

a mini-book about  
**The Gifts of Faith**

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This mini-book about the gifts of faith starts with a story.

### The Power of Light

It was a most tranquil desert night. Around me my companions were sleeping after a long day's trek.

We were on our way to climb Mount Sinai. We had arrived at the end of the first of a three day trip to reach the mountain. I was keeping watch.

We had been advised to keep a watch. The nomads of Sinai were known to take what they need. Sometimes they were known to take what you need.

To defend our camp, I was armed—with a flashlight.

At the moment, I didn't need it. All was quiet. It was a night to enjoy, a chance to think, to reflect upon the importance of this place in history.

After a time, however, I began to become conscious of a sound coming from the darkness of the desert night. It was a rustling. It came all at once; it stopped; and then it came again.

I was only beginning to pin down the precise direction from which it was coming when suddenly I began to hear more rustling coming from another direction. I was only beginning to zero in on this second source of sound when suddenly more sounds started coming from a third direction. Apparently we were being invaded.

I had to do something. And there was only one thing to do. I waited for the next telling sound, took aim with my flashlight, and fired. There was a man crawling toward our camp. But, the moment the light hit him, he fled. Not following his flight, I now fired in the direction of the second source of

sound. Once again I had caught a nomad. Once again the invader fled. Two down, one to go. I fired once more, caught a nomad, and this one I watched run.

How powerful I felt. And how powerful, I thought, is light.

I should not have been surprised. After all, the power of light, of truth, is what our faith is all about. Faith is knowledge that changes the lives of those who possess it.

To believe in heaven frees us from the dread of death, or the need to keep ourselves distracted—never really living—because we cannot face the facts of life.

To believe in heaven frees us from anguish at the death of those we love. Though we may miss them, we know that they have gone to God and are more alive than we are. We also know that one day we will be reunited with them. Knowing that we are not going to lose them, we feel freer to love them while they are here.

To believe in heaven lets us dream. Though all of us have our dreams, the day comes when most people have to admit, if only to themselves, that their dreams are not going to come true. This never happens to people of faith. We know that our dreams are going to come true, the only place they ever could.

Knowing that we were made for divine life, we understand that we were made to want divine life. Presumably, we also understand that no worldly thing could ever fill us. This is the reason that to get one thing is to want another. Therefore, though we can and we should work to make our lives and our world better, we need not suffer over any one thing we do not yet have. We need not anguish over any one problem we have not yet solved. We need not suffer envy.

Not seeking more from things than they can give, we can enjoy the things we do have. Our house does not have to be a heavenly mansion. Our house is not in heaven. But, if we find love there, it can still be a home. The people in our lives do not need to be perfect. No one is perfect. Nonetheless, if the people in our lives are trying, they can still be our companions.

To believe in heaven gives us joy. At the very least, it gives us hope.

To believe in love gives us purpose. We know why we are here. We know what we should do. We know that what we do will make an eternal difference.

If we believe that we are here to grow in love, we love. We are free—free from the fear that we are giving more than others—to live the only kind of life that could ever satisfy us. God would not have made us so that we could ever be happy doing what is wrong. Rather He made us so that we can be happy only when we are doing what is right. This is the reason that if we live selfishly we are never satisfied, no matter how much we have, whereas if we live a life of love we are always satisfied, no matter how little we have.

If to grow in faith and love is our goal, we gain control over our lives. We are always in a position to do what we want most of all. This is not true if fame or fortune is our goal. If something worldly is our goal, we have to hope that the world will cooperate. (Probably it will not.) If, instead, to grow in faith and love is our goal, we can always do what we want, no matter what the world may do. If something goes wrong, we can accept it, and thus our faith will grow. If people offend or disappoint us, we can forgive them, and thus our love will grow.

If we believe in God's plan, we have the best possible reason to accept ourselves for who we are. After all, God's plan for everything is also His plan for each of us. Yes, our life is a struggle, but it is a special struggle that God has given us to form each of us into a special person who will have a place in heaven no one else can fill. Understanding this, we can forgive ourselves for what we cannot yet do or have done and cannot change. No longer do we compare ourselves to others. Indeed, once we recognize that God has put all His love into our making, we can love ourselves for who He made us. This makes possible the sincere love of others.

To believe in God's plan allows us to accept whatever has happened and cannot be changed. We may not yet know why something hard has happened, but we can know that it needed to happen, for the best possible reason. Likewise, to believe in God's plan allows us to accept whatever is happening now and cannot yet be changed.

Since we know that everything that is going to happen—once it has happened and cannot be changed—will also follow God’s plan, we can live our lives without fear. If we know that a year from now we are going to be where God wants us to be, what’s to fear? If we think the same about our family and friends, we can live without the impossible burden of thinking that everything depends on us. Everything does not depend on us. Everything depends on God. Our job is to do our best, the best we can right now. The rest is up to God and His plan.

To believe in God’s plan gives us peace.

## The Ten Gifts of Faith

The following are the ten gifts which follow from faith in heaven, love, and God’s plan:

Love of self. Because we realize that God has made us who we are.

Peace with what we cannot change. Because we realize that whatever cannot be changed happened for God’s good reasons.

Freedom from fear and pressure. Because we know that everything that is going to happen will also follow God’s plan.

Freedom to love and therefore to live the only life that can bring us happiness. Because we know that love is what life is for—and it doesn’t matter whether we are rewarded here.

Control. Because we can always do what we want most.

