

Solution-Focused Faith:

How To Believe God For A Miracle!



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We "covet prayer" for it is the key to successful ministry!

Hebrews 6:12 ... to be like those who believe and are patient, and so receive what God has promised.

Ten studies on how positive bible-based faith helps us to tap into God's practical and perfect solutions for our lives.

Study 1 – The Direction Of Faith

Matthew 9:28-29 MKJV And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to Him, Yes, Lord. (29) Then He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith let it be to you.

Matthew 15:28 MKJV Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith! So be it to you even as you wish. And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Matthew 17:20 MKJV And Jesus said to them, Because of your unbelief. For truly I say to you, If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Move from here to there. And it shall move. And nothing shall be impossible to you.

These ten bible-studies are on what I call “solution-focused faith”. Solution focused thinking focuses entirely on the desired end state and how to get there. Instead of worrying about what is not working “solution-focused faith” concentrates on what does work and how to do more of it.

Solution-focused thinking is the opposite of problem-focused thinking. It does not bog down in the “paralysis of analysis” or get into gloom and doom predictions. If you get a flat tire do you get out the jack and the spare and quickly fix it and move on, or do you say, “How did that nail get there” and get angry and blame people. The first person is solution focused; the second person is problem-focused. Solution focused people have faith and hope and move forward in life, problem focused people have fear, anger and despair and stay stuck by the side of the road.

God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5) and that means God is POSITIVE. God never says “Oh that is just too hard for Me, I can’t do it.” God calls into being that which is not. He is creative and creates wonderful solutions. Sometimes God does point out the problem – but only in order to fix it, not to grumble over it forever.

When Jesus came across a problem – sickness, disease, death, a storm or whatever, He did not call a committee to order and analyze it for six months. He just envisioned the desired end solution and called it into being (e.g., “Lazarus come forth”, “be healed”, “be made clean”, “little girl rise up”, “peace be still” etc.

Jesus does not say “leprosy I rebuke you be gone” he says “be cleansed”. He never says to someone “tell me your life history and why you are sinning” he simply says “you are forgiven, now go and sin no more.” The focus is always on the future solution not the current problem.

David and Goliath is another great instance, or the twelve spies, ten of whom saw the problems and two of whom saw the Solution. Or the feeding of the five thousand where the disciples saw the problem (not even ten thousand denarii!) while the little boy offered up a solution (five loaves and two fish). In the midst of the dark and terrible storm in Acts (Acts 27) when everyone is convinced they are lost and going to perish an angel comes to Paul, not with an analysis of the problem but with its solution.

Over and over again we see that faith has a direction – the future, and faith has content – the desired end state, the realization of God’s perfect will for that situation.

Do we truly believe that a good, wise and perfect God is interested in us and cares about our affairs and has a wise, good and perfect solution for them that can be known? The solution-focused saint believes there is such a solution, seeks God for it, then holds on to it by faith.

This is not an easy story to tell but shortly after we were married my wife and I were searching for accommodation near her university in Manila. Nearly everything was taken and we started looking at a place that I can only describe as a “terrible dump” little more than a converted garage. We were in need but this was dreadful. But I said “This is too dreadful it cannot be God’s place for us, this is the Devil’s offer!” After a bit more searching we found a clean place among good friends. This, we turned into a beautiful home. God’s place for us was perfect! The lesson I learned is that the Devil often offers a quick solution that is a disaster – the car that is a lemon, the wrong woman to marry, the wrong career, the cheap nasty lawyer, and Satan hassles us to take it to “solve our problem”.

But God’s solutions are good and perfect solutions! Look at God’s solutions in Creation from the neck of the giraffe, to the trunk of the elephant, to the wings of the bumble-bee – they are all good and perfect solutions.

Faith knows that God loves us and cares for us and that His long arm of power works everywhere for good and that His justice protects all our interests. (Psalms 23, 37, 73, 103 etc)

Faith knows that God is wise and creative and has wonderful perfect solutions that He can reveal to us who believe. (James 1:5-8, 3:16-18)

Faith knows the peace of God is His perfect “shalom” and is not just an emotion but is also a lifestyle, a concrete tangible realizable state of actual blessing and favor from God. (Isaiah 9:1-7, 26:3,12, 32:15-20)

Faith is confident that God is working all things together for good for those who love Him. (Romans 8:28)

Faith walks in those solutions. Faith sees the God-given perfect solution and receives it and believes it.

Unbelief sees the problem and denies that there is a God-given solution.

Presumption sees the problem and imagines some crazy solution that has nothing to do with God. Most prosperity gospel teaching on “visualize your desired car” fits here.

Faith takes one look at the water and sees wine, one glance at the mountain and says “where should I move it to Lord?”. Faith listens for God’s solution and does not cook up a human solution.

The first two verses from Matthew I opened this devotional with emphasize “according to your faith be it unto you”. The third talks about mustard-seed faith moving mountains. Faith is our ability to believe in the good activity of the perfectly wise God.

Hebrews 11:6 MKJV But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Faith for ministry finances means believing that God will reveal a financial solution that honors His name and is adequate for His work and meanwhile making do with “five loaves and two fishes” and the power of God.

Faith for evangelism means believing that God will lead you to those He has prepared to receive the gospel. Faith sees the harvest not the hardness.

Faith for healing means letting God show you the perfect healing for that person (which may be passing to glory) and then believing it according to His Word.

Faith is when the human spirit is firmly set on the promises and power of God, and is not swallowed up by the waves of doubt and the sight of the stormy problems. Faith sees tangible real solutions coming from God in good and perfect ways – because there is no imperfection in God.

Faith walks in the light, where there is no darkness at all and dwells in the Truth of God's goodness power and love, so the direction of faith is always TOWARDS THE PERFECT SOLUTION – which it calls into being! (And faith lets God decide what the perfect solution is!)

Questions

1. What does it mean to be solution-focused?
2. How was Jesus always solution-focused?
3. How does faith see the God-given perfect solution and receive it and believe it?
4. What is the proper and true direction and focus of effective faith?

Study 2 - The God Of Faith

Exodus 34:5-8 MKJV And Jehovah came down in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah. (6) And Jehovah passed by before him and proclaimed, Jehovah! Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, (7) keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the sons, and on the sons of sons, to the third and to the fourth generation. (8) And Moses made haste and bowed toward the earth, and worshiped.

Romans 11:29-36 MKJV For the free gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (30) For as you also then disbelieved God, but now have been shown mercy through their disbelief, (31) even so these also have not believed now, so that through your mercy they may also obtain mercy. (32) For God has shut up all in unbelief, so that He might show mercy to all. (33) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (34) For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? (35) Or who first gave to Him, and it will be repaid to him? (36) For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to Him be glory forever! Amen.

James 1:17 MKJV Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

God is not a philosophy or a concept, He is an active Being whose attributes describe His actions. Thus when God creates “peace” it is not just mental peace or inner peace – rather it is tangible peace that is wars cease to the ends of the earth and the field blossoms and people live to a great age in happiness and contentment.

When God creates righteousness it is not just inner righteousness (though that is included) but also overall justice, fair systems, widows are protected from scams, orphans are sheltered, laws are obeyed, the world is put right way up.

When God gives grace then bondages are broken, life becomes free, healing breaks out, miracles occur, the Church grows and “great grace was upon them all”.

And when God sends joy then the whole of Creation is lifted up in celebration and rejoices with His rejoicing, life moves up a notch, sadness is banished, the city celebrates, the spirit of heaviness is replaced by the garment of praise and the flowers bloom and the wilderness breaks into song.

Because *that which happens on earth is an extension of God’s character in Heaven* we need to understand the nature of the good and wise God we trust, pray to and have faith in. The nature of God is the nature of the Being that controls reality. The nature of God is thus directly connected to how things are, how healthy I am, how much I am paid, and so forth. That is why Jesus could say:

Matthew 6:26-30 MKJV Behold the birds of the air; for they sow not, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them; are you not much better than they are? (27) Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature? (28) And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, nor do they spin, (29) but I say to you that even Solomon in his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (30) Therefore if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much rather clothe you, little-faiths?

Jesus is saying that the goodness and faithfulness of God can be seen in fat sparrows and beautiful lilies. It is God who is feeding them, it is God who is clothing them. God's nature is seen in nature and how it is organized.

It is God's goodness and faithfulness that are feeding you and clothing you.

In Matthew 5 Jesus tells us to love our enemies. The basis for this is that our heavenly Father loves His enemies and the tangible sign of this divine love is that He sends His rain on the just and the unjust. The outward circumstances – rain on the just and the unjust – matches the nature of God – He loves His enemies.

God's nature and our circumstances are meant to be tightly connected. However we ended up disconnected from God and serving Satan instead, we wanted Las Vegas instead of Heaven. But being "in Christ" means reconciliation with God and being put back under His rulership where His nature manifests in all the circumstances of our lives.

Living faith is when we realize that God's nature rules our circumstances and we decide to trust that absolutely. Faith says: "because God is good then my life will be good because God will make it that way. He cannot make it any other way because He is good to those who love Him."

The fact that God is "abounding in goodness and truth" means that He has a great reservoir of good and that He will be true to us, solid, unwavering and eternal in His blessings in this life and the next. God is not just good in a distant philosophical sense. Rather He is "working all things together for good". His outward actions "working" reflects His inner nature "good". And this working of God is on our behalf – "for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28)

The fact that God is light means that He is perfect and there is no imperfection in Him at all and that all His gifts are good and wise and without repentance (see opening verses). We can trust God to give us what is right for us, in fact what is perfect for us.

Faith enables us to experience the nature of God in action. The blind man believed in a healing God and was healed, David believed in a powerful God and was victorious over Goliath, the thief on the cross believed in a gracious and merciful God and entered Paradise. Faith opens the doors to the reality of God's character in action in our lives.

When Jesus and the disciples were at sea and the storm arose Jesus slept because he was confident about God's keeping power, and when the disciples were frightened Jesus said "Why are you afraid of little faith". Jesus was totally confident of the goodness of God overriding the circumstances of the storm. Anxiety means we have stopped believing or are doubting that God's goodness will rule over our circumstances.

