

The Intangible

5 March 2006

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1 and 6

“The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see.”

“It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that God exists and that God cares enough to respond.”

Sermon in a sentence: Too often we struggle with our beliefs, hoping to find solid proof; but we can't hold the intangible. How do we find faith and believe in that which we cannot see?

WOW! What an awesome song! Thank you Good Earth Band! Today's theme originated from that song. It's about a woman searching and struggling with her faith; until she meets a boy named Will.

What she observed from Will is that despite his physical handicaps, he was not bitter at all; instead he had a strong faith in God. This caused the woman to wonder about Will's God. So she pondered over the question, “How could Will have so much faith in such the intangible? Well, that's what we are going to talk about this morning, “How do we find faith in “The Intangible.”

The thing to remember is that all people, Christians and non-Christians, even atheist, exercise faith. That is, every day of our lives we apply faith in simple and profound ways. For example, we may take a pill of some kind today. And it requires faith that the pill will help us, rather than hurt us. If we travel on an airplane, it requires faith that we will arrive safely at our intended destination. Usually, we don't even see the pilots until we have landed. All of these are everyday illustrations of faith.

And some of us place our faith in people or other things. Some trust that our jobs will always be there; or that our spouse will never leave us. And we all exercised faith this morning as we came in and sat in a chair; we didn't even think for a moment if that chair would hold us, we just sat down!

Well based on these illustrations, I suspect that we can now agree on at least two definitions of faith. The first is that **Faith is “confidence or trust in a person or thing.”** And secondly, **“Faith is “belief which is not based on proof.”** However, both definitions may cause some of us to still have questions or doubts.

And doubt is okay. As a matter of fact, it is healthy to doubt; because doubt is faith seeking to grow! FAITH can use DOUBT to nourish and strengthen itself. In other words, our

doubts and questions are signs of our faith, or indications that our faith really matters.

I know some of us could be wondering are people of faith the only persons who have faith. Many people of faith seem to think so. However, all of us have times when we are confused about our faith or what we believe. And this has been true down through the centuries. That's why the Worship Team felt that some of us might have questions about our faith or the Intangible.

That's why two Sunday's ago; you were given an opportunity to submit questions you would like to ask the Intangible God. We can't possibly respond to all of your questions we received. But, I would like to examine a few this way.

The GARDEN Kids uses a book entitled “I Wanted to Know All About God.” It appears that the author used a group of children to write down their questions and then answer them. Here are some responses to their questions:

“I often wondered what colors God likes. Then I met several children of other races.”

“I wondered if God's people have faith in each other, and my friend trusted me with a secret.”

“I wondered if God is caring, and the new boy shared his crayons with me.”

“I wondered what God's love feel like, and Grandma put her arms around me and gave me a big hug.”

One of you Adults submitted this question, **“How do we communicate to God or where do we find God?”** Again, the author's response is brilliant:

“I wanted to know how to communicate with God, and I felt someone knocking at my heart. Now when I go out looking for God, I know exactly where to find God, in my heart.”

Many of you were interested in **“How the Bible defines faith?”** Listen to the response from our Bible passage. Our first verse states:

“The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see.”

In other words, Faith is the ability to look beyond the visible into the invisible or the tangible into the intangible. Only the heart can hold the intangible.

So go ahead, doubt, and ask your questions: Is there really a God? Does it do any good to pray? Why should I go to church? If God is so good, then why is there so much evil in the world? And why do bad things happen to good people? You see the list can go on and on. But I believe our second verse was written in response to those who have such doubt. Listen to the next verse:

"It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that God exists and that God cares enough to respond."

Really, today's message is all about faith. And I know this may be hard for some of us to comprehend. But I am convinced that our doubts reveal how seriously we take our faith in God. Someone who doesn't care what they believe isn't going to be bothered with doubts and questions. But those who do will be stimulated; and try to resolve their doubts with answers. And, in that process we will grow.

So allow me to share a four step-process that has proven to help our faith grow.

1. Write them out.
2. Pray it out.
3. Study them out.
4. Talk it out.

First, we should write down all of our questions the same as the children's book. In other words **write them out**. If we let our doubts and questions lead us to writing them down, chances are we are going to end up with a stronger faith. Then we should pray about them or **pray them out**. Research them, or **study them out** individually. And finally, **talk it out**, by talking with others; this will only make our faith stronger, not weaker.

While watching the Olympics on TV the other night, it reminded me of a remarkable story of strong faith in the intangible. It was about the life of Wilma Rudolph, the great Olympic sprinter. You see Wilma was born with health problems that left her crippled. One day she asked her parents, "Will I ever be able to run and play like the other children?"

"Honey, you have to trust God and never give up hope," they responded. "If you trust God, God will make it happen." Taking her parent's counsel, she painfully struggled to walk. By the time she was 12, to the delight and surprise of many, Wilma no longer needed her braces. She went on to play basketball on her championship high school team and won three gold medals in the 1960 Olympics.

When you hear inspiring stories of faith like Wilma Rudolph's, do you sometimes wonder, "What could I accomplish if I would put my trust in a loving God?"

God speaks to us and through us, to reach us in many, many ways; whether it is slipped in through a TV show; with those little "reminders" which creep into our daily life, or directly, through thought. We will hear and recognize it if we listen, and once heard, it is up to us to act upon what God is telling us.

So I want to challenge each of us to start trusting The Intangible like Wilma Rudolph; because **"Faith is not trusting**

that God can, but that God will." Because I am convinced that God is always, always with us. But we must have the courage to trust God; and never give up! Remember, it's God's unconditional love following us; day-in and day-out, making a way out of no way. But we must trust that God, The Intangible, will make it happen! How strong is your faith?

Closing

As we leave here this morning, I certainly hope and pray that we know it's God's unconditional love that's following us. Only our hearts can hold the intangible.

Have a great Sunday and go in peace.

Amen.