Freedom from the dread of death—or the need to live a life distracted. Because we know that death is not the end.

Freedom from anguish at the death of those we love. Because we know that they are alive with God and that someday we are going to be reunited.

Freedom to dream joyfully. Because we know that the greatest life we can imagine, and more, is on the way.

Freedom from longing and envy. Because we know we were made for life with God and nothing here can fill us.

The ability to enjoy what we already have. Because we do not expect things to be more than they can be.

## The Gifts of Faith Are Infinite

The gifts of faith may be ten, but they are also infinite. In other words, my possession of faith's gifts in no way diminishes the value of anyone else's possession of the gifts of faith, and vice-versa.

This cannot be said of worldly goods. My house takes away from the land available for everyone's else's house. My car adds to the traffic that impedes everyone else's car. Every cent in my pocket diminishes the value of everyone else's money. And everyone else who has talent makes my talent a little less special.

But I lose nothing when others have the gifts of faith. And others lose nothing when I receive them.

My happiness with being me is no reason that others should be less happy being them. In every case "God could not love you more if you were the only person He ever made."

My peace with what I cannot change takes nothing away from others' peace with what they cannot change. Indeed, when others are at peace, they are nicer to me and everyone else.

My peace with the future is no reason others should feel fear or pressure. Indeed, when others' future is in God's hands, I feel less fear and pressure in thinking of them.

There is no reason that the satisfaction in my life needs to diminish the satisfaction of others with their lives. Indeed, when others have a

satisfying life—because they have faith and because they love—life is better for me.

Very much unlike worldly control, which is founded on power over others, the control that faith gives—because we can always have faith, we can always love—neither needs nor involves any power over others.

My eternal life will not shorten by one second the eternal life of others. Instead, my life is so much better because I know that others will never die.

Knowing that others will never die, and that each of us has something to add to the eternal life of everyone gives me another reason to be happy that I will see others in heaven.

And isn't it telling that everyone's dreams are different? What this is telling is that our lives in heaven will not compete.

Of course, *not* suffering what I don't have here helps me not to compete or be greedy here on earth.

So does my enjoyment of what I *do* have. And my enjoyment of what I have takes nothing away from you.

## The Gifts of Faith Are Perfect

The gifts of faith are infinite, and they are also “perfect”:

Knowing that God has made us who we are, and that He has put just as much into the making of each of us, is the best possible reason to love ourselves for who we are.

Knowing that whatever happened took place according to God's plan for our eternal good, and that one day we will understand the reasons that whatever happened *had* to happen, and we will be thrilled about the results, is the best possible reason to accept things that have already happened and cannot be changed.

Knowing that everything happens according to God's plan for our eternal good, and that at any given time in the future we are sure to be where God needs us to be, and the same is true about everyone we care about, is the best possible reason not to feel fear or pressure.

Knowing that every little way we grow, and help others to do the same, will allow us to share God's life more richly FOREVER, is the best possible reason to live a life of faith, and to know the satisfaction that we can get from no other life.

If life with God is indeed our goal, the fact that it is always possible to live our faith gives us the greatest possible control that we can have over our lives.

To know that we are not going to die is the best possible truth with which to face death.

To know that those whom we love who have died are more alive than we are, and one day we are going to be reunited, is the best possible truth with which to face the loss of loved ones.

To know that with God our dreams are going to come true, and even more than that, is the best possible truth *period*.

To know that we will always want more than we can have is the best possible reason not to suffer what we do not have, and not to suffer envy.

Finally, to know that nothing here can be all that we want it (him, her) to be is the best possible reason to appreciate things for what they are.

## Life Without the Gifts of Faith

Not having the gifts of faith leaves the human spirit wanting:

Not believing in yourself for the right reason—because God has made you who you are—leaves the faithless to seek their worth in things that can change or are really worth little. This leaves them insecure and unhappy about who they are.

Not believing that the hard things in life happen for the best possible reason, the faithless carry resentments even to the grave.

Not believing that the future is in God's hands too, the faithless are often fearful, and those with obligations always feel pressure.

Not understanding the purpose of life—to prepare for life with God—the faithless lack purpose, and, for fear of being “the only one doing it,” they are not free to love. This leaves them with a life that is ultimately empty.

Not wanting the best thing for them—a richer life with God forever—the faithless want things that the world must give them. This often leaves them at the mercy of others, and never gives them confidence that everything is under control.

Not sure about heaven, the faithless fear death, and in order not to think about it, they try not to think about anything.

Not sure about heaven, the faithless suffer anguish when those on whom their identity depends die.

Not understanding that we were made for life with God, where our most wonderful dreams are sure to come true, the faithless are mocked and tortured by their dreams.

Not understanding that we were made for life with God, and nothing less can ever fill us, the faithless suffer the illusion that “if only this... then I would be happy.” They often suffer envy.

Not understanding that we were made for life with God, and nothing less can ever fill us, the faithless seek more from things than they can give. Thus, they are never satisfied nor grateful.

If you would like to hear or have a song about the gifts of faith, just go back to [www.thefaithkit.org/panorama](http://www.thefaithkit.org/panorama), click on “From Search to Church,” and try the buttons under “Dona Fidei.”

If you would like a great way to keep the gifts of faith in front of you, just go back to [www.thefaithkit.org](http://www.thefaithkit.org), click on “Check Out The Faith Kit,” and then click on “The Fingers of Faith.”