Solution-focused faith sees God's goodness and joy and grace and love and righteousness and providence manifesting powerfully in the midst of human circumstances to produce "peace, be still" solutions of total perfection. Faith calls on God to manifest His benevolent character in the midst of daily life.

If you are getting "shafted" at the office you can call on God to manifest His perfect justice and to protect the righteous interests of those who love Him.

If you are knee deep in debt you can call on God to make manifest His mercy and grace and cause your debts to be forgiven or removed from you and you can call on His wisdom to teach you how to be wiser in future.

If your relationships are a mess you can call on the God of peace to manifest His peace in all the relationship of your life for He “cause the righteous to be at peace with his enemies”. Proverbs 16:7 MKJV When a man's ways please Jehovah, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

If your life is depressing and joyless and a grind you can call on God to make His joy manifest in all your circumstances so that you live a life of celebration. You can call on the God who removes the spirit of heaviness and replaces it with the garment of praise.

You are entitled to this for two good reasons. Firstly you are in Christ and you are blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms including those above. In a human sense you may not be so entitled but in a divine sense you are.

Ephesians 1:2-3 MKJV Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ;

Secondly all the promises in the Bible are “yea and amen” in Christ. They are yours by inheritance in Him.

2 Corinthians 1:20 MKJV (20) For all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by us.

To activate your heavenly inheritance you may need to take some faith actions of your own. Firstly you may need to demonstrate your faith by speaking and acting in accordance with what you believe e.g. by deciding not to express fear in the storm, or by going and getting some stones for your sling in preparation for a victory over Goliath. Secondly you have to let God have His perfect way and not entertain panic-stricken short-cuts to grace that produce “Ishmaels”.

Learn to trust God’s perfect plan and perfect timing (this is a real spiritual training exercise and it often is stressful at first but leads to peace.)

Solution-focused faith believes that God will manifest His wonderful and holy nature in wise and perfect and good ways in the midst of our normal daily lives.

Questions

1. Who controls Reality?
2. What is the connection between the character of God and the actions of God?
3. Why can we trust God to act in good and loving ways in our lives?
4. What are some ways in which we can trust God’s perfect character to bring perfect solutions into our lives through faith?

Study 3 - The Faithful And True God

In the last study we saw that the nature of God is the nature of the Person who controls Reality. God is constantly tuning and tweaking and redeeming and intervening in this disorderly world according to His attributes and character and will. Thus because He is peaceful He will establish peace on earth in real and tangible ways. We finished with the statement that: Solution-Focused Faith believes that God will manifest His wonderful and holy nature in wise and perfect and good ways in the midst of our normal daily lives.

Thus faith is, at rock bottom, faith in the character of God. So today we will look at one aspect of His character – God is a Faithful and True God.

Deuteronomy 32:4 MKJV He is the Rock; His work is perfect. For all His ways are just, a God of faithfulness, and without evil; just and upright is He.

Lamentations 3:22-24 MKJV (22) It is by Jehovah's kindnesses that we are not destroyed, because His mercies never fail. (23) They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (24) Jehovah is my portion, says my soul; therefore I will hope in Him.

In Hebrew faithfulness and truth are related words: emeth (truth) and emunah (faithfulness/firmness), and together they mean that God is established, firm, true to His Word and faithful about carrying out His promises. Thus God can be relied on.

But what can solution-focused faith rely on God for? Do we rely on God to tie our shoelaces? Do we rely on God to make us a billionaire? Neither of course! We can only rely on God to carry out His perfect will - in us, through us, by us and for us. We can rely on God for the promised desired end state! We can rely on God for the perfect solution from the divine will!

When the father of the boy having seizures appealed to Jesus to cast out the demon he was relying on God for a certain outcome – the deliverance of his son. The expectation of an answer to his problem would have been put in the father's heart by the Holy Spirit. The man knew that Jesus had a specific answer to his immediate problem and he trusted Jesus for it and saw the miracle.

The man had seen or heard of Jesus healing power and must have thought – **“what Jesus has done for others he can do for me and more”**. This is relying on the faithfulness of God. What God has done before, He does again. He is reliable. Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

We gain faith by witnessing God in action and gradually concluding that what God has done in the Bible, and what God has done in the Church, and what God has done in my neighbor's life – He can also do for me.

We tend to take the promises of God at an emotional level rather than at a practical level. We tend to say “that verse warms my heart” rather than “that verse is true and I will bank on it and rely on it in my life.”

We sometimes shrink from this sort of practical reliance on God because we have been disappointed with God, or we have seen others who were disappointed with God. God sometimes seems unreliable, or slow in answering, or unavailable to those who pray desperately for the life of a young woman with cancer. It even gets to the point where we start making excuses for God!

There have been times in my ministry when I have really struggled to see the faithfulness of God. This is often either because of an academic calculating understanding of faithfulness or a great impatience with the circumstances.

We sometimes rip God's promises out of scripture and apply them like abstract mathematical formulas. The promises of God are not abstract rules but are personal spiritual principles. God is Spirit and those that worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). The Word of God and the Spirit of God must work together in the life of the worshipping believer. Only when the Spirit and the Word agree and witness together can you have faith in the promise of God. When we treat promises like abstract rules we set ourselves up for disappointment. Generally the promises of God have to be first "seen with the spirit" within the Christian. You have to "know" deep within you that the particular promise A applies to the circumstance B being considered before you.

When God confirms His word to you, then you can rely on it, but you must wait for it to come to pass. Joseph was sorely tested as he waited for God's word to come to pass: *Psalms 105:17-19 MKJV He sent a man before them, Joseph, being sold for a servant; (18) whose feet they hurt with chains; he was laid in iron, (19) until the time that his word came, the Word of Jehovah refined him.*

God was faithful to Joseph, and God will be faithful to you. God has His perfect will, His wonderful creative solution, that He wishes to bring to pass in your life but you must keep on believing and keep on waiting for it.

God is faithful to His vision of the kingdom of God, and to the establishment of a perfect and good new heavens and earth under His rule, that is without crying or pain. God has a similar vision for your life. He wishes to establish His kingdom in your heart, your home and your circumstances.

You can trust God to make that happen or you can try your own foolish solutions.

Because God is faithful and true you can rely on Him to bring His promises to fruition in your life. You can see God solving your problems in good and perfect ways. You can believe that He will supply wise solutions to pressing problems. In your spirit you can sense the solution that God wants you to have. Deep within your heart you can see this solution emerging. You can see the mustard seed growing. You know that God will do it because He is faithful and true. Abraham knew Isaac was "on the way" twenty-five years in advance.

Romans 4:20-22 MKJV He did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, (21) and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was also able to perform. (22) And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Abraham believed that God was faithful and true: "**being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was also able to perform.**" And Abraham's faith in the reliability of God in a specific practical circumstance "was imputed to him for righteousness".

Questions

1. What did Abraham believe about God? What did He believe God for?
2. How long did Abraham believe for? Was God faithful? Why did Abraham get credit for this?
3. What two things need to line up before we can claim a promise from God?
4. How can we rely on God for a specific practical outcome?

Study 4 - Faith In The Goodness of God

God is good, and He longs to do good to those He loves, and He works all things together for their good (Romans 8:28). Thus one of the great challenges of solution-focused faith is to believe in the goodness of God. We live in the midst of a sinful and wicked world, and at times it seems hard to believe that we can actually experience this goodness and be rewarded by God. ***Solution-focused faith truly believes that God is good and will work out a good and perfect and practical solution.***

Hebrews 11:6 MKJV But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Psalms 27:13-14 MKJV I would have fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living. (14) Hope in Jehovah; be of good courage, and He shall make your heart strong; yea, hope in Jehovah.

Psalms 13:6 MKJV I will sing to Jehovah, because He has rewarded me.

Psalms 142:7 MKJV Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Your name; the righteous shall gather around me; for You shall reward me.

There are those that sneer at the idea of God rewarding people, they say: "O you should not believe because of the reward, that is so primitive, true faith just believes in the abstract virtues of God." True faith does nothing of the kind! True faith must believe that: "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)"

There are three notable instances of faith being commended in the Scriptures - Abraham, the centurion, and the Syrophenician/Canaanite woman:

The faith that justified Abraham was not abstract belief in the virtues of a philosophical God! The faith that made Abraham famous was faith that Isaac would be born to an old couple despite their infirmity (Romans 4:19-21) and later on the faith that Isaac could be raised even from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19) !

And when the centurion was commended for his faith it was faith that his servant could be healed by a word from Jesus (Matthew 8:5-13).

The Syrophenician/Canaanite woman was commended for her great faith in Jesus, because she believed Jesus could and would deliver her daughter from a demon (Matthew 15:22-28).

My first attempt to believe God for specific things was shortly before I went into bible college, it was a Monday early in 1980 and I asked God for a Young's Concordance, a New Bible Dictionary and a pair of brown shoes, by the end of the day I had been given all three and none of the people who gave knew anything about my needs or my prayer. I soon learned the art of "living by faith" and seeing God's provision in highly specific matters. Now hardly a day goes by without some small tangible answer to the prayer of faith. In fact I think it is better to have a real faith in a good God who provides parking spaces than a purely philosophical faith in abstractions that maintains the world is, for all practical purposes, untouched by God.

If you go to the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 they are all “looking to the reward” and believing God for quite real tangible things such as victories in battle, the resurrection of Isaac, deliverance from Egypt, the future of the sons of Jacob, the resurrection of the tortured martyrs, and citizenship in the future city of God. They all believed that the invisible and intangible would one day become the clearly visible and the very tangible. When we pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” we are asking for invisible things such as the Kingdom and the will of God to become tangibly present “on earth”.

Faith believes that God’s goodness is a present reality that orders our days and our lives. Faith believes that God’s goodness can undo the Devil’s badness and restore the years the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25,26). Faith believes that even our sin and folly cannot be so powerful to completely prevent us receiving some of God’s goodness for He sends His rain on the just and the unjust. (Matthew 5:45)

In fact it can be said that God is absolutely determined that we will experience His goodness – from beautiful sunsets, to cool breezes, to falling in love, to being saved, to being filled with the Holy Ghost. God wants to demonstrate His goodness to us over and over gain in bountiful and generous ways. Jesus never knocked back anyone who was determined to experience the goodness of God for themselves. In fact the determination of the Canaanite woman to experience grace is what Jesus praised her for (as he also praises the persistent widow in Luke 18 and many others like lepers and blind men who insisted on experiencing Gods’ goodness here and now.)

