

**“How to Have Faith”
Hebrews 11:1 - 6**

Big Idea – Faith comes from believing God’s Word and trusting Him.

How would you describe faith? What does faith look like, and how do you know if you have it or not?

J.O. Fraser, former missionary to China, likened faith to a muscle in your body. “Faith is like muscle which grows stronger and stronger with use, rather than rubber, which weakens when it is stretched!”

Others’ definitions of Faith

- The art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods.—C. S. Lewis
- Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.—St. Augustine
- Faith is voluntary anticipation.—Clement of Alexandria

The Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines faith in the following manner :
noun -complete trust, unquestioning confidence: strong belief, especially in religious doctrine.

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, the Greek word for faith is the word *“pistis”* . Besides standing for the word faith, *pistis* can also be translated as assurance, belief, faith, fidelity.

No matter you words you use to describe it, faith is one of the foundations that Christianity is built upon. If you did not have faith in God, an unquestioning confidence, one would have to wonder if you were a true believer. Without faith, we are left blowing in the wind, like the tumbleweeds you see in the old Western movies.

Where does faith come from?

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.

2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good testimony/witness.

3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

4 It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

5 It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God.

6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

1. Faith is Reality

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

"What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see."

"Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it."

Verse 1 is not really a formal definition of faith but a description of what faith does for us.

It makes things hoped for as real as if we already had them, and it provides **unshakable evidence** that the unseen, spiritual blessings of Christianity are absolutely certain and real.

In other words, it brings the future into the present and makes the invisible seen.

True Bible faith is not blind optimism or a manufactured "hope-so" feeling. It's not an intellectual assent to a doctrine. It is certainly not believing in spite of evidence! That would be superstition.

True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances and consequences.

This faith operates quite simply. God speaks and we hear His Word. We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the

consequences may be. The circumstances may be impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown; but we obey God's Word just the same and believe Him to do what is right and what is best.

The unsaved world does not understand true Bible faith, probably because it sees so little faith in action in the church today. The cynical editor H.L. Mencken defined faith as "illogical belief in the occurrence of the impossible."

The world fails to realize that faith is only as good as its object, and the object of our faith is *God*. Faith is not some "feeling" that we manufacture. It is our total response to what God has revealed in His Word.

Romans 10:17 "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

3 words here summarize what true Bible faith is: *substance*, *evidence*, and *witness*. The word translated "substance" means literally "to stand under, to support." Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house: it gives confidence and assurance that he will stand. So you might say, "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for." When a believer has faith, it is God's way of giving him confidence and assurance that what is promised will be experienced.

The word *evidence* simply means "confidence." This is the inward confidence from God that what He has promised, He will perform. The presence of God-given faith in one's heart is confidence enough that He will keep His Word.

Witness (kjv, "obtained a good report") is an important word in Hebrews 11. It occurs in verse 2, twice in verse 4, once in verse 5, and once in verse 39. The summary in Hebrews 12:1 calls this list of men and women "so great a cloud of witnesses." They are witnesses to us because God witnessed to them. In each example cited, God gave witness to that person's faith. This witness was His divine approval on their lives and ministries.

The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that faith is a very practical thing (Heb. 11:3), in spite of what unbelievers say. Faith enables us to understand what God does. Faith enables us to see what others cannot see. As a result, faith enables us to do what others cannot do!

People laughed at these great men and women when they stepped out by faith, but God was with them and enabled them to succeed to His glory. Dr. J. Oswald Sanders put it perfectly: "Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen."

2. Faith is grounded in God.

Hebrews 11:6 “Without faith no one can please God. Anyone who comes to God must believe that He is real and that He rewards those who truly want to find Him.”

Hebrews 11:6 “...it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.”

Good works cannot make up for lack of faith. After all is said and done, when a man refuses to believe God, he is calling Him a liar. Here the author of Hebrews explains that faith is mandatory for those who approach Him.

Unless you are willing to come God’s way and believe Him, you cannot possibly please God.

Faith is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

We are saved by grace through Faith

Ephesians 2:8 “For by **grace** you have been saved through faith, and that, not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”

God’s **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist’s **E**xpense

God **R**eaching **A**cross the **C**hasm of **E**ternity

It all begins with the grace of God: He takes the initiative in providing it. Salvation is given to those who are utterly unworthy of it, on the basis of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is given as a present possession. Those who are saved can know it.

