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The Life of Faith

More than once Jesus told his disciples to follow him. For the disciples to follow Jesus, they had to embrace a lot of change. Change in their everyday lifestyle. Vocational change. Change in family relationships. Change in religious beliefs. But those changes were a really just a reflection of deep inner change.

Signing up to follow Jesus means signing up for a lifetime of change. Change of heart. Jesus spoke so often about the heart because it is central to everything. What we do and say and believe and teach and model all flow from our hearts.

On one occasion, Jesus got into a boat and his disciples followed him. Sounds fun, huh? A day at sea or a journey to the other side. A huge storm suddenly appeared and the disciples found themselves in a boat which was literally becoming covered with waves. I would be afraid, wouldn't you? They naturally looked to their leader. He was asleep. I don't think they hesitated to wake him up. They said, "Lord, don't you care that we are dying?" Makes sense to me. They have committed their lives to following Jesus. They followed him into this boat. A storm has arisen. Jesus must be unaware. After all, he is asleep.

The response of Jesus is challenging for us if we are honest. "Why are you afraid, you who have so little faith?" Ouch. How do we interpret Jesus response to his disciples? His response was one which went straight to their hearts. Straight to the issue of fear and faith. Polar opposites in the Christian life. But if we are honest, we know it is not always easy to live from a place of faith. Especially during a storm.

Looking back to the question the disciples asked Jesus, we come to the issue of their present crisis. "Jesus, don't you care?" This is the point of honest wrestling with faith. Does Jesus care about us personally? Is his mission more than a world wide cause; is it personal?

The writer of Hebrews describes faith in Hebrews 11: 6 by saying that it is impossible to please God without it, because the person who comes to Jesus must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. He then goes on to list individual men and women who discovered what it meant to live a life of faith. This section of scripture is such a gift of God to us for it describes men and women who were very imperfect. Men and women who struggled at times. Men and women who failed, but men and women who at their heart, at their core, believed God. Men and women who were involved in a progressive, life-long journey of what it means to have faith and follow God.

These men and women wrestled with the issue of faith, just as we do. They wrestled with God because faith must be personal to be effective. The very wrestling is the testing and proving ground of our faith. God is not offended by that. In fact, I believe that He often initiates the wrestling match just as He did for Jacob because He knows that if we wrestle with Him to test and prove our faith, we, like Jacob and many, many others, will be permanently touched by His hands. We will leave our wrestling match with a limp which humbly begs for us to remember that our God is real and powerful and is personally involved with us.

Wrestle on, fellow pilgrim for God says that if we seek Him, we will find Him, if we search for Him with all our hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).

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