Faith in the goodness of God, experienced in the land of the living and also in Heaven, is absolutely fundamental to true Christian faith. If God is good all the time, then He is being good to me right now as I sit at this computer. Now experiencing that goodness requires faith. It is always faith that brings the goodness of God down to earth. It was faith that led to the birth of Isaac, the New Testament healings, and the miracles and revivals of Acts.

Faith is the persistent, “stupid”, stubborn opening of our hearts to the goodness of God despite all the contrary evidence that would make us cynical, defensive and unbelieving. Faith is asking for Jesus to provide wine at the wedding of Cana then just doing what He says and seeing the bountiful provision, faith is believing five loaves and two fishes can feed a multitude and then opening to God so he can participate in the act.

We have to believe that our God is bursting to demonstrate His goodness in the midst of our daily routine. Faith is simply opening up to this reality.

Though from time to time evil may blight a year or more of our lives we are never finished completely, slowly but surely God’s goodness will triumph, and our days will become filled with joy. No disaster can separate us from the love of God and His goodness to us. Even the martyrs find God’s goodness to them in the end and we are thus “more than conquerors”. (Romans 8)

I have recently read of the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70 and how dreadful the “siege and sack” was in the ancient world, but even in such awful situations God’s goodness is not absent: “*Psalms 31:21 MKJV Blessed is Jehovah; for He has worked His mercy wondrously in a besieged city.*” No matter how “besieged” your life may be, God can still bring His wondrous goodness into it.

On a practical note we need to insist on the goodness of God, just as Job did, just as the Canaanite woman did, just as blind Bartimaeus did and just as so many others who have been blessed by God have done. The Psalms are a continual record of David going before God for justice, mercy, forgiveness, deliverance and the experience of His goodness. David did not take God’s goodness as automatically granted, he made it a matter of prayer.

In Christ we can come to the throne of grace for help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16) and we should do so placing our burdens on Him for He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). We need to go before God, in an attitude of trusting faith, and ask that His goodness, and His blessings will be poured into our lives at our points of need.

Psalms 31:19 MKJV How great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You; You have worked for those who trust in You before the sons of men!

Psalms 37:3-5 MKJV Trust in Jehovah, and do good; you shall dwell in the land, and you shall be fed on truth. (4) Delight yourself also in Jehovah, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. (5) Roll your way on Jehovah; trust also in Him, and He will work.

Questions

1. Why is it sometimes very hard to believe in the goodness of God? (e.g. the tsunami disaster)
2. Can you give some examples of how faith brings the goodness of God “down to earth” from heaven? Why is it essential that we believe that God rewards us? (Hebrews 11:6)
3. How does God’s goodness restore broken lives?
4. How can solution-focused faith lay hold of the goodness of God for daily living?

Study 5 - Faith In The Acceptance And Love of God

Romans 15:7 ISV Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, for the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-5 ISV Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (2) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing God's glory. (3) Not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, (4) endurance produces character, and character produces hope. (5) Now this hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Sometimes the solutions that faith requires are internal – in our heart and mind and in our perceptions of the universe around us. Do we see ourselves as always rejected? Do we often see God as punishing us? Do we see the world as evil and scheming and out to get us and deprive us? Goethe described the Devil as “He who always denies.” After living in this world, under Satan’s attacks we can become used to “always being denied” and end up feeling unblessed, deprived, useless and rejected.

The cure for this is to develop faith in the acceptance and love of God. For in Christ God has accepted us.

If God loves us, accepts us, justifies us and even desires to glorify us (Romans 8:28-31, John 17:22) and that same God is the Creator and Ruler of all things, then He will be working to express that acceptance, love and joy to us, in practical ways in the midst of our daily life. The great saints of old have always beheld a “beautiful world” that is their friend, with for instance St. Francis speaking of “Brother Sun and Sister Moon. Because they were in harmony with God they also perceived themselves to be in harmony with His Creation. The whole world was accepting them and loving them because God had accepted them and loved them.

Proverbs puts it this way: *Proverbs 16:7 MKJV When a man's ways please Jehovah, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

Christians need to wake up to the fact that God loves them and accepts them and the angels love them and accept them (Hebrews 1:14) and the whole of Creation loves them and accepts them – except the Devil, a few demons and those that serve the dark side. When the bad guys are finally vanquished we will discover that we belong in a Universe of love.

God’s love is based on us being in Christ, not on our spiritual performance. As long as you are born-again, then His life and His Spirit dwells in you, and you are acceptable to Him. We are “accepted in the beloved”:

Ephesians 1:4-6 KJV According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

The cross has put an end to the wrath of God and we are reconciled to Him. (Colossian 1:19-20)

Colossians 1:19-20 KJV For it pleased [the Father] that in him should all fulness dwell; (20) And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven.

Given this we are reconciled to God, who has also reconciled all things to Himself, so God, Christians , and “all things’ belong to the one vast community of reconciliation.

I am emphasizing this because we live in a world where we are informed daily about terrorist attacks, Internet scams, sexual predators and various plagues and poisons. This can lead to a semi-paranoid state of utter anxiety about “the state of the world” and indeed the person without Christ is perhaps justified in this perception.

But the Christian lives in the light, in a state of grace and acceptance and at peace with God and with the entire Universe that He rules. We are accepted and acceptable not just in a theological and religious sense but in a practical sense for we dwell in complete acceptance by all things from trees to angels to God Himself. We must not anticipate rejection, we should by faith anticipate favor and love and blessing (and persecution from a few).

Evil is not ultimate, God is ultimate and His love and acceptance is ultimate and final. At the end of our days we shall be surprised by joy and dwell in perfect love. Terrible things may occur in this life but they will eventually be forgotten at the moment when every tear will be wiped away.

Jesus was rejected but that rejection was not the end of the story for the Stone that the builders rejected became the Chief Cornerstone and it is marvelous in our eyes. (1Peter 2:6,7) In Christ we share in His victory over rejection. We are accepted in the beloved.

Lets look at some practical applications of this. Say “Joe” is looking for a godly Christian wife but he has experienced rejection by women before. He is now terrified of dating. He can bring the problem to God like this: “Lord you love me and have accepted me and I am reconciled to you and to your Universe. By faith I believe that that You see me as lovable and acceptable. I pray that You will work in the perfect woman of your choosing, speak to her at the perfect time and help her to see me through Your eyes – as lovable and acceptable. Also help me to see myself as loveable and acceptable and cast out all my fears for your perfect love casts out all fear. In Jesus name. Amen.”

Learn to dwell in the perfect love and acceptance of God, not in the fickle approval of people. If God says that you are lovable and acceptable, and that all your sins are forgiven and that you are justified in His sight – then you are loveable and acceptable, as a fact, as an eternal and immutable fact – and no opinion of any scarecrow man of straw can change that!

Say you are seeking a promotion at work. You can come to God and say: “Lord I am terrified of being rejected for this promotion. First show me, teach me, instruct me that I am lovable and acceptable just as I am, and that my self-worth does not depend on this promotion. Show me that human rejection is not final and does not affect me. Give me great peace and joy in the interview O Lord. But Lord I also ask that You will cause the interview panel to see me through your eyes, and that the love that You have for me will come to me through them, for the heart of the King is in your hands and you can turn it as you wish (Proverbs 21:1). May your perfect will be done in Jesus name. Amen.”

The people blessed by God dwell in unusual favor – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, Esther, Mordecai and many others. They all had both great favor from God and great persecution from man. But God always won in the end!

God has a solution to your rejection - for He has accepted you and will make you acceptable to others, acceptable to the right people, at the right time. Now enter into that solution by faith.

You may wish to try the following prayer of affirmation:

I am a born-again believer and I am accepted in the Beloved, God accepts me just as I am.

I am spotless in His eyes, since I am cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

God loves me therefore I am fully lovable, God accepts me therefore I am fully acceptable.

God loves me and accepts me and by His divine power He will make others to love me and accept me also.

God has reconciled me to Himself, God has also reconciled all things to Himself, therefore I am in harmony with God and in harmony with His Creation and am loved and accepted by the entire Universe that God has made.

God's favor is upon me and as I go through life I will generally experience a loving and accepting world.

God's love and favor and protection is upon me and I shall rise up and not go down, I shall overcome all trials and tribulations and I shall be more than a conqueror for His powerful love is always with me and works all things for my good. I shall triumph, I shall rejoice, both in this life and in the life to come. Praise the Lord!

Questions

1. What makes us acceptable and lovable?
2. What could you do if you knew for certain that God's favor would always be upon you?
3. How can God influence others to accept you and to favor you? (Proverbs 16:7)
4. Is human rejection the end of the story? (1 Peter 2:6,7)

Study 6 - Faith In The Coming Kingdom

Matthew 6:10 KJV Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.

Matthew 25:34 KJV Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Luke 10:9 MKJV And heal the sick that are in it, and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near you!

Revelation 12:10 MKJV And I heard a great voice saying in Heaven, Now has come the salvation and power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night.

Luke 23:42-43 MKJV And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. (43) And Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.

Solution-focused faith believes in the arrival of the Kingdom of God. For when the Kingdom of God arrives all relationships are put right and all problems solved. Solution-focused faith believes in the arrival of the Kingdom both in the present “repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand” and the future “inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”.

One of the keys to this is a well-known phrase that is part of the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) In this prayer we are asking for God’s Kingdom to come “on earth” as in the verse in Luke above: “And heal the sick that are in it, and say to them, The kingdom of God has come near you!” The arrival of the Kingdom had a tangible effect in the real world, in this case healing. When the Kingdom comes there is healing, exorcism, revival and great joy. (see the previous series on Acts 1-8 mentioned above)

Solution-focused faith envisions the arrival of God’s Kingdom both in the present and in the future.

The Kingdom arrives in the present most often as a “mustard-seed” – that is in a small group, a church, a rescue mission or a prayer meeting. These mustard-seed beginnings are places where people are totally given over to doing the will of God “on earth as it is in Heaven.”

