

CCC HOW GOD BUILDS YOUR FAITH P1

The Six Phases of Faith

Matthew 9:29 & Mark 9:23

The Bible says in Matthew 9:29 "*According to your faith, it will be done unto you.*" That's the key to the great adventure with God. It's according to your faith. God says, "You get to choose how much I bless your life. God says you believe and I'll do it. You believe and I'll bless." Mark 9:23 says "*Everything is possible for the person who has faith.*" If you will grasp these two scriptures... it makes life a great adventure. How many of you would like to have a stronger faith? So for the next six weeks we're going to do a faith building series.

Faith is like a muscle -- it develops. It can be strengthened and make you strong or left alone you will become weak. It

depends on how much you use it. If you have a weak faith, or maybe I should say it this way **if you want to have a strong faith...** don't miss the next six weeks.

So, how does God build my faith? From God's word, the bible we see... He uses a very predictable pattern, a very predictable process and if you understand it, you can cooperate with it and not just be clueless to what is going on in your life. This series just might be the most important series we do this year.

Okay God's word, the bible says, "*Without faith, it's impossible to please God.*" The question I'm asked more than any other question, as a pastor, is "Why is this happening to me? I don't understand it." And when you don't understand God's Six Phases of Faith on how He builds your character and how He builds your faith, you will get discouraged and not understand. You may even

become resentful. If you don't understand God's Six Phases of Faith on how He builds your character and how He builds your faith... You will become a worrier. If you don't understand God's Six Phases of Faith on how He builds your character and how He builds your faith you may become fearful about the future. You may become depressed. And most of all, you can't co-operate with what God is doing because you don't know your going through phases. But when you understand the six phases that God takes **every believer** through, and there are no short cuts for anyone... He takes all believers through them... You will go through them... He will take you through them over and over and over and if you know them then you can say "Oh, I'm in stage four right now" or stage six or stage two. You understand what's going on and you don't get discouraged when times are tough.

We will learn to "recognize the Six Phases of Faith in my life." So what are the six phases God uses to build my faith.

How does God build my faith?

1. Dream God always starts with a dream. Nothing happens until somebody starts dreaming. You've got to get an idea, a vision, a goal, an ambition. You have to set your sights on some target. When God wants to work in your life He always gives you a dream – a dream about yourself, about what He wants you to do, about the impact He's going to use your life in the world. There are many examples in the Bible of this.

God gave Noah the dream of building an arc. God gave Abraham the dream of being the father of a great nation. God gave Joseph the dream of being a leader that would save his people. God gave Nehemiah the dream of building the wall around Jerusalem.

Faith speaking, nothing happens until you start dreaming. How do you know if it's God speaking to you? Ephesians 3:20 "*God is able to do far more than we would dare to ask or even dream of, infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts or hopes.*" I truly believe with all my heart, God's been speaking to too many of you, you just don't recognize it, you don't recognize that dream, that idea, that concept, that thing that would really be of great benefit to other people – that thing which is far more than you could possibly see yourself doing... Those things where do you think that idea is coming from? It's coming from God. God starts with giving you a dream. But that is only one stage God gives you the dream now the next is you:

2. Decision -- you begin to do something about your dream. Nothing is going to happen to that dream God has

given you until you wake up and put it into action. You've got to make the decision: You decide, "I'm going to go for it!" A lot of people have dreams from God, but they never get to Phase Two – Why? Because, they never make the decision to go for it. James 1:6-8 says "*You must believe and not doubt because a double minded man is unstable in all that he does.*" Faith is a verb -- it's active and not passive. It's something you do. Decision making is a faith building activity. Now during this phase -- you must do two things:

1) **You must invest. It's a decision to invest.**

Time, Money, Reputation, Energy. There is an investment stage in Stage Two of decision making. You lay it on the line, you take the plunge. You say, "God, You've told me to do this and I'm going to go for it!"

