

## **McFaith**

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John 6:66-70

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Faith is a buzzword right now. With the way the economy is struggling, we all need an extra dose of faith to get through these difficult financial times in our country. We are told about the personal faith of our presidential candidates. And both are making their faith public to attract the Christian community. Talk shows celebrate the faith demonstrated by those who endure tragedies in their lives. I've been hearing a lot about Faith lately, which makes me wonder where all this faith comes from in the first place.

As I listen to people describe their faith, it sounds much like the two "very attractive" men in the video (and too late on people thinking you're weird). I've met many people who know they need faith, but they have created something unique and all their own - their own personal McFaith (a little of this and a little of that from all the worlds religions). And I believe this whole "create your own faith" idea is becoming a very dangerous trend in our world today. Consider the new faith created by a man in Melbourne, Australia. Dr Macnab is a noted psychotherapist and executive minister at St Michael's Uniting Church. He says the new faith is necessary because the old faith no longer works. "The old faith is in large sections unbelievable. We want to make the new faith more believable, realistic and helpful in terms of the way people live." In creating this new faith for the new world, Dr. Macnab seeks the good, the tender and the beautiful in Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism. Sounds like Macnab has founded McChurch.<sup>1</sup>

Many people will tell you they have faith, but faith in what. And where did this faith come from? Christians will tell you that they are a people of faith, but so will the Dali Lama or a Muslim. If faith is something we all need and so desperately want, how do we get it. Where does it come from? And should the Christian faith be different from the rest? Well, to answer that question, let's go back and see how the disciples of Jesus developed their faith.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.stmichaels.org.au/>

We've been talking for several weeks about how Jesus called His disciples to love God, and to love one another as well. If you'll recall, Peter made the incredible proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of the living God. Jesus then teaches the importance of accepting Him as Savior. He taught the importance of serving one another with humility. He talked about the responsibility we have to live our lives in such a way that others may come to believe and trust in God. He taught the value we must have in our relationships with one another. And he taught that we must view forgiveness according to God's standard. Jesus taught these things in the area around the Sea of Galilee. He taught on the road and in the Synagogue. And what affect did these difficult teachings have on His followers? John 6:66 says, *"At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him."*<sup>2</sup>

John says that many disciples simply walked away. But right after this, Jesus turns to the Twelve and asks, *"You do not want to go away also, do you?"* Simon Peter answered Him, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."* (John 6:67-69). Although the lessons have been hard, Peter speaks for the group and says, "We believe and we know". He has found faith in Jesus. Now, we're all proud of Peter, but I want to know where that faith came from, and why did they find it while the others walked away. Did Peter find it hidden in a box somewhere? Did he come to this conclusion after weighing all the evidence and then decide all on his own to place his faith in Jesus? Or did his faith come from somewhere else. Jesus answers Peter with a statement that has been troubling me. He says, *"Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"*<sup>3</sup> (John 6:70) Aside from the comment about Judas, Jesus says something here that's been troubling me. He says, "I chose you". Could it be that Peter did not create his faith nor find his faith, but that faith was granted to him by Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews tells us to, *"Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith"*.<sup>4</sup> (Hebrews 12:2) Now if Jesus is the Author, could it be that He is the one who writes faith on our hearts? Is it possible that a Christian faith is not a

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<sup>2</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>3</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Jn 6:67-70). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>4</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Heb 12:2). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

faith that is manufactured or found by our own efforts, but is in reality a gift from God? This troubles me because if this is true, then the faith that I have as a Christian is not my own, I have been granted it by God for believing in Jesus. And suddenly I've become a steward of God's incredible gift of faith.

Just prior to the mass exodus of disciples, Jesus says, *"For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."*<sup>5</sup> (John 6:65) And I believe this is why so many walked away from Jesus while the twelve stuck around; those that remained had faith in Jesus because the Father gave it to them. These twelve Apostles listened to the words of Jesus, which led them to believe in who Jesus is. And from that belief, God granted them faith. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, *"So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ."*<sup>6</sup> (Romans 10:17)

So Jesus is the author of our faith. But He is also the perfecter. This means He has the right to strengthen, broaden, and deepen that faith in any way He may choose. This is something few of us expected when we called Him Lord and Master of our lives. We expected peace and happiness, not trials and hardships (*knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*<sup>7</sup> James 1:3). But please note that the perfecting comes after the faith has been given, not before. However, if we have built our faith on something within ourselves, then any strength to endure comes from human effort or the strength of the human will. And based upon our own wisdom and understanding, the things of God make no sense at all. I think that's why the harsh realities of this world are so hard for many people to understand. They have a faith built upon something from within; they've created their own personal McFaith. But the faith that God grants those who believe is a faith that not only endures, but also grows during times of hardship and grief.

So the Christian faith comes from God. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"*.<sup>8</sup> (Ephesians 2:8) And how is it that a person receives such a gift? By merely asking. I believe that both

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<sup>5</sup>New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Jn 6:65). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>6</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>7</sup>New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Jas 1:3). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>8</sup>New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (Eph 2:8). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

those who left Jesus that day long ago and those today that have trouble making sense of Jesus could have the faith they desire by simply asking. But sadly, most people won't. They just will not ask God for the faith they need to understand the teachings of Jesus and to endure the times when Satan sifts them like wheat (see Luke 22:31). Instead of simply asking, many people will look for strength in human reason and understanding or manufacture a McFaith by the limited power of the human mind. Even Paul desired that a person's faith *"would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."*<sup>9</sup> (1 Corinthians 2:5)

My friend, don't miss this chain of events that lead us to real faith. Many of us would rather bypass hearing and believing in Jesus, and simply jump straight to faith in God. But any faith in God that is not first grounded in Jesus Christ is not faith at all. It is merely a strong hope; a manufactured assurance in a person's own strength of will.

I wonder, does this best describe you? Have you tried to create a faith on your own? Have you spent years trying to be the author of your faith only to have it fail repeatedly? You can have the kind of faith that endures. You can have the kind of faith that is not shaken and stirred by circumstances in this life. If you have heard the message of Jesus and believe that His words are true, then all you have to do is ask!

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<sup>9</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (1 Co 2:5). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.