

Believing To See

by Rita Langeland

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"Did I not tell you," replied Jesus, "That if you believed you would see the wonder of what God can do?" (John 11:40 – J. B. Phillips Translation)

Jesus was standing with Mary and Martha in front of the tomb of their brother Lazarus. He had just ordered that the stone blocking the entrance to the tomb be removed. Martha objected, mentioning the stench that would come forth since Lazarus had been dead for four days. At this point Jesus turned to her and said, "Did I not tell you...that if you believed you would see the wonder of what God can do?" This statement reflects God's way of doing things. IF YOU BELIEVE, YOU WILL SEE. The world approaches everything in the opposite way, "WHEN I SEE IT, I'LL BELIEVE IT."

God has called every Christian to walk by faith and not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7) Faith believes God and His Word even when it cannot see any tangible evidence with its natural sight. St. Augustine defined faith this way: "Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of faith is to see what we believe." God designed us to live lives of faith, trusting God in everything and for everything in our lives. Martin Luther described it this way, "God our Father has made all things to depend on faith...so that whoever has faith will have everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing."

God fully intended for every believer to obtain what he or she needs in life by faith. Whether you need healing, finances, wisdom for your business decisions or any other supernatural intervention in your life, God wants you to BELIEVE SO YOU CAN SEE the wonder of what God can do in your situation.

Joshua is one of the greatest Bible characters and he lived his life BELIEVING TO SEE THE WONDERS OF GOD. Joshua had learned from serving under Moses that God loved to do wonders among the people, but that He always required that they first believed His Word. So when Joshua became the leader of Israel at Moses' death, he knew how to operate by faith. We can observe this in the third chapter of the Book of Joshua.

And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap." Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan. (Joshua 3:5,9,11,13,17 NKJV)

The children of Israel needed supernatural intervention in order to get across the Jordan River. It was the time of harvest and the Jordan always overflowed its banks during that season. So the water was deep and there were between 800,000 and 3 million Israelites (according to Bible scholars) that needed to cross with their belongings, animals and children. It was a logistical impossibility. But Joshua took the first step that is required to receive "the wonders that God can do" by choosing to BELIEVE THE WORD OF THE LORD. God had told him that when the priests step into the water carrying the ark of the covenant, the waters flowing from upstream would be cut off and they could walk through on dry ground. If Joshua had argued with God about the impossibility of that idea OR if he had insisted that he first had to understand how God would do that miracle before he would believe it, he would never have received it.

Many people are stymied in their faith because they think that they need to UNDERSTAND IN ORDER TO BELIEVE. They have an exalted estimation of their intellect. God's ways are far beyond the human intellect and Proverbs 3:5 tells us that God requires us to Trust in the Lord will all of your heart and lean NOT on your own understanding. The truth is that if we choose first to believe, God will bring us understanding of His ways. Insistence upon understanding first is a roadblock to your faith.

A second step that Joshua took was to be willing to VERBALIZE what he believed. Many Christians are trying to believe in their hearts for a certain thing from God but never risk saying with their mouth that which they believe. This is an important faith step. Paul the Apostle understood this principle as demonstrated in Second Corinthians 4:13: And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak.

In this scripture Paul was quoting from Psalm 116:10. King David was the author of Psalm 116. Like the Apostle Paul, he understood that faith is activated both by believing with the heart AND speaking with the mouth that which is believed. True faith or true believing changes the way you speak about your circumstances. Because he believed, Joshua was willing to say before he saw it happen, that the water of the Jordan River would recede and the ground would dry up so they could pass over it to the other side. That is part of the "risk of faith". You must speak what you believe.

In our work in East Africa we are believing God to start an orphanage and a one year Bible Institute. The Lord recently spoke to me that we would own a certain piece of property in Tanzania that already has buildings on the grounds that would be suitable for this endeavor. At this point the owners appear to have no interest in selling the property, and we don't have the money in our hands (at this writing) to purchase it. But I believe and therefore speak that Hidden With Christ Ministries will own that property for the purpose of starting an orphanage and Bible Institute. Is it risky to say what you believe? Could you end up looking like a fool? Certainly, walking by faith is a risk. But God is faithful and we are dependent upon Him not ourselves to bring to pass His promises. It is far better to BELIEVE TO SEE, than to choose not to believe (because of fear of looking foolish) and NEVER SEE the wonders that God can do.*

A third step that Joshua took in preparation to see God do wonders among them is that he called the Israelites to "sanctify themselves." The word sanctify means "to set apart for spiritual purposes." In the Israelite's case, they washed their clothing and their bodies as a sign of setting themselves apart to receive God's miraculous intervention. Sometimes we need to set ourselves apart through prayer or fasting or a withdrawal from worldly activities to prepare our hearts to receive God's wonders.

In my home church we have a special retreat weekend each year called "Encounter the Cross". The church leadership fully believes that God will do wonders among the people during that special event. But as part of the preparation to receive the "wonders that God can do" the leadership team fasts and prays for thirty days prior to that retreat. We have never failed to see "wonders" done in the hearts and lives of the people who attend.

A final step in Joshua's faith project was that he took action that reflected his expectant faith. How do we know he truly believed God's word? Because faith always ACTS ON GOD'S WORD. Joshua acted on God's word by sending the priests to step into the Jordan and by telling the people to get ready to see God do "wonders among you."

If you are believing God for a certain promise, then your actions should reflect that you expect that promise to come to pass. For example, if you believe God has called you to be an overseas missionary, then you should begin studying the language in preparation for that call to come to pass in your life. Don't wait to see it happen first, and then plan to prepare. If you really believe then you will prepare now! Your actions will reflect your faith. If you believe, you will see the wonder of what God can do!

(this message is available on CD or MP3)

*FOOTNOTE: Since the writing of this article in 2004, the orphanage that we had been believing for came into existence in early 2007 and we are currently renting a building to house it on the very property mentioned above. It is called the Treasures of Africa Children's Home and you can see it and the precious children who live there on our website www.treasuresofafrica.org. This is an example of faith becoming sight!

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