

A woman called a local hospital and asked about Erma Stockburn in room 302. She was relayed to the nurses' station, where the nurse there said they really couldn't give out a lot of information but would take a little look at her records. "Ms. Stockburn is doing very well. In fact, her blood pressure is fine, she is to be taken off the heart monitor in a couple of hours and, if she continues this improvement, Dr. Cohen is going to send her home in a day or two." The woman said, "What a relief! Oh, that's fantastic. Wonderful news!" said the caller. The nurse said, "From your enthusiasm, I take it you are a family member or a very close friend." "Neither! I AM Erma Stockburn in 302! Nobody here tells me anything!" Jesus did say we are to be innocent as doves but wise as serpents. It also doesn't hurt to have a sense of desperation.

There was a woman in Scripture who sought Jesus' help with her sickness—she had been bleeding for twelve years it tells us—was willing to believe in him: "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Mt. 9:21 All of life's niceties and charms had been stripped away. Her strength was gone, finances dried up, her appetite withdrawn. But what remained inside her weakened body was the strong heartbeat of faith in the person and work of Jesus. Capture a person, blindfold him, imprison him, and refuse him anything but a meal a day, and he will return to the heartbeat of his faith: "God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid." Is.12:2 We have so many blessings that we often misplace the greatest treasure we have in our possession—our faith. Turn to your heart of faith. It is there that God speaks to you. As scriptures say, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me." John 10:27

The heart of the Christian faith constantly requires a return to the heart of the matter and that is our faith with an ear for the voice of the master. God's grace plants in our hearts this living faith, that causes us to love and trust the Lord as we walk out our faith. If we don't take care of our faith, we can lose the spirit and get burned out. Faith may be "the assurance of things hoped for" but it's an assurance that starts to gather moss if it just sits around. I have been a Christian long enough that I KNOW in certain areas God has given me Faith to speak and act so I KNOW it will come to pass. I use it whenever God says NOW is the time. Faith works as you work it.

In Clint Eastwood's, *Pale Rider*, the plot centers on a conflict between a group of simple poor miners and the rich miner LaHood, the most powerful man in the nearby town. A drifter (Clint Eastwood) rides in and defends a miner from a gang of LaHood's hoodlums with amazing skill wielding a hickory axe handle. He then shows up for dinner wearing a minister's attire. At this point, LaHood comes back from being out of town, and gets a report on his mine activities as well as his attempt to scare off the tin pan miners to get their claims. His son and another man tell him that a stranger came and pulled them together. LaHood is incredulous that one man could do this and tells his boys to go back and explain to this man who they are, and help him pack up and leave. Then the son lets fly the arrow that pierces the heart, "Yeah, there ain't much for a preacher to do here, right?" To which LaHood shouts, "You let a preacher into Carbon Canyon? When I left, those tin pans had all but given up. Their spirit was nearly broken. And a man without spirit is whipped. But a preacher can impart faith. (Heck!) One ounce of faith, they'll be dug in deeper than ticks on a hound." In other words they will believe and become heart strong, and that will make a difference.

This is what Paul says about the Christian faith. He tells us “never be lacking in zeal,” (instead) keep your spiritual fervor.” The Message, says it like this: “Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master.” Look back at the introit from Barclay’s translation. Not just any old faith will do, but only a faith that has some fire in it. Faith to pass the breaking point and not to break. Even a person of a different religion or an atheist could recite the Apostle’s Creed, read the bible, even explain to you in an intelligible manner what the Trinity means, but that doesn’t mean the person has faith. The same is true of those who do have faith: We believe, but help our unbelief, as Peter said, before he became the true leader of the Ancient Church. We may know something is true, but may be just as willing to leave behind the enthusiasm for that truth./// But sometimes, life throws us into a situation where we can’t avoid facing our faith. The story of Black Hawk Down is that of a small group of Army Rangers who flew into Mogadishu, Somalia, to capture a warlord who was stealing American food from the starving Somali people. One of the young men whose life was changed by this brutal battle was Sgt. Jeff Struecker, who now serves as an Army chaplain. Sgt. Struecker claims that as bullets whizzed past his head and grenades exploded all around him, God called him into the ministry. I have heard of foxhole conversions but this one was real. As he said, “In the middle of that firefight, I had to decide whether I believed what I say I believe. And when I finally answered that question, my faith became so strong it gave me the strength to fight the rest of the night.” It’s like this: you can be at work but not working, or perhaps working but not working hard. You can care about someone but if it does not make a bit of difference in how you react, there is no faith.

