

FROM



to



Applying Spiritual Forces to Your Reality

joanna cheock

illustrated by Yvette Beatrice Co

FROM FAKE to FAITH

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This book is dedicated to my
husband, who walks beside me
in the journeys of my life,
and to our five children,
Meggie, Frances, Henry,
John & Leanne

check out the facts

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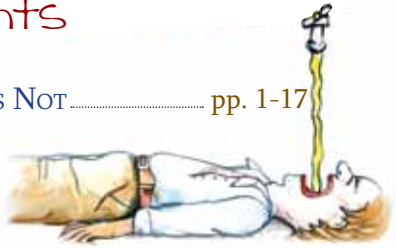
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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT FAITH IS NOT



Ask a hundred people to define faith and you would have a hundred answers as unique as each individual. This is natural since the word faith is loosely used in many different ways. Because of this, every time the word faith appears, it is most likely that each person would have a different mental picture. For the sake of clarity, before we can define faith, we will need to understand what it is not.

When we speak of faith, we are not talking about a religion, a creed or a specific ideology. Although, it can be used that way, that is not what we mean when we say ‘faith’ in this book. Instead, it will refer to a unique God given human ability that allows access to great power by seeing things that cannot be seen.



FAITH IS NOT AN EMOTION

Although what you believe and see have significant bearings on how you feel, faith is not an emotion. It is not about feeling good or bad about something. It is not about being up or down, happy or sad. Wearing a smile or a somber look does not signify

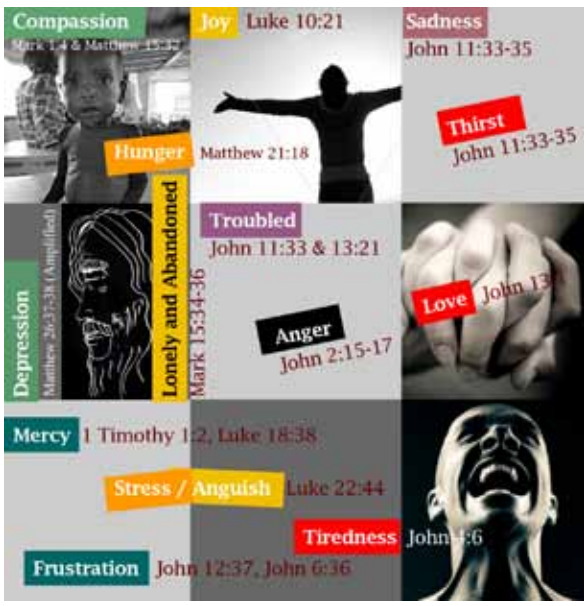
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the amount of faith you possess. Lack of faith is not shown by a frown or an angry expression. Laughter does not represent an abundance of faith. This is because faith is not based on our emotions.



In college, an angry young lady confronted me and some other youth leaders who were laughing together. She had the idea that true faith meant we had to go around with sad somber faces. It was hard for me to imagine Jesus getting along with sinners and tax collectors without a friendly warm smile—even laughing at a joke or two.

Jesus had great faith and recognized others who showed faith. The bible records him showing many feelings from all ends of the spectrum.



Jesus never tried to hide his feelings to give the culturally acceptable impression of a man of 'faith'. **Instead he was blatantly real and without pretensions.** He was always honest about what he felt and was not afraid to cry or love or admit that he was depressed.

The idea of a Jesus that felt strong and powerful emotions is actually more biblical than the placid serene Jesus portrayed in most paintings, movies, and TV shows. This generally acceptable model of how Jesus behaved is more similar to eastern mystical gurus than biblical record. Unfortunately, this fake model is what most Christians feel pressured to emulate. This is why **CHRISTIANS OFTEN SEEM UNREAL** because we are forced to perform in a way that we were never meant to.

On the other extreme are those who whip people up into an emotional frenzy. Judging the success of a worship service by how stoked up the crowd gets is a big mistake. The emotional roller coaster is never a good gauge of the lasting change that true faith can bring. A New Testament example of riling up the emotions of a mob into a frenzy, led up to cries of 'Crucify him!' This is



an example we are definitely not meant to copy. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is dangerous to simulate a supernatural encounter by stimulating emotions because it leaves the participants empty and unchanged. Many become junkies for 'emotional highs', not realizing that

IT COMES WITH DEEP LOWS.

