



HOW DIVORCE CAN SHATTER A CHILD'S FAITH, PART 2

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By Wayne D. Stocks

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Divorce can fundamentally change a child's view of the world, and their faith in God (or ability to put their faith in God) oftentimes suffers when their parents get divorced. [Last week](#), in part one of this series, we began our look at a biblical definition of faith by setting out five questions that we must answer about faith. We looked at the first two questions:

1. Who do we put our faith in?
2. What is faith?

We also talked about how the divorce impacts a child's faith. In the first part of last week's article, we examined who we put our faith in. The answer should be

obvious – we put our faith in Jesus, but children of divorce oftentimes find it difficult, if not impossible, to put their trust in anything after the two people they trusted the most (their mom and dad) have violated that trust.

In the second part of last week's article, we defined faith as trust and relied on Hebrews 11:1 for a biblical definition of faith:

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

We discussed how our faith and trust in God is based, in part, on His unchanging nature and commitment to honoring His promises. For most children, they enjoy (at least in part) a relationship with their parents that reflects these attributes (albeit in a fallen form). When that inherent trust which kids put in their parents is violated by divorce, it leaves kids unable or unwilling to place that trust in anyone else (including God).

That leaves us with three more questions to answer when it comes to understanding faith. We had originally planned to cover all three questions in today's article, but given the importance of each question, we have opted to spread those out over two weeks. So, this week will answer two more questions fundamental to understanding faith:

3. Why do we need faith?
4. Where does faith come from?





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Next week, we will deal with our final, and perhaps most involved, question:

5. What do we do with faith?

The following week, we will examine ways that the church, and those who work with children, can help children of divorce in their journey of faith.

WHY DO WE NEED FAITH?

In order to understand faith, we must grasp why it is important that we have faith. Is it simply an accessory that somehow makes our lives better like a nice suit or beautiful jewelry? Is it a piece of a grander puzzle? Can we get by without it?

The Bible is very clear about the reason for faith:

...and everything that does not come from faith is sin. [Romans 14:23b]

Let that sink in for a minute. EVERYTHING that does not come from faith is sin. When we try to do things our own way and be good enough rather than have faith in God, that constitutes sin. Everything that we do that is not based on trusting and putting our faith in God is sin, and sin is such a grievous thing to God that our Lord has to die on a cross to pay the price for your sin and for mine. Given that, our next verse should not come as much of a surprise. It merely approaches the issues of faith from the other direction:

*And without **faith** it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. [Hebrews 11:6]*

Everything that doesn't proceed from faith is sin, and without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God. Faith is pleasing to God and anything other than trusting in Him is not pleasing to Him because it is sin! The verse tells us that we must believe in God and that He rewards those who seek him. If we have faith and seek God and his will for our lives, God will reward us! It might not always happen when we want it to, or exactly how we think it ought to happen, but God will reward our faith.

Faith in God is absolutely critical to our lives. When children experience the life altering and soul shaking event that is their parent's divorce, and all the ramifications of it, their ability to trust in virtually anything is critically injured. Not only do they lose the ability to trust themselves and to trust in other people, their ability to trust in the God of the universe is hindered if not destroyed. They struggle with faith, and since faith is the very foundation of our lives, they are left trying to live their lives on a shaky foundation. Until children of divorce are able to place their faith in, and trust in, God, they are stuck in a position where it is "impossible to please God."





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WHERE DOES FAITH COME FROM?

That brings us to our next question, and a very important one at that: Where does faith come from? If it is impossible to please God without it, it is important to know how we get some. Faith is not something you can pick up at the local Wal-Mart. You don't accumulate points that you can trade in for faith like in a video game. It doesn't fall from the sky every morning. There is only one source for the faith we seek, and that is from God Himself. Consider the words of Ephesians 2:8

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through **faith**—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [Ephesians 2:8]*

We don't choose to have faith because we're smart or good enough or anything else. Even the faith to believe in and follow God comes directly from God. He gives us every good thing that we have including the ability to trust in and follow Him. We love and follow Jesus because God allows us to not because we are special or deserved it. Galatians 5:22-23 reminds us of a litany of things that are attainable only through our relationship with God:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness and self-control [Galatians 5:22-23a]*

Faith comes from our relationship with God the Holy Spirit. Faith is not something that we have ourselves but something that God gives us out of his grace. Grace is giving us something we don't deserve, and without God we wouldn't even be able to have faith in Him. He gives us everything!

This fact should be encouraging to both children of divorce and those of us who work with them. While we can help children of divorce to understand the necessity of, and benefits from, placing their faith in Jesus Christ, we cannot give them faith. The faith that they need, and hopefully will attain to, is a faith that is given directly by God. Ultimately God is in control. He heals the brokenhearted. He restores the faith of the disenchanted. We love because God first loved us, and we have faith only because God gives it to us. This necessitates that we be constantly and earnestly in prayer for the souls and the lives of these children of divorce. We will discuss that more in a couple of weeks when we look at what the church, and those who work directly with children of divorce, can do to help restore their faith, but in the end that restoration and ultimately reconciliation is up to God.

Join us next week as we tackle our final, and perhaps most daunting question, "What Do We Do With Faith?" Then, in two weeks, we will look at the practical side of this issue when we offer some practical ideas for what the church can do to help strengthen the faith of children of divorce.

