

A Working Definition of Faith

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What is faith? Most would say that faith is a strong belief in spiritual things. I think that faith is something entirely different. Belief is a product of the mind. Faith emanates from the soul. Belief determines what we think and choose. Faith determines the extent we experience spiritual reality.

Have you ever had a conviction that something was true, even though you had no proof? For example, you were convinced that you would make your rent or mortgage even though you didn't know where the money would come from. Your conviction was so strong that you didn't worry, although the circumstance seemed to demand it. Your conviction was not based on reason or resources, but on something else. This unshakable confidence springs from your being and affects your will, mind and emotions. It has an energy all its own that sustains it over time. Faith operates like that.

Faith Versus Belief

Belief is a conviction of the mind regarding something that may or may not be true. Faith is a conviction of the soul regarding what it knows to be true. This soul knowledge is not intellectual, but intuitive, dynamic and trusting. This truth that the soul "knows" is not doctrine or belief, but an apprehending of spiritual reality.

I was at a Christian conference when someone pulled me aside to ask me to pray for the presenter who had injured her knee earlier that day. She could barely stand or walk, but was expected to speak up front in five minutes. In that moment, I had no doubt that God would help her. I knew this at my core with absolute assurance. That feeling was bigger than my own thoughts and feelings. I laid my hands on her knee and prayed for a minute or two (we didn't have much time). Then, I told her to stand up. She looked at me as though I were crazy, because she knew she couldn't stand. Again, I told her to stand, because I confidently believed she could. She stood without pain and was amazed. She was able to give her presentation immediately.

A Starting Definition

The most often quoted definition of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." I find it interesting that this definition does not mention truth. The only truth required

for faith is the unseen spiritual reality in which we place our confidence, not the truth we learn in church or classrooms. We don't put our faith in doctrine, but in the dynamics of the spiritual world. This faith operates in spite of or in defiance of the truth of our senses, our prevailing circumstances, or the opinions of others.

But shouldn't our faith be in God? Our faith needs an object, but the object is not always God. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt . . . you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done." (Matthew 21:21) Jesus didn't say we should have faith in him or God. He just tells us to have faith.

The Power of Faith

A woman suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years tells herself that if she touches Jesus' garment, she will get well (Matthew 9:20-22, Luke 8:43-48). As soon as she does so, she is healed. Jesus then asks who touched him, because he has felt that power has gone out of him. She comes forward and explains the reason she touched him and how she was immediately healed. Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well. How was she healed? By God or by her faith? Jesus explained that it was her faith that healed her. This is an important distinction. This tells me that her faith had a power all its own, apart from God.

Also, notice that the object of her faith was Jesus' garment. Her faith was based on her conviction that touching Jesus' garment would make her well. She believed that Jesus had the power to heal, but her faith extended beyond Jesus to his clothing. His clothing had no power, but her faith had so much power that it resulted in her healing. Note that she didn't ask Jesus to heal her. She apprehended the healing for herself, without any action on Jesus' part. Even Jesus didn't know what had happened until after the fact.

A Revised Definition

All this to make the case that faith can be defined as "spiritual intention." This is a radical departure from the standard Christian definition, but my goal is to always present things in a different light. Let me elaborate on this definition.

Spiritual intention is a conscious positive focus that emanates from our soul. It has power and influence over circumstance. It is a confidence and conviction in a spiritual reality that transcends our physical reality. We put our faith and trust in that unseen spiritual reality, believing that it has more weight and effect than what we can see and feel.

Spiritual intention is not a mental exercise. It is not the result of concentration or convincing ourselves. Instead, it is generated from the core of our being and doesn't engage our mind directly. We feel it as a bold confidence, an inner conviction, an unshakable expectation. It is a conviction that comes forth from our soul and that our soul fully embraces because it is conceived in our soul.

Recognizing Faith

Let's use the following scenario: your child is traveling cross-country by plane during a high terrorist alert. Many parents will worry. Some will hope their child is safe. Some will tell themselves their child is safe as many times until they convince themselves. Some will pray and ask God to protect their child. Some will put their trust in God to protect their child, but still wonder and worry. If we doubt, then our faith is questionable (Matthew 21:21).

What would intentional faith look and feel like in this scenario? You would "intend" your child's safety by entrusting your child to God. You would project your intention over the situation by bathing it with your positive thoughts and prayers. You would believe that your intention is effective and powerful to activate a result. You would have confidence that your intention is enough, that you don't need to do anything more. You would feel it with your entire being. You would feel it as an energy that has a power all its own.

Have Faith

Faith does have power if we can learn to engage it. We spend too much time living out of our minds. Let us seek to live out of our souls, where faith is produced. If you are feeling faithless, know that faith is described as a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). It is something we can ask God for. And as Jesus said, we only need a tiny bit: "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey

you." (Luke 17:6) We are called to live by faith (Galatians 3:11) so it behooves us to apprehend authentic faith in our lives.

"Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith." –Martin Luther King

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