We need to pray and believe that the Kingdom will arrive in “mustard-seed form” in our midst and renew our lives and bring us great joy and healing. We need to believe for the arrival of the Kingdom even when lukewarmness, friction, division and apathy surround us. We must not ever give in to cynicism or despair.

The Kingdom seldom arrives “all at once” but comes one spiritually hungry person at a time. We need to kneel down and say “Lord I believe Your kingdom will come here, You will send streams in the desert and cause the wilderness to bloom, and the barren lands to rejoice. I ask You to open my eyes to what you are doing and send me people who can join with me in living in obedience to You.”

If all you see when you look at the Church is hypocrisy, politics, and traditionalism, then you are problem-centered and you will remain miserable in your Christianity.

Solution-focused faith looks around for where things are working and seeks to do more of them. It goes to where things are happening in God and joyfully joins in. Wonderful things are happening in missions, in urban ministry, in Internet ministry, in the urban slums of Asia, in house-churches and in

many other areas as well. It is frequently when we go among ministries to the poor that the Kingdom is most evident.

When the Kingdom comes there is a marvelous feeling of lightness and joy. There is a releasing of old grudges and bitterness and an outbreak of Christian love. If you want the Kingdom to come you must forgive others and be merciful and compassionate. The kingdom never came to the Pharisees because they played spiritual status games, such games belong in the world , not in God's house.

Laying hold of God for the arrival of the Kingdom requires a strong interior vision of what the Kingdom will look like when it arrives. The development of this strong interior vision of the Kingdom was part of the purpose of the parables of Jesus and the sayings of the prophets. An example is one of Isaiah's pictures of the Kingdom:

Isaiah 11:6-9 MKJV Also the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the cub lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. (7) And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. (8) And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. (9) They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.

As we meditate of these Scriptures and develop our strong interior vision of the arrival of the Kingdom two things happen. Firstly we see where the present arrangement falls far short of God's perfection and feel compelled to do something about it. Secondly we long for the Kingdom intensely and develop a vibrant hope that becomes an anchor for the soul. We need both, if we just have the first we can be overly negative and dissatisfied, if just the second we can be lost in mysticism without application to the present reality.

Just as Jesus told parables of the Kingdom and the prophets painted pictures of the glorious future so we need to develop our own solution-focused faith picture of what the Kingdom of God will look like in our neighborhood.

This solution-focused, positive picture of what will happen when God turns up and sets things right is one of the great driving forces of faith, especially for the prophets. At one point John the Baptist was imprisoned and his followers went over to Jesus to ask Him if He was the Messiah. Here is how Jesus replied to the followers of John the Baptist:

Matthew 11:4-6 MKJV Jesus answered and said to them, Go and tell John again those things which you hear and see: (5) the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel proclaimed to them. (6) And blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in Me.

Jesus sends John a message that will reinforce his prophetic faith-picture of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. In other words Jesus was saying "John, the miracles are happening, the Kingdom has arrived, you did not preach in vain, your prophecy has come true".

These faith-pictures are crucial. When God wanted to help Abraham believe He gave Him a faith-picture: *Genesis 15:5-6 MKJV And He brought him outside and said, Look now toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He said to him, So shall your seed be. (6) And he believed in Jehovah. And He counted it to him for righteousness.*

God wants to replace the pictures in your heart with pictures of His Kingdom.

Now I am not talking about self-centered occultic visualization, which is a demonic counterfeit to true spiritual vision. True spiritual vision happens when the 'eyes of the heart are opened' through the work of the Holy Ghost and we believe in God's version of the future.

We have a choice to see with man's eyes or to see with God's eyes of faith.

For instance say we look at our families: Do we see problems and squabbles or children who have great potential? Do we see future criminals or future missionaries? Do we see the love in our wife's heart or just see all her faults? Do we see the husband becoming a strong leader or do we just see a hopeless wimp? You have to go to the Lord and say: "Lord, show me what my family will look like when your Kingdom comes that I may believe You and through faith see You in action in the midst of them." We have to see the Kingdom shaped solution and then patiently believe God for it to come to pass. This takes much prayer. Put your faith-picture in writing and keep it in your spiritual journal as a reminder.

In every situation there is potential for the arrival of the Kingdom. I have even seen the Kingdom arrive in a tiny pre-school in the middle of a desperately poor urban slum in Asia. Psalms tells us that God's love can reach us in the midst of a "besieged city" – the most hopeless of all situations in the ancient world (Psalm 31:21). Ancient Israel under Roman occupation was a terrible place but the Kingdom arrived even there - despite much opposition from the religious establishment.

Solution-focused faith says:

"I believe God's Kingdom can come and His will can be done right here on earth, in my office, in my family, in my neighborhood, in my church, in my city and in my nation. Nothing is impossible with God so this situation is not hopeless. All things are possible to him who believes and I believe that God's Kingdom can arrive right here and I will commit myself to prayer until it does."

Questions

1. Why should we pray for the Kingdom of God to arrive in our midst?
2. What would the Kingdom of God (Christ's perfect rule of over people, places and circumstances) look like in your life?
3. How does the Kingdom arrive? What does the "mustard-seed /ear of wheat principle" teach us? (Matthew 13:31,32; Mark 4:26-29)
4. Why is the Kingdom so exciting? Can you believe in it and for it?

Study 7 - Faith For Kingdom Ministry

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 MKJV (11) Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of the calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, (12) that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:8 MKJV And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that in everything, always having all self-sufficiency, you may abound to every good work;

Hebrews 13:20-21 MKJV Now may the God of peace (who brought again our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant) (21) make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 2:10 MKJV For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works. This is our purpose here on earth – we have a job to do. We are to have the divine nature of Christ expressing itself through us in deeds of kindness, faith and love. We are to be like Jesus and Jesus did many good works (Acts 10;38). While salvation and being born–again is free (just like being born naturally is free) we are afterwards expected to grow up in Christ and do good works, which God has prepared beforehand for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

This requires faith – faith that we can do the good works, faith that the difficulties will be overcome, faith that the results will be worth it and faith for provision, power and poise. Now doing good works is difficult for at least three reasons that I can think of:

1. Good works go against our sinful human nature and are contrary to our natural self-interest and our covetousness and materialism. They also take up sacrificial amounts of time, money and effort.
2. Good works involve encountering the sick (if we are to heal them), the poor (if we are to help them and preach the gospel to them), the lost (if we are to win them for Christ), the dangerously evil (if we are to bring justice), the dead (if we are to raise them) and the demonic (if we are to deliver the afflicted). This is seldom pleasant.
3. Good works are opposed and resisted by the Devil and those in the world who see them as foolish, or who are threatened by them. We have to wrestle against principalities and powers that want to tear down what we build. (Ephesians 6:10)

Because the continued doing of good works is wearying, difficult, unpleasant and sacrificial and you can get misunderstood, slandered, persecuted and even killed, then you can ONLY do good works by having faith in Christ and by working in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Whether your good work is teaching fourteen year old girls in a Sunday School class or trying to win Muslims for Jesus in Asia's urban slums you will need Jesus to turn up for you at regular intervals. You will need faith for the Kingdom of God to arrive in your Sunday School class or in your slum.

You will have to believe things such as "God's work done in God's way, will never lack God's supply" (Hudson Taylor) and believe that God is all-sufficient and that God is able to make all grace abound

toward you, that in everything, always having all self-sufficiency, you may abound to every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

You have to truly believe that your ministry, the good works that God has called you to do – are His concern, and He will help you to fulfill them.

Now there are ordinary good works that naturally belong to life such as raising a family, caring for a sick neighbor, supporting your parents, being patient with customers and being honest in all things. These still need the strength, power and sustaining supply of God. But then there are other works that are “on top of” not “instead of” these things. (Missionaries still have to raise a family, help a neighbor etc, they cannot say “because I do X work I do not have to do Y). These extra good works can seem to tip us over the edge of coping. Life is just too complicated to involve doing good works, having a ministry and “getting somewhere in life”. I have had to let “getting somewhere in life” slip.

When you are 50 and you have let “getting somewhere in life” slip then you need grace to sustain you, and to keep your heart sweet. So good works require grace and faith from beginning to end.

God want us to abound to every good work and to fulfill every work of faith with power. So, by faith we need to paint an inner picture of ourselves doing that. We have to forget the struggles and disappointments and problems and believe God for the answers, solutions and provisions that will lead to the fruits of our labors. I often find that success comes about a fortnight after I am absolutely certain that I am going to fail. The problem often becomes a mountain before it finally gets cast into the sea.

When Paul face ministry problems he took a solution-focused faith approach and I will quote the passage at length and I would like you to notice how at every single turn Paul turns away from dwelling on the problem and focuses on believing for the solution:

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 MKJV (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us; (8) in every way having been troubled, but not having been hemmed in; having been perplexed, but not utterly at a loss; (9) having been persecuted, but not having been forsaken; having been thrown down, but not having been destroyed; (10) always bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus in the body, so that the life of Jesus also might be revealed in our body. (11) For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus might also be revealed in our body. (12) So then death works in us, but life in you. (13) For we, having the same spirit of faith (according as it is written, "I believed, and therefore I have spoken"); we also believed and therefore speak, (14) knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise us up by Jesus, and shall present us with you. (15) For all things are for your sake, so that the superabounding grace might be made to abound through the thanksgiving of the greater number, to the glory of God. (16) For this cause we do not faint; but though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. (17) For the lightness of our present affliction works out for us a far more excellent eternal weight of glory, (18) we not considering the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are not lasting, but the things which are not seen are everlasting.

It is very easy to get morose, disappointed and disconsolate in ministry – and many ministers of the gospel do! We have to look at our weakness and say “God has put His treasure in an earthen vessel that He might be glorified”, we have to look at our sufferings on behalf of those we minister to and say “death works in us, but life in you”. We have to have faith that these “present afflictions work out for us a far more excellent eternal weight of glory”.

