**What Is Faith?**

Faith is an essential part of our relationship with God. It is a prerequisite to beginning the conversion process, which is a necessary step on the road to salvation and eternal life.

Without faith we can't please God (Hebrews 11:6), essentially because if we don't believe in Him and believe Him, we won't really be trying to please Him! In the New Testament, both *faith* and *belief* are generally translations of the Greek word *pistis*. People who live by faith as followers of Jesus Christ are called "believers" (Acts 5:14).

"The main sense of the word 'faith' in the NT is that of trust or reliance... [*Pistis*] bears the sense not of faithfulness alone, but of the reliance and trust that is the basis of man's faithfulness, i.e., the faithfulness that expresses confidence in the faithfulness of God" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* Vol. 2, 1982, article, "Faith").

**How does the Bible describe faith?**

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

Faith goes beyond what we can perceive with our physical senses, so it does not work by the rules of science. Faith allows us to believe that the invisible God can do what is physically impossible. In that sense, faith is built and grows on a spiritual plane, not a physical or scientific one. But that doesn't mean observation, science and rational thinking aren't part of how we come to believe in our miraculous Creator God in the first place. In fact, there is no contradiction or conflict between godly faith and true science. After all, since God is the Creator of everything, science is the study of God's creation.

**Is our belief in God based on a rational foundation?**

Romans 1:20  
For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...

1 Thessalonians 5:21  
Test all things; hold fast what is good.

God's way is rational, and He wants us to test it out and prove that it works. But there is more to faith than what we process in our rational brains. There is a spiritual and emotional component that is a gift from God and grows as our relationship with God grows.

**Who is the source of faith?**

Ephesians 2:8  
For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

As we saw in the last lesson, our relationship with God starts with God. He calls us and opens our minds to understanding and believing. That initial seed of faith is a gift of God and, as we will see in a future lesson, faith is also a fruit that comes through using God's Holy Spirit.

**What can we do if we don't have enough faith?**

Mark 9:23-24  
Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."  
Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

Matthew 7:7  
"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."

Mark gives this poignant example of a father recognizing his lack of faith and asking for God's help. God is pleased when we recognize our own inadequacy and seek His strength and encouragement.

**How do you grow in faith?**

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

Hearing and studying the Word of God can help us see God's faithfulness in the past and His solid promises for the future.

**Is believing in God enough?**

James 2:19  
You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

Hebrews 11:6  
But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

God wants us to believe in Him. God also wants us to believe what He says. He wants us to diligently seek Him, which is done through prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting.

**What did Jesus Christ tell us to *believe?***

Mark 1:14-15  
Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

*Gospel* means "good news," and the news about the return of Jesus Christ to set up God's utopian Kingdom is the best news this troubled world can hear! When we believe the gospel, we will be motivated to share this good news (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

**What did Jesus Christ tell us to *do?***

John 14:15  
"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

When we believe what God says, we should do what God says.

**What is dead faith?**

Matthew 7:21  
"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

James 2:20  
But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Just calling Jesus our Master isn't enough, and just saying we have faith isn't enough. Our growing belief in God will motivate us to strive to obey God—to do His will and obey His law.

**What is living faith?**

James 2:17-18  
Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.   
But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Real, living faith motivates our actions. There is no conflict between James and Paul, as some believe. When Paul said faith was a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8), he continued by saying we were "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

**When we believe in God and believe God, what will we be motivated to do?**

Matthew 3:8  
Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance...

Romans 2:4  
Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

As we saw earlier in Mark 1:15, Jesus commanded us to repent and believe the gospel. God's goodness leads us to this next step in turning our lives toward God. And as John the Baptist mentioned, repentance also involves fruits, or changes in our lives. We will cover repentance in more detail in the next lesson.