

The Life of Faith #1: Foundation of Faith

WHAT FAITH IS

1. Faith involves trust in God's person and character.

Faith rests ultimately in the person and character of God.

1 Samuel 15:29 (ESV)

And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.

2. Faith involves confidence in God's Word.

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

3. Faith involves agreeing with God's Word even when we don't understand the circumstances.

Romans 4:19-21 (ESV)

He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he has promised.

4. Faith involves seeing the unseen

Hebrews 11:27 (ESV)

...for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth

THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITHHebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne.

In the call to faith, the Scriptures urge us to “*fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*”. Some teachings about faith have made faith the key to obtain anything we want. Christians are taught they need to get more faith in order to get more from God. The truth is we need more God so we can have more faith, not the other way around. We need to get closer to Jesus in order for our faith to grow. It is knowing Jesus that increases our faith, because when we know him, we learn that he is trustworthy.

1. Faith in Christ

When the Gospel was first preached by the Apostles, the message they proclaimed was that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

1 Corinthians 15:12-14 (ESV)

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

The call to faith was a call to recognize that Jesus had proven to be the Messiah by rising from the dead. The call to faith is a call to trust in Him for salvation, and to rely on him for one’s entire life. It wasn’t a call to simply have a “personal experience,” but to accept and respond properly to the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. We are called to surrender our lives to the implications of this truth.

2. Faith from Christ

The apostles knew that believing the Gospel wasn't just the result of logical reasoning after hearing the irrefutable evidence of Jesus's resurrection. They knew and taught that Jesus is the author of our faith. The supernatural power of God works to generate faith in a person's heart. The true source of faith is outside of us and our own abilities.

2 Timothy 1:13 (ESV)

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

3. Faith Of Christ

The person who is in Christ becomes an heir of God's promises because of Christ's faithfulness.

Galatians 3:22 (ESV)

But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Ephesians 3:5,11-12 (ESV)

...which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit...This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

COMPONENTS OF FAITH

Faith, as described in the Scriptures, involves the entire person. When we deprive faith from one of its components, faith becomes incomplete and therefore deficient to accomplish God's purposes.

1. KNOWLEDGE - the Engagement of the Mind

For faith to be birthed in a person, the mind has to be informed. Faith must rest on truth, which is revealed in the Word of God.

Romans 10:17 (ESV)

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.

Acts 4:4 (ESV)

But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

A warning: An informed mind does not guarantee saving faith, "For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened." Hebrews 4:2 (ESV)

2. RESPONSE - the Stirring of the Emotions

Faith that agrees with the Word of God in the mind without believing it in the heart is not real faith, but mere mental assent. Biblical faith is accompanied by an emotional response that starts with repentance – godly sorrow for one’s sin. Repentance leads to forgiveness, and forgiveness brings hope and joy ("joy of faith" Philippians 1:25).

1 Peter 1:8 (ESV)

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory..."

3. OBEDIENCE - Commitment of the Will

True faith engages the will of a person. Belief needs to go from the mind through the heart and activate the will to take hold of what has been understood in the mind and responded to in the heart, and make it part of one's life in obedience to the 'Word'. Scriptures refer to it as "obedience to the faith" (Romans 1:5), and this is where faith has had its complete outworking.

Romans 16:25-26 (ESV)

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith...

ADVERSARIES OF FAITH

The Scripture puts faith in contrast with three elements that attack the components of faith.

1. DOUBT

Matthew 14:31 (ESV)

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Doubt attacks our minds, what we know to be true of God and his Word.

2. FEAR

Mark 4:40 (ESV)

He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

The contrast between fear and faith in this passage is explicit. Fear attacks our emotions and response toward God. Fear makes us act in faithless ways, questioning God's care and character (Mark 4:38).

3. SELF-RELIANCE

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

The Scriptures, often contrast faith with works. The Apostle Paul in particular makes a distinction between faith and works. This is not to say that faith is passive, for faith happens not only in our heads and our hearts, but also in our hands. Scripture repeatedly addresses the fact that faith is expressed in acts of obedience. When Scripture contrasts self-reliance (works) with faith, it refers to the human tendency to try to gain or earn God's forgiveness, attention and/or favor by our own humanly actions instead of by faith in the person and work of Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. How has your understanding of faith increased through this lesson?
2. With which adversary of faith do you struggle the most?

HOMEWORK

1. Read the first three chapters of the Gospel of John. Note any time the word “faith” or “believe” is mentioned in those chapters.