Above all we have to have faith in the eternal consequences of our work for the Lord “..not considering the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are not lasting, but the things which are not seen are everlasting.” Ministry requires us daily to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

To do good works we must have a faith vision of these good works being wrought by Christ in us, and having eternal consequences that abound both to the glory of God and to our own eternal glory. (2Thessalonians 1:12) We have to “see in our spirit” lives being touched and nations transformed. All the great saints of God have had such a clear faith vision e.g. William Booths Vision of Darkest England or Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” (<http://www.aibi.ph/history/>) Like Luther you may nail your vision to the church door, or like Loren Cunningham of YWAM you may start a youth movement.

You must have a clear, Spirit-given, faith vision of the good works that God has called you to do and then you must walk in it, step by step, day by day, by faith and endurance. You will have to fight your flesh for it, you will have to go into awful places for it, you will have to wrestle the Devil for it – but it will be worth it.

Solution-focused faith endures the difficulties because it sees and fully believes in a “faith picture” of a wonderful ministry with glorious eternal consequences, which is fully provided for and empowered by God. Solution-focused faith brings a positive attitude to the task, which enables many of the problems to be solved, and it lays hold of God for the answers to prayer that every ministry needs.

Questions

1. How is solution-focused faith needed if we are to do good works?
2. What happens if we just focus on the problems in our ministry?
3. How did Paul view his trials and tribulations?
4. What sort of a faith picture should we build in your hearts of the good works that God has called us to?

Study 8 – Faith For The Powers Of The Kingdom

In our last study we saw that solution-focused faith endures the difficulties of ministry because it sees and fully believes in a “faith picture” of a wonderful ministry with glorious eternal consequences, which is fully provided for and empowered by God. Solution-focused faith brings a positive attitude to the task, which enables many of the problems to be solved, and it lays hold of God for the answers to prayer that every ministry needs.

In this study we shall see that this involves much more than just a positive mental attitude, indeed solution-focused faith is a positive spiritual power! Jesus did not just teach the Twelve to have positive attitudes or to “be enthusiastic and disciplined” like the motivational speakers do. Jesus actually gave them positive spiritual powers as well – power to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out demons and to forgive the sins of any. (Luke 10:1,9,19, Mark 16:17,18)

Solution-focused faith is much, much more than a positive mental attitude or a visualization of success. Solution-focused faith believes in the power of God being unleashed according to the character and will of God, in the midst of our daily life, here and now and forever.

Jesus taught His disciples to lay hold of the powers of the Kingdom by faith and to exercise them in servant-like fashion for the benefit of others and the glory of God. They were to freely give – as they had freely received. [The Kingdom of God is Christ’s perfect rule of over people, places and circumstances.]

The controversial ending to Mark’s gospel lists some of these Kingdom powers: Mark 16:17-18 ISV “These are the signs that will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; (18) they will pick up snakes in their hands; even if they drink any deadly poison it will not hurt them; and they will place their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Even if Mark did not write these words, someone in the early church did, and they can be said to reflect the beliefs of the apostolic age about the powers of the Kingdom of God and in the sovereignty of God, these verses made their way into the Bible. They connect faith “those who believe”, with powers “these signs”.

The apostle Paul connects faith and miracles when he writes to the Galatians:

Galatians 3:2-6 ISV I want to learn only one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? (3) Are you so foolish? Having started out with the Spirit, are you now ending up with the flesh? (4) Did you suffer so much for nothing? (If it really was for nothing!) (5) Does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you because you do the works of the law or because you believe what you heard? (6) In the same way, Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

In other words spiritual powers such as the reception of the Holy Spirit and God’s working of miracles among them, are due to one, and only one thing – true faith - which Paul implies as being akin to the justifying faith of Abraham.

This connection between the powers of the Kingdom and practical, solution-focused faith continues throughout the Bible.

Matthew 17:19-20 ISV Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" (20) He told them, "Because of your lack of faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

Mark 11:21-24 ISV Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has dried up!" (22) Jesus said to them, "Have faith in God! (23) Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' if he doesn't doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. (24) That is why I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.

Most Christians react to these and similar verses with skepticism or excuses. They see the problem (many unanswered prayers) not the promise (the powers of the Kingdom). Our minds are strongly and automatically tuned towards cautious skepticism about 'wild promises' as this is a necessary basic social survival instinct for intelligent adults. Our reflexes say "This is wacky, Jesus must mean something else".

What Jesus is saying is that the extraordinary powers of the Kingdom of God, that He has brought into the world, are available only to those who believe.

Faith is what worked miracles for the Galatians, faith got the demon out of the epileptic boy, faith caused the fig-tree to wither and faith can move the mountains in our life.

This faith in the powers of the Kingdom, is released by: "believing that we have received" – and then issuing a command or a statement to that effect.

All healings done by Jesus involve a word of authority issued in faith. These include: "Lazarus come forth!", "Be stilled!", "Little girl arise!", "Receive your sight!", "Be cleansed!", "Be made whole!", "Be healed!" and so on and so forth. When Peter healed the lame man the format was the same – an authoritative word of faith: "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk".

Generally we are taught to have faith for a "request from God", for an answer to something like "Dear Lord, please heal this deaf man." However the Jesus model is quite different, we have to believe that we have received authority to heal the deaf person and then we have to issue the command "Ears be opened". The Jesus method is an authoritative commanding word of faith.

First the faith - then the command or word of faith. I saw no healings at all until I adopted this method and started using "command prayers" such as those above. Jesus tells us to use this style of prayer when He says:

Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' (*Mark 11:23*) **AND** you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you. (*Matthew 17:20*)

Jesus wants us to use of the authoritative word of faith to unleash the powers of the Kingdom according to the character and will of God. The authoritative word of faith is based in Scripture and in the inner work and filling of the Holy Spirit who teaches us how to apply the word of God to life's situations in an anointed way. (1 John 2:20,27)

This so counter-intuitive and so outside most church traditions that we resist it, or suspect it of being New Age, or even magical - whereas in fact it is thoroughly biblical. All the miracles I can find in the New Testament involve the authoritative use of the word of faith in this fashion. Dozens of them! And

if we want New Testament results we should at least try the method that is amply illustrated in the Scriptures and which Jesus commands us to use (see above).

The powers of the kingdom are not playthings, they are powers God has given us to glorify His name. They were given to the Church in general when Jesus ascended into Heaven and “gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4:7-12) and placed us with Him in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6) and blessed us with all the spiritual blessings in those heavenly realms. (Ephesians 1:3)

They are His powers to be used by His Church in accordance with His will in the way that He has designated – which is the way of faith.

They are not just the powers of the apostles, James lists them as belonging to ordinary Christians who were the elders of a local church: *James 5:14-15 ISV Is anyone of you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) And the prayer offered in faith will save the person who is sick. The Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.*

Thus solution-focused faith believes that ordinary Christians can exercise the powers of the Kingdom with authority - in order to bring glory to God. To do this the authoritative word of faith must be based in the will and word of God and come from the inner prompting of the Spirit of God. We cannot just whimsically make these things up or our own gratification. We do so to make the Kingdom of God arrive on earth and to have Gods' will done on earth as it is in Heaven. Thus it is a two-step process:
a) Solution-focused faith believes God for a perfect and positive Kingdom solution that is “in the light”.
b) We believe we have received the authority to bring it into being (and thus we believe that we have already received it) and we command it to happen with an authoritative word of faith. Anxious scrambling and pleading is not the word of faith. The word of faith is tested and rested. It is calm and poised and powerful. This comes from the conviction that God has given you all the spiritual powers necessary to have Christian mastery over life and to bring God's solutions into being.

I do not expect you to totally believe this, but I do ask you to try it. I promise you that you will notice a marked improvement in your level of spiritual power as you exercise solution-focused faith for Kingdom purposes, and do so with authority and conviction.

Questions

1. How do we exercise solution-focused faith for Kingdom purposes?
2. What authority has Christ given us? How are we to exercise it?
3. What does it mean to believe we have received?
4. Discuss the following: “Faith is not a magic wand that gives me all my most foolish desires, rather faith is the spiritual vision that agrees with God about His nature and His ability to change the world around me.”

Study 9 - Faith For Specific Solutions

I have been a bit of a tease by putting the study that everyone wants, the one that tells them how to have faith for solutions to their own specific problems, this far along in the series. There is a reason for that. It is because without a solid biblical foundation it is easy to slip into idolatry, the prosperity gospel or even into magical thinking by misinterpreting what the Scriptures are saying here.

Solution-focused faith is a not some sort of “magic wand” which enables instant gratification of our most immature and materialistic desires. Solution-focused faith is the patient trusting connection with God that envisions the Kingdom of God arriving on earth and which taps into the powers of the Kingdom, which enable that solution to happen. We must seek first the Kingdom of God – that is primary.

There are five steps in applying solution-focused faith to daily life they are:

1. **Reframing** – changing your point of view from being immersed in the problem to seeing the Kingdom solution.
2. **Believing** – taking the Kingdom solution and laying hold of it with our spirit and our heart and our faith so that we believe in the solution without doubting.
3. **Activating** – by praying, speaking, commanding, using an authoritative word of faith or by “believing that we have received.”
4. **Waiting** – Patiently waiting on God for His perfect answer in His perfect timing.
5. **Receiving** – that which was promised and rejoicing in God’s answer with all thankfulness

The Hebrew prophets used this when viewing the situations of their day. Firstly they saw the “mess” through God’s eyes and saw God’s solution arriving – as either justice or mercy, chastisement or deliverance, they caught God’s vision of the future and believed it, they then activated this by a prophetic action or by giving a word of prophecy. Often the prophets spoke about future events in the PAST tense. This is frequently lost in modern translations as it is deemed “confusing to the reader” to have future events referred to in the past tense. But the prophets believed they had received and by faith they spoke about the future as having already arrived. Here is Young’s literal translation of Isaiah 11:1-9 - notice the past tense

Isaiah 11:1-9 YLT And a rod hath come out from the stock of Jesse, And a branch from his roots is fruitful. (2) Rested on him hath the Spirit of Jehovah, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and might, The spirit of knowledge and fear of Jehovah. (3) To refresh him in the fear of Jehovah, And by the sight of his eyes he judgeth not, Nor by the hearing of his ears decideth. (4) And he hath judged in righteousness the poor, And decided in uprightness for the humble of earth, And hath smitten earth with the rod of his mouth, And with the breath of his lips he putteth the wicked to death. (5) And righteousness hath been the girdle of his loins, And faithfulness--the girdle of his reins. (6) And a wolf hath sojourned with a lamb, And a leopard with a kid doth lie down, And calf, and young lion, and fatling are together, And a little youth is leader over them. (7) And cow and bear do feed, Together lie down their young ones, And a lion as an ox eateth straw. (8) And played hath a suckling by the hole of an asp, And on the den of a cockatrice Hath the weaned one put his hand. (9) Evil they do not, nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For full hath been the earth with the knowledge of Jehovah, As the waters are covering the sea.

