

## *Be Strong in Faith*

Tanieka started buying and putting away things for her wedding day when she was 22 years old. Seven years later she had a room filled with everything from unity candles to table linens. About the only things she didn't have already was her wedding gown and the groom. Since she was a little girl she had always wanted to be a wife and a mother. This was her lifelong dream, and she would not be deterred. Her faith in God was unwavering. Early on there were times when she became extremely disappointed and she wanted to give up, but she encouraged herself in the Word. Well, after three or four years of standing strong, you know how the story goes... Tanieka started to wonder if she was doing something wrong.

When it comes to finding the right marital partner, mastering the virtue of patience is very often underestimated. As a single person, I'm sure you know that preparation comes before partnering, and you may be doing all the things you feel God desires. Still, the wait seems to go on and on, and in the meantime the loneliness deepens as years pass. Feeling lonely at times is part of the human experience, but unmarried individuals have to be careful about these feelings. You can't allow them to hinder your efforts to continue to learn how to live and love God's way.

Tanieka struggled with this, primarily because she had grown very sad about her prospects. It wasn't just that she was lonely; she had become disappointed with the kind of men she was meeting. They were so far from her expectations that she saw no point in continuing to date.

She wasn't doing anything wrong. She just needed to grow in faith and continue to be patient with herself in the process. There are so many internal and external factors that come into play when you consider the reality of partnering. This is often one of the most difficult things to grasp. We can be very selfish. We want *what* we want *when* we want it. But sometimes, particularly when we are young adults, our spiritual paths don't always intersect with the mental images we have of our future spouses. So until we #1) glean a clearer understanding of where God is taking us spiritually and #2) have an inkling of an idea of the person **HE** desires as our traveling partner, if we're not careful, we could potentially take ourselves further away from what we desire as opposed to closer to it.

God knows the areas of our lives where we need to grow. He knows the things that we need to deal with before we can be healthy, solid, Godly spouses. And until we are willing to confront those areas honestly, surrender them and grow beyond them, we will move at a snail's pace. Tanieka wanted more than that—much more. She no longer wanted her personal yearning to

drive the momentum of her life. She wanted to please God and had gotten to a point where she wasn't so much concerned with getting married, but having a fulfilling spiritual and personal life.

Tanieka learned to use Abraham's faith as her guide, and this is one of the most crucial elements to seeing results in our lives. Romans 4:18,20,21 (NIV) says that *"<sup>18</sup>Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed. <sup>20</sup>he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised."* Verse 19 of this same passage says that Abraham was not weak in faith. Now this is the humungous *"big daddy"* statement. It's the key to understanding a little something about how faith works.

Abraham was not weak in faith. This lets us know concretely that it is absolutely available for a believer to be one of two things, either he or she is strong in the faith, or they are weak. This, my friends, is a volitional choice. God didn't cause Abraham to become strong in faith. He didn't zap a whammy on his brain cells and cause Abraham to instantly believe and trust Him. No, against ALL hope, Abraham chose to believe our Heavenly Father. He denied what the circumstances presented. He overlooked what seemed impossible at the time. He simply made up in his mind to put his trust in God and leave it there.

Abraham's faith pleased God, and so must yours. God wants you to trust Him in places within your heart and mind that you perhaps haven't even begun to explore. For instance, you might look at Tanieka's actions and come away with the opinion that she adequately backed her faith. You might view her far-in-advance preparation for her wedding day as evidence of her belief in God's promises, and it was. But as you, yourself, strive to learn more about demonstrating faith, you have to see things from more than just one point of view. Consider the possibility that initially Tanieka may have been so fixated on all the trimmings that she forgot what marriage is all about. You may also have to question whether there was a potential imbalance of expectations that could have done more harm than good.

Oh sure, to buy a few items here and there is plausible, not to mention fun, but to fill a room with purchases brings another question into view. If you are trusting God for the man, shouldn't you also trust Him that everything you need will be there when you need it? Faith requires you to trust that God has wonderful plans for your wedding day, and you don't have to control all the details years in advance.

You see, you have to ask questions like this to become strong in your beliefs, so that you leave no stone unturned when it comes to trusting God; because weak faith won't cut it. Weak faith doesn't produce results. We must be sold-out, fully persuaded that what God has promised He will perform.

Faith is a spiritual reality, and it requires spiritual efforts to back it—efforts like studying God's Word, praying often, and developing your relationship with Him through Christ. God doesn't want you to leave your life to chance. It's not an attitude of *whatever will be will be*. You can

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control your circumstances for the best by acting according to His Word, and believing in His promises. You don't have to go out and buy things to affirm your beliefs, although you can certainly do that if you want. The main thing is that you know in your heart of hearts that God will not fail you.

As irony would have it, Tanieka married a wonderful man of God in a small, intimate ceremony on a cruise ship. She used only a fraction of the wedding things she had saved for years, but she wasn't the least bit concerned about that. So as you look around at the pool of brothers in your part of the world, you might feel like its slim pickings', just as Tanieka did at one time. But you cannot feel that way for long if you are truly seeing our Heavenly Father for the Great, Big, Wonderful God that He is. He'll meet your need, but as we say all the time, it's about prioritizing the relationship you have with Heavenly Father. All day every day, it's about the relationship...the relationship...the relationship! So study His Word. It will always work for your good, and make sure you stay connected to God by doing everything you possibly can to grow in the spirit and to develop strong faith. ●