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said, *You have been saved.* He knew it, and they knew it.

The way we receive the gift of eternal life is through faith. Faith means that man takes his place as a lost, guilty sinner, and receives the Lord Jesus as his only hope of salvation. True saving faith is the commitment of a person to a Person.

Any idea that man can earn or deserve salvation is forever exploded by the words, *“and that not of yourselves”*.

Forsaking **A**ll **I** **T**rust **H**im

Dead people can do nothing, and sinners deserve nothing but punishment.

It is the gift of God. A gift, of course, is a free and unconditional present. That is the only basis on which God offers salvation. The gift of God is salvation by grace and through faith. It is offered to all people everywhere.

Christians have been saved by grace. The grace of God is the source of salvation; faith is the channel, not the cause. God alone saves. Salvation never originates in the efforts of people; it always arises out of the loving kindness of God.

We live by Faith

Proverbs 3:5 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

6 Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”

2 Corinthians 5:7 “We live by what we believe, not by what we can see.”

We must trust Him not only for the salvation of our souls but also for the direction of our lives. It must be a commitment without reserve. “Faith is the Samsonian lock of the Christian; cut it off, and you may put out his eyes—and he can do nothing.”
Charles Haddon Spurgeon

A man slipped and fell off a cliff while hiking on a mountaintop. Luckily he was able to grab a branch on his way down. Holding on for dear life, he looked down only to see a rock valley some fifteen hundred feet below. When he looked up it was twenty feet to the cliff where he had fallen.

Panicked, he yelled, “Help! Help! Is anybody there? Help!”

A booming voice spoke up. “I am here, and I will save you if you believe in me.”

“I believe! I believe!” yelled back the man.

“If you believe me, let go of the branch and then I will save you.”

The young man, hearing what the voice said, looked down again. Seeing the rock valley below, he quickly looked back up and shouted, “Is there anybody else up there!”

Vance Havner had this to say about how we should live by faith. “God is faithful, and He expects His people to be faithful. God’s Word speaks of faithful servants, faithful in a few things, faithful in the least, faithful in the Lord, faithful ministers. And all of this points up that day when He will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

What terrible times we have in our churches trying to keep people faithful in attendance and loyalty! How we reward and picnic and coax and tantalize church members into doing things they don't want to do but which they **would do if they loved God!** The only service that counts is faithful service.

True faith shows up in faithfulness. Not everyone one can sing or preach, but all can be faithful.”

1 Corinthians 4:1 “People should think of us as stewards of Christ, the ones God has trusted with his secrets.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards they be found faithful.”

2 Corinthians 1:24 “...by faith you stand.”

3. Faith is Focused on Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1-2 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress. And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish.”

Not a great faith we need, but faith in a great God.—J. Hudson Taylor

Faith is the attitude in which, acknowledging our complete insufficiency for any of the high ends of life, we rely totally on the sufficiency of God. - C.H. Dodd

We need to focus constantly on Christ instead of our own circumstances.

Christ has done everything necessary for us to endure in our faith. He is our example and model, for He focused on the joy that was set before Him. His attention was not on the agonies of the Cross, but on the crown, not on the suffering, but the reward.

The people listed in chapter 11 are the “cloud” that witnesses to us, “God can be trusted! Put your faith in His Word and keep running the race!” The writer compared the Christian life to a long-distance race. The runners—believers—find themselves surrounded by a great “cloud of witnesses,” or the heroes of faithfulness. These witnesses are not heavenly spectators who observe the conduct of Christians, but those who have given testimony by their examples (see Heb. 11).

Christians can run the race of life well only by laying aside any weights or extra baggage that hinders one from putting forward his best effort. "Sin," especially that of "unbelief," also forms a crippling hindrance to good running.

The race of life is a distance race, like a marathon, that requires endurance, persistence, and sustained effort—not a short sprint.

Charles Wesley, studying Abraham's faith as described in Romans 4:13, wrote a hymn of eleven stanzas about faith. Here's the best

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at life's impossibilities,
And cries, It shall be done!

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible!
He'll do the things others cannot do!