

## ~Other Speakers S-Z: K.P. Yohannan:

During my seminary years in the United States, my Greek professor was Dr. McBeth, a brilliant man with great understanding and insight into the Greek language. He taught us how to study the Bible in light of the rich meaning of the original Greek. It was amazing how he would take passages from Scripture and unfold before us the wonder and depth of them. For example, let me give you a little background of the original Greek word for faith in the Bible. We run into a linguistic misunderstanding with the word faith when we deal with it in the English language.

In biblical text, two words are commonly used: faith, which is a noun and believe, which is a verb. If you look at these words in their English form, there is no obvious connection between the two. This makes us think that we are dealing with two different concepts. As a result, when we study the Bible or preach, we make a distinction between the words believing and having faith.

However, in the Greek language there is no such distinction made. For the noun faith, the Greek word is *pistis*. For the verb to believe, the word is *pisteuo*. The verb is formed directly from the noun. The stem of each word is from the same four letters: P-I-S-T. Our English words for faith and believe come from the same Greek root word.

As far as the Greek is concerned, believing is simply exercising faith. Conversely, exercising faith is believing. This is clearly portrayed in Jesus's dialogue with the two blind men in Matthew 9:28-29: "And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.'" (emphasis added).

We see the connection again as Jesus addresses Peter and the other disciples in Mark 11:22-23. "So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.'" (emphasis added). In all these Scripture portions, you can see that believing and having faith are the same exact thing.

In English, the opposite of belief is unbelief. The prefix *un-* makes it the opposite. But to make the opposite in Greek, the prefix *ap-* is added, turning *pistis* (faith) into *apistis* (unfaith). In English we don't have unfaith; we simply just call it unbelief. And *apistis* (unfaith) translates into English as unbelief. Also connected with this four-letter stem, P-I-S-T, we have the adjective *pistos*, which means faithful or believing. From the opposite of this, using the prefix *ap-*, we have *apistos*, meaning unfaithful or unbelieving. All these different words with the same P-I-S-T stem occur hundreds of times in the New Testament.

If you examine these verses, you will find a massive, powerful theme ordained by God: Faith is the key to experiencing all that God has promised. This strong and pervasive theme saturates the entire teachings of the New Testament Scripture. In English, we do not see it clearly because it is fractured into two separate parts. But God has given us faith, or believing Him, as the single most necessary thing for living a life of all that He has promised. That one Greek word from the stem P-I-S-T is central to the revelation of Jesus Christ in the New Testament as Savior, Healer and Provider.