

Pastor's Corner: 4-20-2019 – Faith when you don't feel it

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. – Hebrews 11:1

I have to admit that I struggled with deciding what to share for my Pastor's Corner this week. To be perfectly honest, I just wasn't feeling it and when that happens I look for ways to cut corners. So, one thought I had was to share an update from the latest board meeting. It's good information for the church to know and easy for me to put together, but this is communion Sabbath and Easter weekend and for some reason church board notes just didn't seem appropriate. Then I thought I could just reproduce a devotional from one of the books on my shelf, but I did that last week (yeah, I wasn't feeling creative then either). Then I thought I should write up some kind of Easter/Communion appropriate something-or-other but, like an artist waiting for his muse, I sat uninspired in front of a blank canvas (an empty Word doc) watching the blinking cursor stare back at me.

Eventually a thought occurred to me. Why not just write what I'm really feeling? Why try to spin something out of nothing. So that's what you get today. An honest and authentic take on spirituality when you just aren't feeling it.

Sometimes we hit a slump in our walk with God and it's at those times that God feels very distant and divorced from our daily walk. When we slump we may find our devotional life becoming lifeless (if it doesn't stop altogether) and our worship experience becoming a formality. During a slump there is a temptation to become discouraged or even to despair. Doubt can creep in and we can begin to question God, our relationship with him, or even his very existence. Slumps can be powerful.

I think it's important to recognize that this is not uncommon among Christians. Chances are, those who appear to always have perfect faith are probably faking it at least some of the time. Discouragement happens to all of us. So, don't beat yourself up over it. Instead, recognize that slumps are a time to re-examine, reboot or just plain hold on.

That's where I find myself today. Just holding on. I may not be feeling God's presence the way I want right now but that doesn't mean he's left me. I included the verse from Heb 11:1 because it speaks to my heart and my situation. If you didn't read it yet, or if you already forgot what it says, read it now.

Faith isn't about feeling. It isn't about proof or evidence. Faith isn't about what we can see, smell, taste or touch. Faith isn't about the confidence we have when we're experiencing a "mountain top" moment. Faith, according to the author of Hebrews, is when we choose to have confidence in something that we can't grasp with our physical senses. Faith is maintaining assurance in what we believe even when we don't see it or feel it. Faith is holding on to God even when you're in a slump and just not feeling it. Belief without evidence – that's what faith is.

So, I'm going to try and maintain an assurance of what I can't see and a confidence in what I can only hope for. I'll push through the slump and continue to trust that God will show up again. I may not feel it right now, but that doesn't mean God isn't there.

One of the things that can help us get out of our spiritual slumps is to engage in what are called spiritual disciplines. These are things like prayer, fasting, meditating on God's word and the like. Since our small group semester is coming to an end I was thinking about starting up a Wednesday night prayer meeting kind of thing where we can explore some of these devotional habits together. I know that I do better when there's some accountability built in. In fact, (spoiler alert) half the programs I come up with at church are really just my way of keeping myself on track. I figure the church is a built in accountability system so I might as well use it. Maybe we can all unslump together?

That's about it for today. Points to take home: 1. We all face spiritual slumps from time to time. It doesn't make you a spiritual failure, it makes you human. 2. Faith is when we choose to believe

even when we don't feel it. Hold on to God even in the slumps. 3. If you're slumping, try to reboot by getting back to the basics of spiritual growth. 4. Don't try to do it alone.

Be on the lookout in the coming weeks for a Wednesday night meeting of some kind. I don't know what to call it. "Meeting" sounds like a drudgery. "Prayer Meeting" has too much baggage. "Class" makes it sound like a lecture with tests. Maybe something like "Wednesday night get-closer-to-Jesus thingamajiggy." I think I like that one, maybe that's what we'll call it.

Keep your eyes open for the thingamajiggy, coming soon.

Happy Sabbath,
Pastor Tyler