

Actions Reveal Our Faith

Sometimes our actions show our faith better than our words. In fact, what we do often shows how much faith we have. Following are several examples, one from the Bible and several from our lives.

In 1 Samuel 17 we read the story about David and Goliath. In that story as David runs forward to challenge Goliath, he picks up 5 stones. Have you ever wondered why he picked up 5 stones and not just one? Did David really believe that if he missed with the first stone that Goliath would give him the chance to sling another at him? Goliath had a shield bearer who would have provided the giant with protection from any subsequent stones, so David had to knock Goliath out with the first stone, or else he would be killed.

So, why 5 stones? In 2 Samuel 21:15-22, we read that David's mighty men fought and killed four men who were descendants of Rapha from Gath. Goliath was from Gath, and Rapha, while a proper name in verse 22, also means "giant." It seems that when David went out to meet Goliath, he had in mind that not only would he kill Goliath, but he would also put to death his four sons. Thus, the act of picking up 5 stones was not so that he could try again if he missed the first time, but, rather, as a way of saying to Goliath, "I am so confident that God has given you into my hands that I am picking up these other stones to say that you will have no descendants." Picking up 5 stones was David's act of faith in the Lord.

In our times, we can also see acts of faith. Most cemeteries (but not all) are arranged in such a way that those who are buried there, should they be able to sit up, would face east. Tradition has it that Jesus, when he returns, will return from the east. When Jesus returns, Scripture teaches, those who have put their faith in him will be raised to new life, and it has become a tradition that those who die in the Lord, when they are raised to new life will see Jesus coming on the clouds. Being buried in such a way is an act of faith, faith that God will raise his children to eternal life.

This does not mean, of course, that if cemeteries are arranged differently, the designers were mocking God. Maybe they just didn't know the tradition or maybe the topography didn't lend itself to a different arrangement. It also doesn't mean that those who choose cremation are dismissing the teaching of the resurrection, for one does not have to be buried in the traditional way to prove their faith. Nevertheless, those who do anticipate the resurrection might choose, as a sign of their faith, to be buried in such a way so that when they rise from the grave, the first person they will see is Jesus.

Perhaps one example that might apply to our routine decisions. As followers of Jesus Christ, we know that we are called to give of what we have to support the ministry of the church and to help others. The Bible teaches that we are to give first to the work of the Lord and then trust that God will provide for us until the next paycheck. There are many who write out their cheques to the church and to charities as soon as they receive their salary, for they are confident that as they give what they have committed themselves to give, God will provide for the rest of their needs. Those who give from what they have left over after expenses, on the other hand, might be showing that they don't really trust the Lord to provide for their daily needs.

Perhaps you can think of other examples of how our actions show our faith more than our words. In fact, it is often the case that our actions do speak out our faith far more than our words. If we truly take God at his word, it is likely that the way we live our lives will speak our faith more strongly than our words.

A few negative examples are also helpful. Superstitions are often an unspoken display of a lack of faith or of faith in someone or something other than the Lord. Knocking on wood is a remnant of the pagan practice of summoning powerful gods who lived in trees. Avoiding walking under a ladder is a superstitious way of avoiding offending the Triune God. (The lines formed by the ladder, the ground, and the wall were thought to represent the Trinity.) Avoiding stepping on cracks is rooted in the belief that a crack in the pavement might be filled with evil forces. While we might not know the origin of these superstitious practices when we engage in them, we are revealing that perhaps our faith might not be as firmly rooted in our Lord Jesus Christ as we might profess. Even if we may not know the origin of superstitions, we know that we are doing something to gain “good luck” or avoid “bad luck.” Sometimes, our actions speak the truth of our hearts, even when we don’t intend that to happen.

When David picked up the 5 stones, he knew what he was doing. He was not confident in himself at that moment, but, rather, fully aware of his dependence on God. He was so sure that God would help him defeat Goliath that he was able to pick up 4 extra stones, stones he would never have been able to use against Goliath. His seemingly insignificant action revealed where his heart was. May it be that our actions do the same.

Pastor Gary