Though given eight hundred years before Christ it is in the “prophetic past”. Such Scriptures “speak over” reality - commanding it into being. When we pray and command we can “speak over” the situation, as if it is already achieved, and already accomplished, and already in the past. For instance

when Mary exalts the Lord she speaks of the future Messianic rule as something already accomplished:

Luke 1:46-55 YLT And Mary said, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, (47) And my spirit was glad on God my Saviour, (48) Because He looked on the lowliness of His maid-servant, For, lo, henceforth call me happy shall all the generations, (49) For He who is mighty did to me great things, And holy is His name, (50) And His kindness is to generations of generations, To those fearing Him, (51) He did powerfully with His arm, He scattered abroad the proud in the thought of their heart, (52) He brought down the mighty from thrones, And He exalted the lowly, (53) The hungry He did fill with good, And the rich He sent away empty, (54) He received again Israel His servant, To remember kindness, (55) As He spake unto our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed--to the age.'

So let's apply this to the problem of anxiety. If you are anxious do NOT pray "Lord take this anxiety away from me" – that is focusing on the problem. Instead pray "The Lord has filled me with peace and my heart rejoices, God has solved my problems and lifted me on high. I am delivered and I am free and I dwell in the joy of the Lord".

We often see this formula in Psalms e.g. the well-known Psalm 23:

Psalms 23:1-6 LITV A Psalm of David. Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not lack. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me to waters of rest; (3) He restores my soul; He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (4) Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table for me before ones vexing me; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. (6) Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for as long as my days.

David is looking into the future and speaking about the blessings of the Lord as actually happening. David is not focusing on the problem but in the divine solution, which he sees as actually arriving in his life.

Similarly the Lord's prayer is an invocation of God's rulership over this world. It is commanding reality in the name of God, calling new things into existence, and is properly written with many exclamation points e.g. "Your Kingdom come!"

Matthew 6:9-13 LITV So, then, you should pray this way: Our Father who is in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name. (10) Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as it is in Heaven, also on the earth. (11) Give us today our daily bread, (12) and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. (13) And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil, for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory to the ages. Amen.

Thus when it says: "Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory" it is "speaking over" reality and invoking the rule of God over all things.

So we see that solution-focused faith speaks over reality and commands it to take the shape of the Kingdom of God. When there is a storm it says "Be still!", when there is a leper it says "be cleansed", when there is a friend in the grave it says "Lazarus come forth!", when there is a demon it says "Come out of him!"

Solution-focused faith speaks so as to bring the Kingdom of God right into the present so that God's will can be one on earth as it is in heaven.

So say your problem is fear you can pray: “In the name of Jesus Christ the love of God is poured into my heart by the Holy Ghost and has cast out all my fear, I am bold and brave and I will rejoice in the Lord” (Romans 5;1-5, 1 John 4:18)

This may not sound like a “normal prayer” but it does sound like many of the Psalms. The spiritual realm is binary – either on or off, complete or incomplete, fulfilled or unfulfilled. When you say by faith “I am at peace, all fear is gone, God’s love is in my heart, I am blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms” you are instructing the spiritual realm that these things “have happened” in the spirit (though they may not yet have happened on earth) and that causes them to arrive in reality. That may seem weird but it is the best way that I can describe it.

Just say that you feel like Joseph in prison and your life seems blocked and frustrating. You can say “I have been faithful and God has opened a door for me that no man can shut and has brought me into the place of blessing and has perfected all that which concerns me.”

There are two related traps here – impatience and carnality. Impatience sets time limits on God (remember Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac) and carnality tries to equate the Kingdom with personal ambitions and dreams. So I dare not say “It is the 25th of this month and I am driving my own green Jaguar”. Such a statement would be covetousness which is idolatry and self-focused - not Kingdom-focused. Though prominent prosperity teachers might say such a thing I will not and I hope you won’t either!

It is through faith and patience that we inherit the promises (Hebrews 6;12) and thus we must give God time. The Scriptures call that process of giving God all the time in the world “waiting on God”. We need to give God the whole process including the timing. Waiting is not passive or mystical. Don’t be like the woman I knew who had an engine problem and who waited for God’s perfect mechanic to be mystically revealed to her for four months until the engine finally gave out and she needed a new car. She should have picked up the phone book and checked out some actual mechanics! Waiting in faith does not preclude the use of common-sense.

Finally we need to receive the solution with gratitude and thankfulness (see Philippians 4:6,7).

We shall apply the five step process to “Joe” who is unemployed and praying for a job:

1. **Reframe** – Joe should not be problem-focused and sit around saying “the job market is so hard, why, why, why, I will never get a job, etc. Joe should see the Kingdom solution and get up and get moving, and start knocking doors. Joe should write out the job that he thinks God would want him to have, and be positive about it. Joe should not sleep in, rather he would use his time well and do some study or Christian service or even projects around the home. Joe would send out those applications, and not let them sit in the drawer.
2. **Believe** – that there is a perfect job for Joe with perfect pay that will come to him in God’s perfect timing. The job will be a Kingdom job (not necessarily a church job) where Joe can make a contribution and do useful things for other people. [You can only “believe” that which is worthy, biblical and true. God had Adam do some work even before the Fall (Genesis 2:15), thus productive work is God’s will for all of us. (see 1 Thessalonians 4;11,12; 2 Thessalonians 3:9-12)]

3. **Activate** - Joe should write out a faith statement that sees the Kingdom solution arriving such as any of those below:
 - a) "Jesus has blessed me and I have a wonderful job with wonderful pay and I give wonderful service in a wonderful way to the glory of God."
 - b) "I speak to the mountain of unemployment and I say "Grace, grace to it. The mountain has become a plain. The problem is solved. The perfect job has arrived and I rejoice in it".
 - c) "God works all things together for my good and is bringing me the job that He desires, the perfect job in His perfect time."Joe would write it out and say it twice a day and Joe would tell the spiritual realm that this is an accomplished fact.
4. **Wait** – Joe gives God the stopwatch. He lets the job arrive in His perfect timing. Joe is not passive, he acts as a person of faith. He believes there is a job for him and acts like it, sending in his resume and going job-hunting regularly.
5. **Receive and Rejoice** – when Joe gets the job he is glad and thanks God. Joe gives the first-week's salary in the offering. Just as Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek as a concrete act of gratitude.

This five-step process can be "tweaked" and applied to many of life's concerns. Just a few things – let God choose the "perfect answer", He may have a surprise in store for you. Secondly see the answer arriving as an outgrowth of God's character – of his love and concern for you, not as the outcome of a magical prayer. Solution-focused faith is not magic, it is getting you out of negativity and unbelief and aligned with God's character, processes and will. Thirdly do not doubt, be unwavering, keep the faith connection solid and trusting (see James 1:5-8).

Questions

1. What are the five steps involved in using solution-focused faith for specific life solutions?
2. Why did the Hebrew prophets often use the past tense when they spoke of the future?
3. Why do you think God makes us wait on Him?
4. What is the difference between solution-focused faith and magical thinking?

Study 10 – Faith For Personal Transformation

In the last study we saw the five-step process of solution-focused faith: “Reframe”, “Believe”, “Activate”, “Wait”, “Receive & Rejoice”. In this study I want to explain that process a bit further and then apply it to issues of personal transformation.

Reframing is necessary because when we are problem-focused this activates the body’s “fight or flight” mechanism, which is designed to respond to threats and problems. For instance if you focus on the problem of a very critical boss at work then you become defensive and tend to either withdraw or resign (flight) – or to build up steam and lash out (fight). Stewing over problems produces a whole bunch of negative reactions in us that activate dysfunctional responses and grieve the Spirit.

In Psalm 37 David tells us not to be problem focused even when we encounter evil:

Psalms 37:7-9 ASV Rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for him: Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. (8) Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: Fret not thyself, it tendeth only to evil-doing. (9) For evil-doers shall be cut off; But those that wait for Jehovah, they shall inherit the land.

“Fret not thyself, it tendeth only to evil doing” – modern translation – “Don’t get your knickers in a knot because it only makes you do stupid things!”. Getting the right spiritual perspective is an essential part of having solution-focused faith. The right spiritual perspective in Psalm 37 is: “For evil-doers shall be cut off; But those that wait for Jehovah, they shall inherit the land.”

The wrong perspective can be summarized by 3 F’s – Fight, Flight or Freeze. The right perspective is Life Mastery Through Solution Focused Faith. The idea is not to run away or blow up or become paralyzed but to master all situations, through the power of the indwelling Christ, (Philippians 4:13).

Reframing moves us out of the problem-centered reactions of the flesh and of the natural man (fight, flight or freeze) and their manifestations (rage, conflict, cowardice, envy strife - see Galatians 5:19-21).

Reframing the problem as the imminent arrival of the Kingdom solution is a bit like playing golf. You can see your ball stuck in the rough as a problem and either lash at it in anger (fight) or drop out (flight) or sit there morosely (freeze) or you can master the situation, visualize the ball landing on the green near the hole, select the right club, play a great shot and win the game. Great golfers are and calm, masterful and visualize great solutions. They don’t slash, bash and stomp around. They are confident and they focus on the solution not on the problem.

Faith is based on confidence in God’s goodness and love and His absolute control of events, confidence in the truth and reliability of God’s Word and confidence in the powers of the Kingdom of God that have been given to us in Christ Jesus. By reframing from problem-focused to solution-focused we rest in confidence and faith and in spiritual life mastery.

Reframing in faith terms moves us into the light and into the positive nature of God and into the life in the Spirit, which involves grace gifts received through faith. Reframing moves us towards the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience...self-control) and enables us to gain mastery over our impulses and thus over our life in general.