2) **You have to let go of security.**

You cannot move in faith and hold onto the past at the same time. You have to move forward, let go. God said to Abraham: *"I'm going to make you the father of a great nation."* Abraham had to leave his home for an unknown destination. Moses had to let go of the probability of him becoming the next Pharaoh's. He let go of that in order to do God's will. Nehemiah gave up a secure job in order to go build a wall around Jerusalem. If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat.

The best example of this is a trapeze artist. You can't get from one bar to the other without what... letting go of one to get to the other one. God gives you a dream and you make the decision. The third phrase is:

3. Delay God will not fulfill your dream immediately.

God has not promised to give you the dream today

and tomorrow fulfill it. You can count on a time lapse always. There is always a delay, a waiting period.

In the book of Habbakuk: God says, *"But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled."* In Phase 3 you start asking the "When?" question. "When, Lord? When are You going to answer my prayer?" Americans hate to wait. We don't like to wait in doctor's offices, traffic jams, or restaurants or for Christmas presents or for anything else. But what we hate worst of all is waiting on God. Have you ever been in a hurry when God wasn't? Irritating isn't it. You're ready but God isn't. God wants to work on you before He works on the project He has for you. Every believer in history has had to go through the University of Learning to Wait. Some of you have not gotten your degree there yet.

Noah waited 120 years from the time he started building the arc until it began to rain. Abraham was told he would be the father of a great nation and didn't have a child until he was 99. God told Moses he would be the leader to lead his people out of 400 years of slavery and then makes him wait in the desert 40 years before it happens. We go through these waiting periods, even Jesus who came to be the Messiah of the world and waits for 30 years in the carpenter's shop. Why do we wait? And my answer is because...It teaches us to trust in God. We learn that His timing is perfect. One of the facts we have to learn is God says delays never destroy His purpose. A delay is not a denial. Kids must learn the difference between "No" and "Not yet". There is a Big difference. Many times God says to you "Not yet" and you think He's saying "No". A delay is not a denial. A delay never destroys God's

purpose in your life. The common reaction in this phase is doubt. We start doubting. "Maybe I missed God's vision". Once you start moving through the Delay period you come to Phase 4.

4. Difficulty Not only do you get to wait, you get to have problems while you wait. There are two primary kinds of problems: They are Circumstances and Critics. You can count on them. When God gives you a dream there will be circumstances and barriers. Moses had difficulty. He led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the desert to the Promised Land. He had one problem after another. First there was no water. Then there was no food. Then there were a bunch of complainers. Then there were poisonous snakes that bit many people. They had one problem after another. They were doing what God wanted but they still Imagine the difficulties Noah had. How would you like to

build a floating zoo. You have all kinds of problems that come along. Why does God allow this? And His word gives us the answer in I Peter, "*At present you may be temporarily harassed by all kinds of trials. This is no accident. It happens to prove your faith which is infinitely more valuable than gold.*" Finally the difficulties become so bad, you've come to your limit, tried everything, exhausted all your options, which brings us to the fifth phase.

5. Dead End The situation deteriorates from difficult to impossible. Hopeless, no way out, no alternatives left. If you are at this stage, congratulations. You are in good company. Everyone in the bible that god used had to come into this phase dead end. Even Paul went through dead ends. Listen to what he says in ii Corinthians 1 "*At that time we were completely overwhelmed.*

The burden was more than we could bear. In fact, we told ourselves that this was the end. Yet now we believe that we had this sense of impending disaster so that we might learn to trust not in ourselves but in God who can raise the dead." If God can raise people physically He can raise people dead emotionally. He can raise a dead marriage. He can resurrect a dead career. He can resurrect a health problem and make it better. If God can raise the dead He can do anything. In Abraham's situation, God said, "I want you to become the father of a nation" and then he waits until he's 99 years old to have a baby. The Bible says it had gone from difficult to impossible. He looks at his body and says, No way! Then he looks at his wife and says, Double no way! But Sarah got pregnant and they laughed about it. God often lets problems become impossibilities. The disciples planned to follow Jesus. They thought He'd

be the Messiah. And then the next thing they know He's hanging on the cross and dies. Dead end for the disciples. For three days they went through a real dead end. At this stage you start asking, "What's going on, God? Did I miss your will? Your plan? Have I missed God's vision? Maybe I just thought this up?" They were exactly where God wanted them to be. If you are in a dead end, you are exactly where God wants you to be. God knows where you are. He's got your number. He knows every hair on your head. He put you in that dead end for a purpose. "Dead ends are a part of God's plan for me." You will have many of them in life. You're just in Phase 5.

