

A Radical Example of Faith

If you've never seen Niagara Falls in person, let me describe it for you.

- It's loud.
- It's wet.

I happened to be on the Canadian side when I first saw Niagara Falls. It was a splendid view, and I was perfectly content with that. I felt no need to see the falls from the vantage point of being literally on top of the falls.

Not Charles Blondin. Blondin was a French funambulist, which is a fancy 19th-century word for someone who walks a tightrope. Blondin got it in his head that it would be fun to cross Niagara Falls on a two-inch thick rope (not a wire). On June 30, 1859, 25,000 people gathered with a morbid curiosity to watch Blondin cross the falls.

As Blondin walked the tightrope, he stopped at one point, lowered a rope to a boat beneath him, and pulled up a bottle of wine. He sat down and had a drink before getting up and completing the walk. But he was not through. He crossed back, this time carrying a camera. He stopped midway and took pictures.

But Blondin was still not through. He returned on multiple occasions to cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope. Once he rolled a wheelbarrow across. He walked backwards. He did it blindfolded. He somersaulted and backflipped his way across. On one occasion, he carried a stove and utensils. Halfway across, he stopped, built a fire, and made an omelet.

After these stunts, I'm sure the crowds were pretty confident Blondin could simply walk the tightrope. But one person proved his confidence. Blondin's manager, Harry Colcord, clung to the back of Blondin as he walked across. If Blondin could carry a heavy stove without a problem, then surely he could carry a man. Maybe so ... but I wouldn't volunteer. Colcord's life was literally in Blondin's hands ... er, on his back. One poorly timed sneezing fit could do both men in.

Colcord's willingness to cross on Blondin's back is the essence of faith. He trusted Blondin, but his trust was more than words; he put his whole life into it.



A lot of people talk a good talk about Jesus, but trust is not a matter of words. Trust is a matter of actions. James said it best.

“But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith

without works, and I will show you faith by my works” (Jas. 2:18).

We sit in a Bible study or listen to the sermon and nod our heads approvingly at the Scriptures we read and the words we hear, but we never act on them. For instance, we agree with the apostle Paul's statement, “And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19), but we're hesitant to give 10 percent to the church because it's money we might need. We give lip service to the idea that God can do great things through anyone, but we hesitate to put ourselves out there to teach kids, help a church member in need, or serve in the community.

People listen to our actions before they ever listen to our words. You can be quite eloquent in your talk about faith, but it's your actions that show what you really believe. If your faith doesn't move beyond what you say, that's a dead faith. And if you bemoan the lack of interest in the things of God, begin with a heart check.

- *Do people see Jesus in me, or do I just talk about Jesus?*
- *Is my life radically different because of Christ, or am I just a religious version of everyone else?*
- *Do others see anything in the way I live and act that would draw their attention to the love and grace of Christ?*

Back in the day, crowds flocked to Niagara Falls to watch Charles Blondin do something fantastic. But you don't have to walk a tightrope to get people's attention; just live out your faith in Jesus. The world has too many examples of dead faith, so be different. Live what you believe and let people see Jesus in you.