

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

A on-line dictionary defines “*faith*” in a number of ways: (1) Confidence in a person or thing; (2) Belief that is not based on proof (3) Belief in the teachings of religion; (4) Trust in God and in His promises as made through Christ and the Scriptures by which humans are justified or saved. (Dictionary.com)

With such a wide range of definitions, it should be obvious that everyone “believes” on some level of faith. For example, everyone believes in *the existence of things* he cannot prove to be true (like *love* or *gravity*). When it comes to spiritual faith, everyone *needs to be* a believer, even those who think they don’t need to be! It is also true that not everyone who believes in the teachings of religion has developed a *personal trust in God* leading to salvation from his sins. And not everyone who has had a religious experience has allowed his faith to become *obedient to God’s commands*, even though the scripture says: “*If you love Me you will obey what I command*” (John 14:15).

What is the value of faith in our daily lives? Articles in this issue answer some important questions: “*Why should we train our children to become believers?*” “*Should we believe because we*



*are going to die?” Should we believe because we are going to live? “What are the steps that will strengthen my faith?” “What value does faith have in the time of tragedy?”*

Apply these principles to your life and you will become a better person. Check verses of the Bible which tell you how to express your faith in *obedience* leading you to the forgiveness of your sins: **Hebrews 11:6, John 20:31, Mark 1:15, Romans 10:9-10, Acts 18:8, Acts 2:38.** Find a church which teaches the Bible so you can grow as a Christian. *Spiritual security is directly related to the strength of your faith.*

— David Tarbet, Church of Christ  
New Milford, Connecticut



# WE NEED FAITH BECAUSE WE WANT TO LIVE!

When I was a boy, I took my bicycle apart and laid all the pieces out neatly. I lined up the spokes in rows above the rim with the inner-tube rolled up in the center. Beside them were the hub, chain, frame and seat. It was very impressive. But laid out like that, I couldn't deliver my papers, visit my friends or jump over garbage cans.

Some people's lives are just as neatly organized. They compartmentalize their work, politics, sports and relationships, but they are missing something. There is nothing to make sense of it all. For Christians, faith is like the hub and life like the spokes that radiate out of faith giving energy and meaning to it all. Without a center, life spins along on the edge of chaos. You try managing work, relationships, family, community, finances, pleasure, pain, guilt, and obligations. You are left dizzy, anxious and teetering on the brink of disaster. It's you against the world. Alone.

It's time to come in from the cold. Faith in God means we are not alone. He gives us strength, guidance, and comfort. The Apostle Paul said: "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). How does God strengthen us?

First, faith saves us from despair. This world had to come from something. If you believe the cosmos came from an accidental bang, the consequences are overwhelmingly sad. People are reduced to so much self-replicating DNA – without purpose or meaning – and morality becomes a matter of tribal preferences. If you believe we came from nothing and return to nothing, then nothing matters.

Second, faith gives purpose to life. We have reason to get up in the morning. People of faith believe we are in training for eternity and God empowers us to live triumphantly.

Third, faith takes away the sting of death. The great unknown is suddenly knowable.

Finally, life can be a confusing maze of choices. Shades of gray make us feel like we are groping through a fog. Many people equate Christianity with learning to say "No!" when in fact, we only say no to choices that harm ourselves and the people around us. *Life, with faith at the center, is a life worth living!*

— John McKeel, Church of Christ  
Groton, Connecticut

# WE NEED FAITH BECAUSE WE ARE GOING TO DIE!



Solomon, the wise king of Israel wrote:

“All share a common destiny--the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not” (Ecclesiastes 9:2). Even Solomon with his wisdom, wealth and power, was not able to add a single breath to his time on earth. Death can come upon us suddenly, for “no man knows when his hour may come” (Ecclesiastes 9:12). By the grace of God we may live to be 80 and beyond (Psalm 90:10), but we can die before our time (Ecclesiastes 7:15-18). With modern medical advancements we may delay death a while. However, death is coming for all, and for some of us, sooner rather than later. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that death is “appointed for all men,” and after that comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27)!

Solomon said the living are better off than the dead, for the living have hope (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6). God has assured us of life beyond the grave by the resurrection of Christ (Acts 17:31). We will all find ourselves before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). On that day we will be judged by His word, (John 12:48). Those who have been found faithful will be given the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

According to the scriptures, without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Since faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17), we need listen to the word of Christ. God says, “This is my Son, whom I love; Listen to him!” (Matthew 17:5).

Because of the coming judgment we should listen to Jesus and believe in Him. As long as we live we can choose to believe. Believing in Jesus gives us hope (John 1:12). He is the source of eternal salvation to everyone who “obeys” Him (Hebrews 5:9). If we fail to believe in Him we will “die in our sins” (John 8:24).

As long as we are living we can choose to obey the Lord. The same scripture that tells us that all die in Adam, promises that “in Christ all will be made alive!” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Death is a given, but life is a choice! ***By obedient faith we receive power to become children of God.***

— Neal Noey, Church of Christ  
South Paris, Maine



# FAITH UNDER TRIAL

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith, by definition, means trusting in God during a trial of uncertain outcome.