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As King Solomon wisely advised, we must maintain a natural balance.

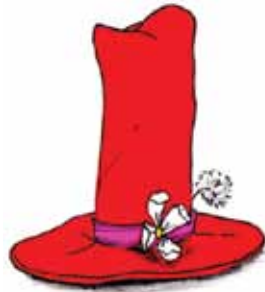
It is good to grasp the one
and not let go of the other
The man who fears God will
avoid all extremes.

Ecclesiastes 7:18
(NIV)

I received a call from a friend of mine who began to feel labor pains before the sixth month of her pregnancy. My husband and I were at the mall and we began to pray earnestly for my friend and her child who was born prematurely a short time later. **The doctors were not optimistic about the child's survival.** And even with the slim chance that the baby girl might live, they expected multiple serious complications. We gave the whole situation to the Lord **and continued our shopping.** Without emotion or even thinking about it, my husband said, "The baby will be fine." I felt a confirmation in my own spirit and texted the message to my friend. She later told me that she had broken down in tears because of the overwhelming peace and assurance she felt from God when she had received the message.

The next day as I met with my OB gynecologist, (I was six months pregnant too!) I told her about the premature delivery.

She sadly exclaimed that the baby would not make it. "But she'll be fine," I had declared without even giving it a second thought. I felt no emotion about the matter. It was more a matter of fact that the mother and baby would be okay. It was like looking at a red hat and saying, **"THAT'S A RED HAT."**



Two years later, my friend's baby is bigger than my own full term daughter and they are both absolutely fine.

With true faith, a lot of times you don't feel emotion but you sense a solid fact that it is done already. Would you be shocked to hear that the sun rose in the morning or set at night? No. It is a fact.



When God says something you just know its there and it exists even if you have not physically seen it happen. Your own spirit confirms that it is there. Like the sun is there in the day and the stars are out at night.

It is not an emotion, because it has nothing to do with you, your efforts, merits, skills abilities or gifts, but it has everything to do with God. It is everything about him being God, his character, what he says, **his living word and our response in obedience.**



FAITH IS NOT WILLPOWER

Faith is not the ability to forcefully control your situation or actions by the power of your will. It is not about wanting something so much that it becomes real. Every person who once believed in Santa Claus can tell you that this just doesn't happen. Frustrated dieters, alcoholics, and addicts are repeatedly reminded by failure that willpower is not enough.

Human beings cannot even control one strand of hair on our own head from turning white no matter how much we desire to stay young. Clearly, it is not by our weak will or flesh that

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we can stand. Faith helps us latch on to strength greater than our own.

Willpower is a misnomer. Most of the time it should actually be called **'WON'T POWER'**.

as in... I

WON'T

HAVE ANOTHER SLICE OF THAT CAKE

I won't drink that bottle of whiskey, or

I WON'T LOSE MY TEMPER...



It usually ends up in a set of rules that we won't let ourselves break by exerting the power of our will over our actions. And because of our human nature, this actually results in an obsession over what we are denying ourselves. As the apostle Paul so aptly put it in the book of Romans,

...I wouldn't have known what sin was unless the law had told me. The law said, "Do not want what belongs to other people." If the law hadn't said that, I would not have known what it was like to want what belonged to others. But the commandment gave sin an opportunity. Sin caused me to want all kinds of things that belonged to others. No one can break a law that doesn't exist.

—Romans 7:7-8 (NIRV)

Faith, properly used can set captives free and make the blind see, but willpower has very little power at all. It is a counterfeit. From the very beginning, man's struggle with sin by his own strength has always resulted in failure.

I don't understand what I do. I don't do what I want to do. Instead, I do what I hate to do. I do what I don't want to do. So I agree that the law is good.

—Romans 7:15-16 (NIRV)

And so together with Paul we agree as he writes,

What a terrible failure I am!
Who will save me from this sin that brings death to my body? I give thanks to God.

He will do it through Jesus Christ our Lord.

–Romans 7:24-25 (NirV)

It is not by the power of our will, but by the power of God’s will for us.

When my mother passed away, my heart felt like someone had physically stabbed me with a knife. I wanted her back so much that I refused to believe that her time on earth was over. I begged God to bring her back to life. I wanted it so much that in my mind I could see her waking and sitting up in the coffin. Every single day of her funeral I expected a miracle. I told my brother about it, which really creeped him out. If faith were willpower, my mother would be here with me right now. But it isn’t. It was what I willed, not what God willed.