Reframing also puts us in agreement with the Spirit and with the arrival of God's Kingdom on earth and thus sets us in position to have our prayers answered. God does not answer problem-focused temper tantrums, He answers positive believing faith in His word.

It is not just positive thinking to frame your prayers as a Kingdom solution – it is good spiritual practice that will lead you to a renewed mind and to life mastery.

I also want to comment a bit more on the concept of **ACTIVATION**. This can be misunderstood as employing mysterious mumbo-jumbo to influence God. Rather it is just speaking the language of the Spirit, which is an eternal language. In Eternity things are either complete or incomplete, forgiven or unforgiven, resolved or unresolved, accomplished or yet to be accomplished. The spiritual realm is in some way related to the subconscious realm, I don't think they are quite the same but they use similar language and it is well known that there is no time in the subconscious and that it is also binary (on/off) and that it, for some mysterious reason "throws out the negative".

Thus if you say: "I shall not eat chocolate" it throws out the "not" and interprets it as "I shall eat chocolate" and you find yourself craving chocolate! This is because the subconscious operates in pictures (like dreams) and what is the mental picture you have when you say "I shall not eat chocolate" – it is you eating chocolate!

The answer is to change the mental picture and see the solution "I shall eat healthy foods, I am eating fruit, soy beans and tofu". One of the reasons people regain weight is that they are programming themselves to do so "I will not be fat" – becomes "I will be fat!", "I will not fail this diet" becomes "I will fail on this diet" because you are seeing the problem – when you say "I will not fail on this diet" you are visualizing failing and that is what you get! The answer is to visualize being slim "I am slim and trim and I am back to a 32 inch waist!" OR "The Kingdom of God is arriving in my physical body and setting the temple of God in order, I am fit and healthy and good looking, my blood pressure is 110/70, my heart rate is 60 and I have a 32 inch waist and can do 100 push ups easily."

Now to a spiritual application: If we say "I will not sin" guess what? Your mind "throws out the negative" and you want to sin. Your mental picture is one of sinning and so you sin. This is part of what Paul meant when he said that the command "thou shalt not covet" aroused "all kinds of coveting" within him. (Romans 7) What is the answer then? The answer to sin is to state the solution in positive terms: "I am dead to sin and alive to righteousness, it is no longer I who liveth but Christ who liveth in me. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. (Romans 6, 1 John 1:9 and Galatians 2:20).

Let's try it again with smoking: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and so I am free from the urge to smoke, I am breathing clean air, I can taste and enjoy my food, God has delivered me from all my cravings and I have given up for good."

What about moodiness and depression: "Mood I rebuke you in the name of Jesus and break your grip over my mind and heart. God has restored to me the joy of my salvation and I am filled with the joy of the Lord, I will rejoice, even though the fig-tree does not blossom and there be no ox in the stall, yea I shall rejoice. The shadows flee and the darkness has gone and I have come into the light. The spirit of heaviness is gone and I receive the mantle of praise."

This stuff really works! This is because the subconscious world and the spiritual realm and the eternal realms all operate in picture language. The prophets painted word pictures for the people, so did Jesus. Even the prayers of Paul give us wonderful pictures for our inner man. (Ephesians 3:14-21) It is a lot easier to pray powerfully if we have the right kingdom picture in our hearts and minds and spirit.

Activation uses the “words taught by the Spirit” to lay hold of the things prepared for us by God (1 Corinthians 2:9-16) for a man can receive nothing good unless it is given to him from above. (James 1:17, John 19;11) and puts us in tune with the spiritual language of the psalmist, the apostles and the prophets.

Try this, stand up, raise your hands up to heaven, palms outward and then speak the Lord’s prayer powerfully into the Heavens as if your powerful voice was reaching the throne. In a faith-filled commanding voice say “Our Father who is in Heaven, Hallowed by thy name! Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done!” etc. You will be surprised how you become filled with spiritual confidence.

Activation does not make you a prophet but it enables you to learn from them. The Spirit will teach you His language and Christ’s mindset (1 Corinthians 2:12-16) and enable you to understand the things of God.

The Spirit sees the future as being accomplished and uses language such as:

- A) **Using the past or present tense for the future:** “Now, the ruler of this world is cast out” (John 12:31) OR “The wolf hath sojourned with the lamb.” Isaiah 11:60, see also the whole of Psalm 72 in any literal translation.
- B) **Invocations:** “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”
- C) **Participles :**”ing” words: See Daniel 2:20-23 “Daniel 2:21 YLT And He is changing times and seasons, He is causing kings to pass away, and He is raising up kings; He is giving wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those possessing understanding.
- D) **Using definite futures:** e.g “is” “are” “shall” or “will”: e.g Mary “for all generations shall call me blessed” (Luke 1:48)
- E) **Using “may”:** e.g. “May you be”: “may you be made higher than all nations” “May it be done to you according to your faith”, “May no-one eat of your fruit again” (the fig-tree) 2 Corinthians 9:10 YLT and may He who is supplying seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness,
- F) **Using commands:** “be loosed”, “Be made whole”, “be cleansed”, “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”, “Be stilled”

This takes practice. As you walk in the Spirit you will learn how to use each of these kinds of prayers in its appropriate place. For sicknesses and demons – use commands, for blessings use “may you be”, for issues of justice use the past tense for the future “justice has arrived, the situation has been resolved, the teeth of the oppressor have been broken”. For obstacles use participles: The doors are being opened, the opportunities are coming, the ministry is growing”.

Activation is not instantaneous; it is not “abracadabra” stuff. Waiting on God and having faith in His nature is very important and all requests must be “according to His will” (1 John 5:14,15). Activation simply puts the positive solution-focused faith vision, which you already believe in, into the language of the heavenly realms.

Well that is the end of this series for now. Just remember the five steps of solution-focused faith: Reframe, Believe, Activate, Wait, Receive & Rejoice.

Questions

1. How does reframing help us to get a more spiritual perspective?
2. What is the “fight or flight response” - and how does being problem-focused activate it?
3. Why is important to frame our picture in concrete, positive picture terms? What does our subconscious do with the negative?
4. How does activation work? What sort of language should we use in spiritual things?

Solution-Focused Faith: Key Teaching Points

THE MAIN IDEAS

Faith focuses on the solution, fear focuses on the problem.

There are two mental Universes, a Universe of faith and abundance; and an alternate Universe of unbelief and problems. We choose which mental universe to dwell in. Both exist simultaneously. Christians should choose to believe in the abundant life.

Don't look at the problem too long, it is like staring into the headlights of an oncoming truck, instead look for the solution and for the way of escape.

Being problem-focused energizes our anxiety and reactivity and leads to an unproductive Fight or Flight reaction.

Being solution-focused draws out our faith, intelligence and creative energy and generates constructive answers for living.

Being solution-focused leads to discovery of our strengths and resources (both natural and spiritual) and then to the mastery of our life.

Solutions flow from a life perspective that shrinks the problem and moves the mountain.

David was solution focused, full of faith and brave. Saul was problem focused, disobedient, paranoid and fearful.

David brought his problems to God for a) a workable real world solution AND b) an emotional resolution AND c) to gain a spiritual perspective

SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Ask the right questions! Not "Why am I poor?" which just makes you angry and resentful, but "How can I create wealth?" which will start you looking in the right direction by faith (Deut 8:18)

Solutions follow expectations. We look for a solution only if we actually expect that a solution will occur. For instance if we expect people to accept the gospel we will find a solution on how to share the gospel with them. If we don't expect people to respond to the gospel we will not have the faith to find the solution and will do pretty much nothing instead.

Being solution-focused means asking discovery questions: What are my strengths? What have I got? What is my dream? What is my plan to achieve, solve or resolve this? Where can I start? How can I pray about his? What does Scripture say? Who can I bring on board? What is the best design?

We need to focus on the outcome that we want, on a clear picture of what we desire, and on especially on what the Holy Spirit causes us to desire. Jesus to the blind man: "What do you want?" - "to see"

Solutions are unique to the person, project, or situation; not one size fits all.

Peter was always testing out Jesus' solutions e.g. walking on water, Judas always played safe and had his own ideas about what should be done

Nehemiah believed that he and God together had a solution for a ruined and burned Jerusalem. Moses, that a solution existed for the Israelites.

Solution-focused people refuse to accept the unacceptable e.g. Gideon and the raiders, David and a blasphemous Goliath

Others see new applications e.g. Paul who saw that even the Gentiles could be saved.

THE SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

The Bible is very important and is infallible however the Bible is the menu, and not the entire meal. The Bible points us to the solutions that God provides such as salvation, healing, sanctification, spiritual gifts, protection, provision etc. we then have to go and experience those solutions in real life.

People of faith seek solutions from the Spirit, people of fear seek solutions from the flesh, from the world or even from the Devil.

The Cross was a perfect solution, it dealt with the key issues of humanity, brought life, forgiveness and reconciliation, and was 100% from the Spirit. Jesus went to the Cross "for the joy set before Him", He was tightly focused on the victories that would come from salvation! (Hebrews 12:1,2)

Solutions are like dancing with God! He leads!

Be still and know that I am God, wait for God, be open to God, to faith, to the spiritual, to divine intervention, let go and let God, stay in tune with God through prayer, worship and bible study.

Once you believe that God is trustworthy then solutions come easily.

God's solutions are generally first concerned with our salvation, sanctification and glorification, with who we will become, rather than what objects we will own.

God's solutions prepare you for the Heavenly Kingdom. God organizes all things to prepare His people for eternity and His solutions are part and parcel of that over-arching plan.

God's solutions always end up glorifying Jesus.

God's ultimate solutions involve stories that operate over thousands of years but where each character plays an important role. The story of the glory of the Son of God. God's will is not like a solution to an equation but is like a right move on a chess board or right reaction in a story line.

God is content to solve just one thing at a time.

Christianity believes that actual, real solutions to suffering exist and are good and that God wants us to have them. We are not fatalists, and we do not believe the world is an illusion, we do not simply detach ourselves emotionally and think that the problem is now solved because we do not hurt any more.