What's the best response to a dead end? I Corinthians *"He has delivered us and will deliver us again."* Psalm 27 says, *"I'm expecting the Lord to rescue me again so that once again I will see His goodness to me."* What's the best

response to a dead end? Expect. Have a positive expectation that God is in control and He will lead you to Phase 6. Which is:

6. Deliverance At the end, God comes in and delivers. God does a miracle. God provides a solution. In Moses' case, God splits the Red Sea. In Abraham case, he and Sarah miraculously conceive a child. In Joseph's case, all of a sudden his dream comes true and he finds himself from being imprisoned in the dungeon to being the second in command in Egypt. Jesus was resurrected. God loves to turn crucifixions into resurrections. Dead ends into deliverance. WHY, because He gets the credit. He gets the glory. The best response to a dead end is not to have a pity party but put on the attitude of expecting God to act. Let me ask you a question... What are you expecting God to do in your life? Now make sure you get what I am

about to say... He's doing what you expect Him to do. (REPEAT) The Bible says "*According to your faith it will be done unto you.* He's doing what you expect Him to do." When you wait for deliverance then God gets the credit. Calvary is a living example of these phases. We've been through them many, many times. The church was started in Phase 1, a dream. It was something I knew I could never fulfill on my own, it was something that God was going to have to do it or it was never going to get done. I knew the dream was from God. Then we moved into Phase 2. Many of you have been a part of the decision phase of the church. You have invested your time, money, talents, resources, giftedness, energy, year after year. Let me tell you Satan hasn't laid down and let this church have everything it wants. Every inch has to be fought for when you're doing God's work.

There's a battle here. It doesn't just happen. These delays are by design. They're building our character. And we're winning the battle. We've had difficulties. Dead ends. But these are all part of God's plan. But then we have come to deliverance because we have not given up and God has honored our faith. But there are delays. We've been here years trying to put an equipping building onto this building without seeing many results. But listen God not done yet so don't you give up either. **Phase 1** -- What is the dream God has given me? If you don't have a dream, start praying, "God give me Your dream." If you can't write down the dream God has given you, you need to be praying. If you don't have a dream you're not living, you're just existing. God didn't plan that. You're here on this earth for a purpose. When you discover that purpose, that's your dream God wants you to go for.

Phase 2 -- Some of you have got a dream from God but you've not made a decision to go for it. You're still setting on the fence. God's word for you at Phase 2 is "Go for it!" Some of you need to make the decision to give your life to Christ. Some of you need to make the decision to be baptized. Go for it! Some of you need to make the decision to join a church. Go for it! Some of you need to make the decision to get involved in ministry and develop your SHAPE. Go for it!

Phase 3 -- What has caused my dream to be delayed? If your prayer hasn't been answered, it's OK. You're in God's waiting room. Do not detour. When things don't happen on our time table, we tend to run ahead of God and create detours to make it happen. You may end up making the wrong decision. Wait, wait, wait for God to work His hand.

Phase 4 -- What difficulties have I faced waiting for the dream to be fulfilled? You are being tested, but it's not going to be the last time. You'll go through many, many tests in life. God says, "I know exactly what you're going through. I see it. I'm watching. Don't think I've forgotten you; I haven't."

Phase 5 -- Have I come to the dead end yet? Some of you are there ready to give up. You're right where God wants you. You're getting prepared for deliverance. God's word for you is "Hang on! Keep on believing! Don't give up!"

Phase 6 -- Do I expect and trust God to deliver me? He will. "According to your faith it will be done unto you." God is faithful. What He tells us to do, He will do. But it doesn't happen overnight.

You go through Dream, Decision, Delay, Difficulty, Dead End. And then comes Deliverance.