  - Most of the time when by faith we press on we will experience obstacles that do their best to stop us from accomplishing what we set out to do.
3. Another thing that I have noticed is that people seem to think that when faith gets involved it means everything is going to be different and change.
  - As if nothing will be familiar anymore as we press on in faith.
  - This too is often a misnomer.
4. To press on means something much more, it means we . . .
  - know something about where we are going, even if it's only the first or last step.
  - may not know it all, but we know enough to get started.
  - we continue to move ahead in what Jesus gave us to do whether it's easy or hard.
  - are willing to keep going in what God asked of us whether it's familiar or brand new.
5. Pressing on is about moving with Jesus regardless of what is happening around us:
  - opposition or support,
  - ridicule or compliments,
  - lack or abundance,
  - misunderstood or understanding.
  - Come what will we have heard from Jesus and are committed to Him.
6. Paul said that we should strain to what is ahead; to press on toward the goal to win the prize that God has called me heavenward.
  - Pressing on is about not quitting and standing in faith.
  - Sometimes its standing strong as a warrior ready for battle and sometimes it looks more like standing weakened by the battles that have taken place.
  - But either way we stand in faith straining with the strength we have, much or little, to the goal of Christ Jesus.
  - **Philippians 3:13-14** (NIV) *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

#### 7. WHAT IS IT THAT HAS BEEN SET IN FRONT OF YOU THAT REQUIRES YOU TO PRESS ON IN 2012?

Conclusion: The time is now for us to become a people of faith who understand the importance of forgetting what is behind us and pressing on to what is ahead in Christ. As a people of faith we have been learning the lesson of perseverance and that work will continue as it matures and grows us in the days ahead. Listen to what the scripture says about faith and perseverance, they are tied together and we are going to live them out as a people of faith. The Bible says in . . .

- **James 1:2–4** (NIV) *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that **the testing of your faith produces perseverance**. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*
- **Hebrews 10:36–39** (NIV) *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” And, “But my righteous one will live **by faith**. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” **But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.***
- **Hebrews 12:1–2** (NIV) *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, **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.***

**WHY FAITH? BECAUSE LIVING BY FAITH DEVELOPS PERSEVERANCE AND PERSEVERANCE MAKES US TO BE MORE AND MORE LIKE JESUS.** The time is now and we as a family called Bridge of Hope intend to do all we can to have God smile upon us. We will live in the blessing of our God as His favor shines upon us because we will love Him by being a people of faith. Today we ask you to join others who are already on this journey of faith. Together we can see what will happen through lives of faith as we strain ahead to what lies before us in 2012.