

# Look into yourself for faith, not down the yellow brick road

BY JENNIFER BYRON

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Faith is a concept for the young. It's easily defined, molded to our individual needs and adopted as possible when we're ripe with the optimism of youth. But as life inches us forward, presenting challenges and frustrations — testing our faith — we soon realize, we're not in Kansas anymore.

Recently, while watching one of my favorite movies, "The Wizard of Oz," I was struck by how much Dorothy and I had in common. The common journey that Dorothy and I share is a one of redefining and rediscovering faith.

As she starts down the yellow brick road, Dorothy, although slightly stunned, possesses the faith of youth — unabashed optimism, blind faith, belief that someone or something beyond her will solve her dilemma.

She is so convinced of her image of the "Wizard" that she even collects a rag-tag group of friends who all support one another in believing in the power of Oz. At one point the Tin Man even asks "Are you sure he will give me a heart?" "Oh he just has to!" chirps the ever-faithful Dorothy.

This is the faith of our youth. It presents itself as an unchallenged trust that allows us to think that everything will turn

out ok. That we simply have to follow the right road and in the end, our wishes will come true. But we, like Dorothy, do not remain unchallenged for very long. The lions and tigers and bears crop up pretty quickly in our lives in the form of lost jobs, changed relationships and unfulfilled dreams.

And like Dorothy, we often mistake these challenges as tests of our faith throwing us into someplace new — thinking faith.

When we see faith as an intellectual exercise we look for cause and effect patterns. When my best friend died of cancer at age 44, I looked for "answers" and the "whys." Hadn't she been a good person,

a great mother, a faithful follower? Surely she was on the right path, why weren't her wishes granted?

In the story of Oz, it's easy to get caught in the mindset that all our five-some had to do was pass the test, rise above the challenges, get the witch's broom and they had their ticket home. That's "thinking faith" talking, and what it really is saying is that we have to accomplish something in order to be worthy of our dreams. And that once we demonstrate our worthiness, then we have earned the right to ask the "Wizard" to please grant them now.

Even after Dorothy watches as each of her fellow travelers

receives a simple reminder of what they actually possessed all along, she still doesn't get it. She is still looking to some all-powerful presence outside of herself.

And with the "Wizard" no longer available, Dorothy places her faith in something, someone else — Glinda, the good witch. This "movable faith" is almost predictable. How many times in our own lives, when we feel the "Wizard" has abandoned us do we simply find something else to worship. We're on to the next "great" thing in our lives — a dazzling new career, a treasured possession, hopeful romance. When Glinda points

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