SOMETIMES WE WANT SOMETHING SO BAD, WE CAN ALMOST TASTE IT.

We try to use the power of ‘faith’ to get what we want, but we don’t receive it. This is because our own selfish desires have confused us into thinking that willpower is faith. We want it so much, that if we can make it happen, we would. Just like the young man who tries to claim a young lady by ‘faith’ or a businessman who would try to influence the rise and fall of the stock market by ‘faith’, we must realize that faith is not what we will to happen. When we force our own will to be done through manipulation, contrivance, or self-effort then the results will always leave us



dissatisfied and empty. In the end, God is God. It is His will that must be done.



FAITH IS NOT POSITIVE THINKING

Many people mistake positive thinking for faith. Refusing to listen to bad news, 'negative' reports or data, we go our merry way blindly expecting everything to turn out right. The concept that people with great faith should not say, think or do things that we would consider negative is not supported by the bible. On the contrary, most prophetic words may actually be considered 'negative' –impending wars, famine, a suffering Messiah would not fit in well as 'positive' thoughts.

Positive thinking is not faith. Faith is not measured by how positive or negative your attitude is. Consider the prophet Jonah's negative attitude towards the people of Nineveh. He felt that the nation was so bad that he wanted



them to perish. So when God forgave the repentant city...

...Jonah was very upset. He became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, "Lord, isn't this exactly what I thought would happen when I was still at home? That's why I was so quick to run away to Tarshish. I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You don't want

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to destroy them. Lord, take away my life. I'd rather die than live."

—Jonah 4:1-3 (NIRV)

You can't get much more negative than a fellow who could consider God's goodness and loving kindness as something bad. And yet **JONAH HAD GREAT FAITH**. He saw who God was. He saw the invisible and knew the truth and acted on it.

The misconception of faith being likened to positive thinking may have arisen from the idea that as Christians we are to be constantly rejoicing and giving thanks.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:
Rejoice!

—Philippians 4:4 (NIV)

In everything give thanks: for this is the will of
God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

—1 Thessalonians 5:18 (KJV)

But when we understand that the focus of our joy is the Lord and the reason for our thanksgiving is His will, we realize that it isn't really about thinking positively as much as it is about the knowledge of the character of God.

The concept may have also spread because the gospel is literally the 'good news' of great joy for all people. But Christ Jesus himself, whose presence on earth is the good news, told his disciples beforehand that he would suffer many things. When positive thinking Peter took Jesus aside to scold Christ and tell the master such things would never happen, he was soundly

rebuked. (Matthew 16:21-25)

We have to balance the **'ROSY' PICTURE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE** that is sold to the general public with verses like,

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.—Matthew 16:24 (NLT)

Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you.
—John 15:20 (NLT)

But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.
—Matthew 5:44-45 (NLT)

Christians are not exempt from bad or negative things, but we should instead be prepared to rise above them through the grace of God. We are called on to have a good attitude in the face of trials, but a positive attitude is not faith.

Because of this fake idea about faith, men and women of faith have not always been warmly received. This is particularly true

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when the message they bring is not the one that people want to hear. Speaking on people who had great faith, the writer of Hebrews recounts...



Some were jeered at, and their backs were
cut open with whips. Others were chained in
prisons. Some died by stoning,
some were sawed in half,
and others were killed with the sword.
Some went about wearing skins of sheep
and goats,
destitute and oppressed and mistreated.

—Hebrews 11:36-37 (NLT)

The prophet Jeremiah experienced this maltreatment when he had the difficult job of **BEARING THE BAD NEWS** of Judah's impending national defeat and destruction by the Babylonian empire.

"This is what the Lord says: 'Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live. Their reward will be life. They will live!' —Jeremiah 38:2 (NLT)

Jeremiah was hoping that with this prior warning about how things will turn out, his people could take the best possible option given by God. Although his intentions were good, many were not pleased with his negative take on their future.

Then those officials said to the king, "That man should be put to death.

What he is saying is making the soldiers who are left in this city lose hope. It's making all the people of the city lose hope too. He isn't interested in what is best for the people.

In fact, he is trying to destroy them."

