How To Live By Faith

READ: Hebrews 11:1 (Common English Bible)

“Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don’t see.”

REFLECT:

Harold Blake Walker writes, “We live by faith or we do not live at all. Either we venture or we vegetate. If we venture, we do so by faith, simply because we cannot know the end of anything at its beginning.” Walker applies this principal to marriage, the pursuit of a career, and the challenge of overcoming any of life’s difficulties. There is little certainty in life. Either we risk obtaining what we desire or we remain single, fail to realize what our potential may be, and are stopped by any resistance that places itself between us and what we want. Once we accept the veracity of Walker’s premise, the question becomes, “How do we proceed with an act of imaginative faith?

We begin by paying attention – paying attention to the object of our desire. I first noticed the woman that I would eventually marry in Hebrew Language Class. She was attractive, clearly intelligent, and was engaging with other students. As many men have said before me, any notion of a romantic relationship with her would be a reach. Yet, I refused to simply dismiss the possibility. I paid attention to her. I looked for opportunities to engage in conversation with her. Then I looked for clues that she may be responsive to a friendship, moving to a deeper engagement and finally, the most terrifying risk of all, asking her out on a date. She could have politely refused. Clearly admired by both students and faculty, this was a risk.

This same dynamic is at play in any arena of life. If we desire anything, we begin by paying attention to the small things, gathering clues here and there for the next step that we will take. We make a mental picture of taking possession of what we want and strive forward toward it. That is what this passage from Hebrews means by “Faith is the reality of what we hope for” – we strive forward as though what we desire is now a reality – that we have already taken possession of it. Yes, moving forward may meet with failure. That woman in Hebrew Class may have said “no” to my request for a shared dinner. But the answer was located on the other side of faith - on the other side of taking the risk to ask.

The Book of Hebrews does not minimize the difficulty of faith. An easy faith is a contradiction of terms. Faith, as we have acknowledged, carries an element of risk. And great faith has always had to reckon with great doubt. We possess faith only as we fight for it each day – keeping our eye on the object of desire and recapturing its allure each day. Then we must doubt our doubts and move steadily forward in the direction we wish to go. Yes, the burden of doubt occasionally presents struggle and strain. All great ventures of our lives require struggle and strain. But triumphs are not won without an unquenchable belief that we can achieve what we desire. It all begins with one step forward. That is living by faith.
RESPOND:

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you? **Pray:** “What would you have me hear, O Lord?”

2. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayer to pray? **Pray:** “What would you have me do, O Lord?”

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PRAY:

*Great God, strengthen me when weaken by doubt. Kindle again and again a strong belief that you are an ever-present strength in times of difficulty. Help me recognize your transformative grace that surrounds me. Amen.*

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