**Faith Like a Child**

So, what should does it look like to have Faith Like a Child? I propose that there are 3 parts to faith that we can emulate in our daily lives.

First, when I think of a child, I think of innocence. Most of the time when we talk about innocence, we define it has having a lack of guilt with respect to any kind of crime or wrongdoing. I believe that a child’s innocence goes further than that. I believe a child’s innocence encompasses a world view where they don’t even know that wrong-doings exist. A child’s innocence is one that believes every person they meet is good. In today’s day and age, people would presume that as naïve, not innocent. But I believe if we begin each introduction to someone we do not know and assume that they are good, our encounters with those people would be better. And that our outlook on our world would be greatly improved. But how can we, as adults, actually do that. We know better, don’t we? Everyone we meet is only out for themselves. Everyone is only interested in their own version of the good life, making sure they get theirs. People don’t really look out for each other do they? When is the last time, you met a genuine stranger and expected them to be friendly? When is the last time you were the friendly stranger? I have to tell you about my grandma. She was always the friendly stranger. She was the kind of person that embodied the saying, “The are no strangers, only friends I haven’t met yet.” For those of you that know my father, you know that she passed on these traits to him as well. When my grandma was alive, she loved to travel all over the world. If you ever had the pleasure of sitting next to her on the airplane, I can guarantee that by the end of the flight, you not only loved her, but you had given her your address and in December, you would receive a Christmas card from her. And when you received it, you would think fondly about the best flight you had been on. When she would catch me arguing with my brother and sister, she would tell us that when she and her sister would start to argue as children, instead, they would look at each other and say “Let’s try to get along, shall we?” She definitely embodied the innocence I associate with “Faith like a Child.” She expected the best from and for every person, every day.

I believe the second part of “Faith Like a Child” comes from the definition of faith. A Firm belief in something for which there is no proof.

We were all told things by our parents and other adults that shaped how we viewed the world because we believed that everything they told us was true … to the letter. Hopefully, we were told things that are worth believing. One of my favorite movies is Secondhand Lions. It is the story of a boy, Walter, who goes to live with his 2 great uncles in rural Texas. During the movie, he hears stories of the adventures his uncles had as young men. Later in the movie, he asks one of his uncles if all of the stories are true. You see, he had spent most of his life before this point listening to the lies his mother told him and commitments left unmet so his faith in other people was shaky at best. When he asks his uncle, played by Robert Duvall, if the stories are true, his uncle’s response has always stuck with me.

“If you want to believe in something, believe in it. Just ‘cause something isn’t true doesn’t mean you can’t believe in it…. Sometimes the things that may or may not be true are the things that a man needs to believe in the most: that people are basically good; that honor, courage, and virtue mean everything; that power and money, money and power mean nothing; that good always triumphs over evil; and I want you to remember this, that love, true love, never dies... No matter if they're true or not, a man should believe in those things because those are the things worth believing in.”

This has stuck with me because there are things that I believe in, even when the world tells me to do otherwise.

I found a song by Gold City called **“What Children Believe”** that has a similar message. I’d like to play it for you now.

What do you remember believing when you were a child?

I think a child’s ability to believe in things unseen, is something that we as Christians should continue to do. This past summer, Chuck preached a sermon series about different ideas people have about who God is and what people believe about God. For me, most of what I believe about God has come from what I was taught as a child and what I experienced in my own life. There are times when I have overwhelming feelings about what to do in certain situations. I choose to believe that those feelings come from God, through the Holy Spirit. Some people may tell me that it is just my conscience that was engrained in me during my childhood. Perhaps, but that doesn’t mean I can’t choose to believe that it is God guiding me. I believe that when I pray, God listens to me. I don’t believe that if my faith is strong enough and that if I pray hard enough, or often enough, God will do my bidding. But that doesn’t stop me from praying for things. It doesn’t stop me from wanting my friend with terminal cancer to be miraculously healed. It doesn’t stop me from wishing that there wasn’t hunger and pain in the world. It doesn’t stop me from praying. I don’t necessarily pray for things so that God will make them happen, I pray so that I can be honest with God and myself about what it is I’m feeling.

Which brings me to my third point about having Faith Like a Child. Children recognize that they can’t do everything all by themselves. They all go through stages where they will say, “I do it all by myself” But, most of the time, they recognize that they need help to do a lot of things. They need a boost to get a drink from the drinking fountain. They need help tying their shoes because their fingers aren’t yet coordinated enough. They need help with their algebra homework, or writing a research paper.

As adults, many of us still have the “I do it all by myself” mentality. I think that is why God invented smartphones, so that we as adults can recognize we need our children to help us figure out how to use them. But, when we face challenges in life, we try to handle it “all by ourselves.” With all of the stresses in our lives; we think that if we just spend more time working on it, we can figure it out. I know that I go through times in my life when I try to handle it all by myself, but realize I need help.

A year and a half ago, I was promoted at work, to be the division manager. That means that I am responsible for the rest of the software team. Making sure they have all of the tools to do their jobs, but also to make sure we have enough work to do. Within the first month, I had to lay off 3 people. For almost a year, I began each month not knowing what we were going to be working on the following month because I didn’t have enough contracts to cover everyone for more than 30 days. I did a lot of traveling, and meeting with a lot of customers, trying to identify new problems they needed us to solve for them and how we could get contracts in place in order to perform the work. This was a very stressful time and I spent a lot of time feeling like I had to do it “all by myself.” But on my good nights, when I would go to bed, I would pray for the wisdom to know what to do next and the strength to get it done. If you ask me if I believe that God heard my prayers, modified my body chemistry, to cause the right memories and instincts to connect so that I had “wisdom” and that he modified my adrenal glands to pump just the right amount of adrenaline into my system so that I had the energy necessary to complete the tasks I needed to complete in order to be successful? My answer is, No. But I do believe that I would not have been able to complete all of those tasks if I had not acknowledged that I cannot do it all by myself. My simple act of asking for help, humbling myself before God, recognizing that I don’t have to be alone, does calm my spirit, does cause me to feel differently about my world and the pressures I experience. Whether or not that is through divine intervention, I do not know and truthfully, I do not care. What I do know is that God’s word tells me to place my worries at Gods feet. And when I do, I am better able to meet the world’s challenges.

If we can become more like children in the ways we live out our faith, being the friendly stranger so that others may believe that the world can be a friendly place, believing in those things that are worth believing in and acting as if we believe in them. And acknowledging that we do not have to “do it all by ourselves.” that God is with us always and forever. I believe that is what makes a life with purpose and meaning, a life worth living, as well as a life well-lived.