—Jeremiah 38:4 (NirV)

Jeremiah ended up deep in mud at the bottom of an empty well. His 'negative' message was considered dangerous for the nation and Jeremiah was accused of being a traitor. However, as the truth of his words became more and more evident, it was the prophets with the 'positive' message that were nowhere to be found.



Where are your prophets who prophesied to you? They said, 'The King of Babylonia won't attack you. He won't march into this land.'

—Jeremiah 37:19 (NirV)

Real faith does not blind us to the facts. We cannot think positive things into reality. Faith is about what is real. The world may be going through an economic crisis, but we see the reality of our God being the great provider who will work all things for the good of those who love him. Everything

around us may seem to be falling apart, yet we can be sure that the King is in control. The pain of sickness may be very real in our flesh, but the understanding of Christ as our healer is unshakeable truth.

Faith is the truth that we see. The truth or what is real to a person determines his or her emotions, attitudes and consequently every decision that leads to actions. **Faith is not maintaining a positive demeanor about what you see, IT IS HOW YOU SEE.**



FAITH IS NOT IMAGINATION

Faith is not having an over active imagination. It is not daydreaming about an alternate reality to escape from life. Many people fantasize about being super heroes, but they know well enough not to leap from tall buildings or try to stop a locomotive by stepping in front of it.



I have a son who loved to wear super hero costumes. He slept, played and went to school in these outfits. Once, he had a Superman suit on in an elevator and a woman jokingly asked him why he didn't just fly up. "It's just a costume, lady," he had answered.

Even little children know that imagination is not reality but an escape from it.

CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF LIVING IN A DREAM WORLD TO ESCAPE REALITY. Unfortunately, this is sometimes true. In an imagined reality all can always be right in the world.

There is no need to care for the environment, since God is in control. There is no need for hard diligent work, since God will provide.

There is no need to prepare for the future, since Christ is coming soon.

These are just a few unbiblical **FAKE** ideas that pretend to be **FAITH**. Although there is a measure of truth in these statements, there is a large gray area for abuse and misinterpretation. Twisted concepts like these, helps us to escape from reality and our clear responsibility as stewards of this earth. Nature as well as the bible tells us that we will reap what we sow. **IF WE ARE LAZY OR IGNORE THE TRUTH, THAN WE SHALL HAVE TO EAT THE FRUITS OF IT.**

We can imagine that there's no heaven or hell.

But our thoughts don't make a dent in reality.

We can imagine that we can leave our kids for months and years without any consequence for our neglect because 'God will take care of them.'

Many families have been destroyed by this kind of Fantasy Land thinking. We need to consider the very real role of parents in protecting, nurturing, and providing for their children's needs. Our clothes will not mend themselves, our food will not cook itself, and even our own children will never know the gospel unless we face the truth and do something about it.



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When God wanted to save his people out of Egypt **He used a man** named Moses. God said that he had heard their cries of suffering and...

So **I** have come down to save them from the Egyptians. **I** will bring them out of the land.
I will bring them into a good land...

—Exodus 3:8 (NIV)

Then after declaring all the stuff that He (God) would do, the Lord says to Moses...

So now, go. I am sending **you** to Pharaoh. I want **you** to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.
They are my people.

—Exodus 3:10 (NIV)

When God says that he will do something, he searches for an earthly vessel to do it for him. He uses our hands to feed the hungry and he uses our mouth to speak his word.

Faith is not an escape from reality. **ON THE CONTRARY, IT EMPOWERS US TO SEE WHAT IS REALITY** and enables us to move in truth to make a difference.

We know when we imagine or fantasize about something, that it is not real. There is always a point when we must return to reality and face the consequences. **The problem is, the more we run from our problems, the bigger they get.** Like all the counterfeits of faith, escaping reality through imagination is powerless.

Facing the truth can be painful, but it is nothing compared

to the pain we will reap when we are **finally** forced to accept reality.

Sometimes the fantasy world we create becomes so real to us that we have difficulty separating truth and imagination. I watched a television interview of a young man who had been part of a shooting rampage on his local high school. After the bloodbath, he had actually been surprised that his classmates did



not simply get up and continue as usual. He was accustomed to playing hours of violent fantasy games on the computer where everything restarts at the push of a button. Locked up in jail with the violent deaths of his peers on his hands, he was forced to

face the truth of his actions.

Faith is about **THE REALITY** of God's greatness. Faith is about the **TRUTH** of his boundless love. Faith is all about God

and His dreams for us.