Abraham could see no clear way that his barren, ninety year-old wife could bear him a son, yet the Bible says he “considered Him faithful who had made the promise.” Faith, then, depends on how well we trust solely in God’s solid-rock character that does not change despite our circumstance. It is only when we are under trial that we know whether or not we have true faith.

This came home to me in 2012 when my wife, never a smoker, was diagnosed with lung cancer. Now into our sixth year of various chemotherapy and radiation treatments, even a four-hour surgery last May to remove an egg-sized brain tumor, my faith as a husband, caregiver and evangelist, is still under trial.

If I get a cold, I am reasonably assured that if I take a regimen of medicines over a short window of time, I will be better soon. But cancer? We have been living with excruciating uncertainty for six years! Will she live or die? Is today a go-to-work or lie-on-the-couch day? Will she feel too queasy to eat supper tonight or is there a specific craving that I have to run to the store to find?

That kind of trust over that period of time takes incredible faith. “*God’s got this-- He always has,*” is our mantra that reminds us, sometimes daily, that He is the only One who has ever been in control anyway.

It was always during the difficult times that Jesus would rebuke His followers for lack of faith. It is not easy to be a Christian. When the squall comes up on our Sea of Galilee, we believe God to be asleep and not in control. We may even accuse Him of not caring. But, our lack of faith is showing.

After Jesus’ hard teaching about His body being real food and His blood real drink in John chapter 6, many “turned back and no longer followed him.” When Jesus asked the Twelve if they too would leave, Peter answered with words that should encourage all to find faith under trial, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” There’s no one else. ***Our lives depend on having faith under trial.***

—Douglas Kashorek  
Church of Christ, Plattsburgh, NY  
He is editor of sermonlines.com

# SHOULD WE INSTILL FAITH IN OUR CHILDREN?



What happens if we fail to teach our children to believe in God and neglect to teach them the spiritual principles of the Bible? A number of years ago, a survey was conducted in a town in Michigan that demographically represented the U.S. Mothers were asked what attributes they wanted their children to possess when they were grown. The top three answers were: God-fearing, hardworking and a good citizens. About 40 years later, researchers revisited that town and asked the same question. This time the answers were: successful, self-actualized and healthy. Notice the change in attitude. Parents had adopted a different set of goals for their children—serving me, myself and I.

Our urban society is showing us that the indicators of a healthy society are collapsing. Teen suicides, drug abuse, disrespect for authority, depression and anxiety issues are at record highs. It reminds us of the Israelites who, when they forgot God endured great calamity- “and Judah refused to follow His commandments and God gave them over to plunder” (I Kings 17:18-20).

Society is suffering the effects of children reared without a consciousness of God.

Parents would do well to raise their children according to the Biblical paradigm of Proverbs 22:6, making sure children attend Sunday School or religious education classes, to hear their mothers and fathers pray for them, to learn the stories of great Bible heroes, to attend a summer Christian camp and to grow up with a awareness of God’s presence. These concepts will help prevent temper-tantrums, hitting parents, bullying class-mates, treating those in authority with disrespect and running around inappropriately.

Should today’s parents instill faith in God, with scripture as His moral and ethical guide to successful living? The evidence says a resounding “Yes”. The research is clear: happy children and adults are loving, considerate, reverent, respectful of others and obedient to the commandments of God. *We cannot afford to abandon teaching our children spiritual values of faith.*

—Timothy Bonzagni  
Coventry, Rhode Island



# STEPS TO FAITH

Every person needs to develop a rock solid faith that trusts completely in God. What are the steps to developing this kind of faith? What triggers doubt in your heart? Doubts must be starved and faith must be fed. Hebrews 11:1-6 provides us with some steps that will help.

*“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. . . . And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”*

**Step One: Know God Exists.** Creation tells us God exists (Psalm 19:1-6).

**Step Two: Desire To Find God.** You do not have to see to believe (John 20:25).

**Step Three: Know God Is Worthy of Your Trust.** God’s promises are unwavering. He gives resources to accomplish all tasks. He turns weakness into strength. God has promised to take away your sins through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

**Step Four: Know God Rewards Those Who Seek Him.**

**Step Five: Learn What God Expects.** God’s word tells us exactly what God desires. Read and study the scriptures—God’s primary source for faith (Romans 10:17).

**Step Six: Put Faith Into Practice Through Obedience.** (James 2:14-26). True saving faith says, “Lord, I will do whatever you tell me to do through Your word. I will do whatever you have commanded me to do.”

**Step Seven: Put Yourself Where Faith Can Be Nourished.** Consistently meet for worship with Christians. You are invited to worship with a congregation of churches of Christ this Sunday. *Stay close to people who will help nourish your faith.*

— Timothy Tarbet, Church of Christ  
New Milford, Connecticut



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