So how does God deal with us? The Lord keeps putting options in front of each of us. There goes a poor person. There goes an opportunity that I would be good at. There goes a time for prayer. There goes someone who needs me to forgive him. There goes someone whom I am supposed to love. There goes a situation I could make better. There is someone about whom I sense a word from God that should encourage them and pray for them. There is a place I should volunteer at. There goes a chance to support a worthy, God-based cause with my money. Serve the Lord ! **Take your faith out of your brain and put it in your heart.** That is what that soldier did!

We sometimes have a tough time figuring out what it means to serve the Lord. It seems as though Christians have a tendency to believe that God needs protection, and instead of helping a person in need, whose life may just be bending the rules in order to survive, we turn against them. I think it has to be better to face God on that day not worrying so much about protecting God’s holiness, but advocating for one of us his children. This is exactly what Christ did throughout his life and by his death. I am going to say it again and maybe someone will hear this and it will change their life. “I have infinite value and worth as a person because I am created in the image of God and while I was yet a sinner Christ died for me (Romans 5:8)” Learn that and your faith will excel.///

A 5 year-old girl loves her Sunday school, loves listening to her parents harmonize on the old gospel hymns, even loves the fire-and-brimstone preaching antics of Brother Munroe, loves everything about her church. In Mrs. Nichols’ class she is memorizing the books of the New Testament, eagerly anticipating her reward, a gold necklace with a tiny glass bulb containing a real mustard seed, just like in Jesus’ story. But then everything goes wrong. Her father becomes so sick her mother must support the family by becoming a waitress, which includes serving

drinks. To the First Church, serving alcohol means “breaking the covenant.” Hands of friends and neighbors are raised to vote the family out of the church. As Kate Young Caley writes in her book *The House Where the Hardest Things Happened: A Memoir about Belonging*: ‘And so I, who loved the church ... I, too, was out.’ Richard P. Hansen wrote, Former friends now ignore them. Even Mrs. Nichols turns her back when little Kate runs into her in Ellen’s General Store. Her family walks away from church and never returns. Hansen’s book, “Is a mustard seed enough?”

This question has been over used but still packs a punch. What Would Jesus Do? Do we really believe Christ would kick a family out the church for that? We can only serve the Lord by doing so in a way that is in accord with his character and the nature of his personal faith—because in fact this is more than just his personal faith that we see in the Gospels. This is God in human flesh. This is the very image of God in action. As goes God the Father, so goes Jesus. As the creator did, so did Jesus. As Jesus spoke, so God the Father spoke. Our faith should give us a heart of compassion for others, should resemble Christ’s heart for those who were like a sheep without a shepherd. Forgive wrongs against you. Don’t judge others, but in kindness consider your own weakness and failings. Let the Spirit of Christ lead you as you face countless times the question of whether you will find room in the inn of your heart for this misdirected world. Or will you trust God because you lost your job again. God needs not another strong man or woman, but one who is humble, seeks peace, and loves mercy.

A number of times, Jesus said something to the effect: “According to your faith let it be done to you.” Mt.9:29 When it comes down to it, the size of your faith will determine the size of your life. It is the believer with a heart of action faith God can bless. Nelson Mandela “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?’ Actually, who are we not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world.” **TAKE YOUR FAITH OUT OF YOUR BRAIN AND PUT IT IN YOUR HEART.** Amy Carmichael wrote this; it is a song I think:

From prayer that asks that I may be; Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee;
From fearing when I should aspire; From faltering when I should climb higher
From silken self, O Captain, free Thy soldier who would follow Thee.
From subtle love of softening things, From easy choices, weakening’s, (Not thus are spirits
fortified, Not this way went the Crucified);
From all that dims Thy Calvary O Lamb of God, deliver me.
Give me the love that leads the way, The faith that nothing can dismay;
The hope no disappointments tire, The passion that will burn like fire;
Let me not sink to be a clod; Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.
-----Amy Wilson Carmichael

You will be fuel for God when you **take your faith out of your brain** and put it in your heart.