Worship creates a higher perspective that enables us to think at a level which will solve our problem (Psalm 73)

Worship takes us out of fear, fretting, anxiety and being problem-focused (Psalm 37) and reminds us of God's faithful love (Psalms 23, 91, 103 etc)

Love and wisdom are BOTH part of any excellent solution. Love is made effective via wisdom.

Implementing solutions often requires endurance, godly wisdom and character

Solutions flow from God's wisdom within us, every good and perfect gift is "from above".

Solutions often require a change in the type of wisdom we are using: from carnal wisdom to spiritual wisdom, from worldly wisdom to Christ's wisdom etc. A problem cannot be solved by the same level of thinking which produced it in the first place e.g. corrupt thinking will never make an honest man.

Power never concedes a single thing without a demand. Thus spiritual warfare is going to God to make demands on the Devil, with so much heavenly force that Satan surrenders that thing in your life which he has held captive.

The belief that nothing is impossible with God is foundational to the idea that solutions exist for all known problems.

The belief that all things are possible to him who believes is foundational to the idea that mere human beings may solve all known problems.

Solutions exist for all problems in both the visible and invisible realms. These are found in Christ in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Solutions are opposed by the Devil who wants us to remain ignorant.

Apathy opposes initiative and stops solutions which is why "sloth" is one of the seven deadly sins. Pride, envy, avarice, lust, wrath, and gluttony are similar opponents to true Faith.

You are not obliged to solve everyone's problems, each should carry their own load. (Galatians 6)

Angels are part of God's solution-providing order.

Many solutions depend on inner spiritual wisdom e.g. Daniel, Joseph etc.

Solutions are sometimes delayed by the Devil. The assistance of angels, prayer and fasting may be required. See Daniel 10

Angels may give instructions leading to solutions e.g. Acts 8

Sometimes the solution might just be "grow up"! Infantile behavior perpetuates childish fight-or-flight reactions which have trouble as their inevitable consequence.

The sin and self-centeredness problem is the main problem and the gospel is the solution. It is no use gaining the whole world and losing one's soul.

Empathy and spiritual sensitivity help us to minister God's solutions to others.

Intercession prepares the ground for fruitful solutions to appear.

Solutions come by faith, work through love and become faithful through wisdom and endurance.

Faith and thinking are not opposites. Faith believes and receives the solution, while thinking gives us wisdom in the implementation of that particular solution.

Righteousness sustains a solution while dishonesty destroys them. Integrity is essential to peace.

Gratitude, praise and thanksgiving open our heart to be receptive to God's solutions.

When we habitually implement God's solutions we create a state of being known as SHALOM or God's perpetual peace. This requires our mind being stayed on God, Isaiah 26:3

The Spirit-focused mind is filled with life and peace. Romans 8:4-6

The temporal, earthly solutions are important clues that fully good and eternal solutions await in Heaven. Jesus tells His disciples to heal the sick and then proclaim that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

The law is the wrong solution. It always fails because of the weakness of the flesh.

Works thinking is stinking thinking. Guilt has never, ever arrived at a good solution. The Pharisees created burdens and did not lift a finger

to solve them. we are not to create burdens for others. His commandments are not burdensome Matthew 11:28ff, 1 John..

Grace through faith is the only solution that works, that makes us become fully alive.

A good man makes a good plan that bears good fruit, while a wicked man makes wicked plans that bear evil fruit.

Our solutions determine and reinforce our state of being. A person who is bold, wise and full of faith-filled solutions enlarges their soul. However someone who is cowardly and unbelieving rapidly diminishes their soul.

God wants to glorify His children, and thus to build greatness into our spirits, which is accomplished by making us full of faith and giving us mountain-sized problems which we then solve in cooperation with Him. (Romans 8:28 to end of chapter)

Christianity is not just internal, about being saved and being good, it is also external about Creation and Providence and justice and governance and action in the world that ennobles our spirit and prepares us for Heaven. David's prayers, songs and anointing were insufficient to make him a great King, he also had to kill Goliath, win actual battles, lead men, and survive 14 years of persecution.

Even if the problem is historical the solution is present and at hand. The Cross was a solution in the present for the sin of Adam.

New solutions often appear simultaneously throughout God's Kingdom due to the work of the Spirit.

Solutions depend on theology. If we believe in healing we will see healing, if we think healing is not for today, then we will not see healing.

Solutions are more obvious if we are closer to the Lord because it is then easier for us to hear His voice and receive His wisdom.

WARNINGS

There are wise "solutions" and very unwise "fixes". If only a stupid person would do it, then don't do it.

The Devil's quick fix often arrives just before God's wise solution. Don't do the first thing that pops into your mind unless you check it out first.

A godly solution is value driven e.g. compassion, honor, justice while an ungodly solution does not consider values and is often angry, impulsive, expedient, short-term, or impatient and is driven by emotional satisfaction.

Solutions operate in the present, Moses rod, loaves and fishes etc, fear waits for a perfect future.

Seeking a kind of absolute theoretical grand perfection frequently prevents people from implementing God's simple but workable solution.

Solutions naturally decay into disorder unless effort is expended to keep the solution going.

Evil and deception or falseness are never part of a truly godly solution.

WHAT GOOD SOLUTIONS LOOK LIKE

Solutions call on God and upon His gracious wisdom, and not on our fleshly energies or ego.

Solutions will not be sinful or unbiblical. Always check them out in the Word.

Solutions often involve the use of command prayer and spiritual authority e.g. Jesus speaking to the storm, Moses to the Red Sea etc.

Solutions are generally specific, concrete, and involve vivid, clear, positive pictures of a desirable and peaceful future.

Solutions are spiritually energizing with an energy, power and authority which is from God.

Solutions say "Yes!" to something and are tightly focused on a hopeful, joyous outcome.

Solutions put aside anxiety, sin and despair and put off the old nature, ego and self-centeredness which creates problems by the dozen.

A good solution entrains your mind and will so that you naturally discipline yourself

Solutions do more of what works, and less of that which is not working.

Solutions are seldom dramatic, and are often harmonious, quiet and still, almost common sense, and flow from us being in the right place at the right time and God working in us and through us.

Trust is key to coming up with rapid and affordable solutions. Distrust, suspicion and disunity waste time, energy and resources.

Solutions lead to peace and frequently to reconciliation.

Solutions flow from openness, reasonableness and humility, problems from stubbornness, closed minds, unreasonableness, and pride.

There are solutions within solutions within solutions. So we often need to break the big picture down into smaller solutions and then do them one at a time.

All solutions, no matter how seemingly trivial, are important e.g. fixing the photocopier, so you can print the church bulletin, so a lady reading it can ring the pastor and get help.

Large complex problems often have surprisingly simple solutions, the rampant diseases of scurvy in the British navy and the simple solution of lime juice

Godly solutions are stated in vividly positive terms.

Solutions may involve iteration. Doing something over and over again and improving a bit each time around.

Solutions may involve identifying and removing some key obstacles.

Solutions may involve developing new habits and new patterns of living

Procedures, routines and organization create the necessary order for a solution to remain in place over an extended period of time

The difference between a mere idea in your head and a Faith solution is that solutions have action attached to them, they involve a change in behavior.

Solutions often involve the right pathway or procedure and the right person and timing.

While solutions may involve very many steps each step will have a certain elegance and simplicity about it. Tangled complexity is a sure sign that something has gone wrong.

Solutions are beautiful. Everything is beautiful in its proper time.

Solutions may be ignored and rejected e.g. Jesus, the prophets and apostles.

Solutions may involve calling for repentance, and giving exhortation and strong warnings.

Large scale solutions involve building agreement and political will. Unity leads to accomplishment. Genesis 11 etc. Paul exhorts us to be of one mind for the sake of the gospel.

Holy boldness is generally a sign of solution-focused faith.

PEOPLE AND SOLUTIONS

Solutions often involve people in unity "Where two or three are gathered".

You may need to remove divisive, unbelieving, tempting, foolish, angry, inept, negative or draining people from your life before God's solution is possible.

Bringing positive, capable, faith-filled people into the situation can be highly effective and they often empower the solution.

RESOURCES

Website and free e-book on Solution-Focused Faith:

<http://www.globalchristians.org/solution/index.htm>

Prayer and Spiritual Warfare Website:

www.newtestamentprayer.com

Contact John Edmiston

Cybermissions Office:
21615 Berendo Ave. Suite 400
Torrance CA 90502

Ph: 310-783-1510

Email: digitalopportunities@gmail.com

www.cybermissions.org

www.globalchristians.org

Solution-Focused Thinking Worksheet

- ✓ **Action-Oriented**
- ✓ **Solution-Focused**
- ✓ **Faith-Driven**
- ✓ **Possibility Thinking**

Q1. What **Action Steps** will I need to take toward the **Solution/s** to my problem as I am driven by **Faith** in a very great and godly **Possibility**? (see page 2)

Q2. What are the words I must speak?

The thoughts I must think?

The attitudes I must hold?

The lofty goals I must attain to?

Q4. What does Scripture as a whole say?

Q5. What are my options?

Q6. What do I need to find out?

Q7. Do I need to learn some new skill first?

Q8. Who must I meet?

What kinds of people do I need to meet?

What do I want them to do?

What do I want God to do through them?

Budge The Mountain!

- Calculated Action For Wisdom
- Focused Action for Effectiveness
- Sequentially Ordered Action For Progress
- Persistent Action For Breakthrough
- Tweaked Action For Constant Improvement

ACTION STEPS

a) What actions are mine alone to take?

b) Which actions are God's alone?

c) Which actions are for others to do for themselves?

d) Which actions are for others to do for me / my project?

Project Discernment Sheet

This sheet is designed to assist you to look at and pray about all the critical aspects of a project – physical and spiritual, positive and negative, opportunities and practicalities.

Strengths = Your resources, inherent strengths, advantages
 Weaknesses = Where you are lacking in capacity or competence
 Opportunities = Opportunities in the external world.
 Threats = Competition, Physical, and Financial Threats

Project:
 Date:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

Why:

Who:

When:

Where:

What:

How:

Is this project: Ethical? Honest? Constructive? Honoring to God? Kind to others? Seeking first the Kingdom?

Is the timing right? Can you give this project the proper attention that your part in it requires?

Where does it fit with the rest of your life, ministry and calling? Are you being pushed into it?

