

From One Person

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Has anyone been to Hawaii? I haven't been there yet, but I really want to go. Hawaii is one of the most desired destinations for World travelers. Among the islands of Hawaii, Kauai is known as the "Garden Island" and is famous as a filming location because it has wonderful nature. But, in contrast to its beautiful environment, many inhabitants of the island were involved with problems such as alcoholism, mental illness, and various crimes.

Emmy Werner and other scholars started a large research project called "Kauai Longitudinal Study."ⁱ They monitored the development of all children born on the island at ages 1, 2, 10, 18, 32, and 40 years. The population of their study was 698 people. Then, Werner and her colleagues focused on the data of 210 people who grew up with various biological and psychosocial risk factors. Two-thirds of them had similar problems which their older generations. But for one-third of the children, the results were completely different. They excelled in school, had a good family and social life, and were successful in their careers.

They investigated how they overcame the so-called fate of the "high-risk" group and lived a productive and happy life. In her article, Werner suggests several common factors that had a positive impact on their lives, and one of them was a factor that can be found in their relationships with those around them. They had at least one person who understood them, helped them, and trusted them in any situation. They were usually "competent, emotionally stable person who was sensitive to their needs." Some of the supporters were parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts in the family, or they were friends, seniors, teachers, pastors, and church members in their communities. Even though they sometimes failed or got frustrated, they could overcome the odds and return to a healthy and happy life because they had at least one person who would inspire and empower them in their lives.

Likewise, we all need someone in our lives who can trust and support us. Do you have anyone such person in your life? If you have someone who trusts you, loves you, and supports you, you should thank God and that person. Also, you have to cherish the relationship. But even if we don't have such a person, or if you lost the person, you don't have to worry because we have one.

Now when we feel like there is no one to love and trust us, there is one who comes to us. The one is the Triune God, our Lord. Especially the Holy Spirit is with us, and when the enemy devil condemns us, the Spirit will protect us as the Advocate. The Holy Spirit loves us and is aware of the potential within us, our power as the image of God. Our Lord is competent, emotionally stable, and sensitive to our needs. So, we must constantly listen to the loving voice of God.

However, in order to establish a relationship with God, the most fundamental elements are required. That is faith. By faith, we come to realize and understand our relationship with God. We are children of God. And by faith, we depend on God for our lives. Faith is the bridge that Jesus built through the sacrifice, which reconnected the broken relationship between God and us. So, the believers must understand what faith is.

Hebrews 11 is what we call the chapter of faith. The author begins the chapter by defining faith and then gives the stories of the various ancestors of the faith. The author's definition of faith is as follows: "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." In the King James Version, it reads, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Through faith, the formless and unrealized come into existence and become a reality. The ability to make something from nothing is what we call the power of creation.

God created the heavens and the earth, and the Creator's power was displayed to the greatest extent in the Creation. As we believers see God's amazing creatures, we praise the greatness of God. When we see beautiful beaches or volcanic fields in Hawaii or experience the magnificence of Niagara Falls, we feel God's creative power and sing of God's marvelous work. When I was in Nepal, one of the best ways to feel the presence of God was to look up at the high mountains. Even when the space photos taken by the James Webb Telescope were released recently, people of faith must have been amazed by God's Creation that goes beyond the limits of our imagination.

We are in awe of God's Creation because we know it was created out of nothing. We believe and confess the creation from nothing, *creatio ex nihilo* in Latin. This is the faith that verse 3 speaks of. "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible." However, as we ponder it a little more, God's act of creation itself is the act of faith. When God said let there be light, God hoped that a substance called light would come into being. The light was what God hoped for, which didn't exist yet, but it soon became substance. When God the Creator believed in God's Divine power and declared what God desired, the world became material in form, and all creation was created.

So, technically, faith is divine, not human. We humans can never acquire faith for ourselves. Faith is something that God has to give us. The Bible tells us. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—” (Ephesians 2:8) Yes. Faith is a gift from God to us. Faith cannot be acquired by human strength and effort. It is given to us suddenly and mysteriously by the grace of God.

Let's look at Abraham's faith in Genesis 15. One day God comes to him and speaks to him. “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” How enjoyable and comforting are these words? God promises the protection for him. Nevertheless, Abram, who has not yet taken the name of Abraham, complains to God. “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? You have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” Definitely, in this moment, he was not a man of faith.

But God speaks to him. “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.” Then God brought him out and made him see the sky, saying, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be.” Then, at the moment, faith suddenly comes to Abram's heart. He doubted God's plan a while ago. But God's faith is given as a gift in his heart. Then, God's plan, which he has never seen before, begins to appear in his spiritual eyes. Faith comes to Abraham's heart somehow. And the Bible tells us this way. “the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

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What did Abraham do? Why was he recognized as righteous by God? What he did was just open his heart when he heard the word of God and accepted it with his heart. His faith was simply a gift from God when he put the Word of God at the center of his spirit. He was able to live the life of faith as summarized in Hebrews 11:8-16 because Abraham received faith as a gift from God. It was the simple acceptance that made Abraham the father of faith.

God eagerly looked for a person who trusted God. God searched for someone who could share God’s purpose and plan together. God blessed Abraham only because he was the one who participated in God’s purpose. Abraham was already old and childless. He was as good as dead. However, faith gave him a new life, and Abraham became the father of faith. He became the beginning of accomplishing God’s plan. Then, the Divine plan of salvation was fulfilled by Jesus, another person who devoted his life to God’s mission.

God is also looking for one person today. God has invited persons, but a few people answered God’s invitations. Just as we need God’s care while we live our lives in these high-risk circumstances, so too God is looking for someone to participate in sharing God’s love and mercy to the world and help fulfill God’s missionary tasks. Some of us might excuse our weaknesses such as age, health, finance, etc. However, all we need is to receive God’s heart into our hearts by faith. Open your heart to the Lord’s will. Then, you will become the one who dreams of God’s work. You will be the ancestors of faith for this age who opens a new era of faith.

ⁱ Emmy Werner, “Resilience and Recovery: Findings from the Kauai Longitudinal Study,” *FOCAL POiNT: Research, Policy, and Practice in Children’s Mental Health*, Summer 2005, Vol. 19 No. 1, 11-14. <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/7988/files/1408128/download?verifier=MSyfMF3bkM5Q2GBLjzgXMGXJ6EpBcIMiLWrU8GUh&wrap=1> – You can download the article with this link