

What Is Faith?

‘Jesus said, ‘Whoever comes to me, I will never turn away.’ (John 6:37)

Peter Walker
www.1peter1three.weebly.com

To Olivia

***'God keeps track of all my sorrow. He saves
my tears in a bottle.'*** (Psalm 56:8)

Introduction

Jesus asked us to have faith in him. He did not just want 'belief', he wanted faith.

Faith is a mysterious thing. In this short booklet we'll consider what Jesus really meant by asking us to have faith, and how to take that step of faith.

At the end of this booklet there are ten journal reflections, so you can consider some words of Jesus and write down your own thoughts.

Let's get started!

What Is Faith?

Even great thinkers can't tell you exactly what it is, and what it is not, because faith is something living, beyond thought or reason. Faith is a spiritual reality in your heart, your soul.

Faith is not belief. You see, you can believe in something, but not really accept it, or not live it. Think about it. You probably believe it is not right to steal or lie. But have you stole anything, or lied? Some people who truly believe something is wrong, are doing it anyway – every day! So belief is not the same as faith.

One way I think of faith, or sometimes define it, is *'belief in action'*.

Let's say two people – Deco and Pete – are standing around a shop and no one is looking. Both of them say they believe it is not right to steal. But Peter says to Deco, *'Hey man, let's take a few bars of chocolate, no one's looking!'* Deco says, *'No man, I don't believe it's right, I'm not doing it.'*

Now if I were to ask you which one of these guys *really* believed it was not right to steal, what would you say? I'm thinking, *'Deco!'* Why? Because Deco actually lived what he said he believed. He acted on it.

Look at this amazing verse in the Bible, written by James, who was the brother of Jesus:

***'You say you believe in God? Good for you!
But even the demons believe in God!'***
(James 2:19)

If demons believe in God, and I believe in God, well, what's the difference between their belief and mine? Possibly nothing, to be honest!

The difference will be in only this: If my belief in God leads me to actually put my *faith* in him, and *follow* him. Demons believe in God, but they have no faith in him, they do not follow him.

Do you?

Who Is Jesus?

‘Jesus said, ‘Unless you believe that I am the One, you will die in your sins.’ (John 8:24)

That is a strong word right there! Again, Jesus is not talking about a ‘nod’ of agreement with his nice teaching about being kind. No, he is talking about a deep belief – a faith – in who he is.

So who is he?

Very simply, and very powerfully put, Jesus is God.

He is Lord. He is King. He is Judge. He is the One and Only.

So then the real question is:

Is he my Lord? Is he my King?

You see, Jesus gives us ‘free will’. This does not mean he lets us do what we want without consequences. No. It means he lets us choose if we accept the life he offers, or if we reject the life he offers.

Think about it in terms of friendship. A real friendship is a two-way street. Both people are committed to each other, appreciate each other, and care. That’s a real friendship, a healthy one.

Now, you can choose to not have a friendship, or

to leave a friendship, but if you do, you will not have the support of that friend, the care, and the love. You can choose to reject a friend, but with it you will lose that friendship. Obvious, right?

And yet when it comes to God, people think that they have 'free will' to live anyway they want, to reject his morals and his commands and his teachings, and yet to still have the 'friendship', so to speak. To still have God's love and care and protection and provision.

We don't expect this when we reject a friend, but we do expect this when we reject God. But the truth is, God doesn't work like this anymore than a friend, or ex-friend, works like this. God gives us free will to walk away from him. And when we walk away, well, he's not there anymore. Because we abandoned him.

'The Lord says, 'When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen.' (Zechariah 7:13)

What Is Jesus Asking of Me?

This is a great question! We don't ask this much. We mostly ask Jesus for things we need or want, but we don't often consider what Jesus is asking of us.

Jesus came to earth as God in the flesh. It is really important to understand this. There is only one true God, and Jesus is fully that God! There is none other.

'All the fulness of God is in Jesus.'

(Colossians 2:10)

This identity of Jesus – fully God – is why people killed him. They killed him for the same reason we don't follow him: *We don't want God telling us what to do! We want to live our own lives!*

Let's shoot straight here: I want to swear, smoke, drink, drug, look at pornography, lie, steal, gossip, cheat, fight, think wrong thoughts, say unkind things... I want to do what I want! I want to be god of my own life, lord of my own destiny.

Can you relate to this?

But then on the flipside, I want God to help me, be with me, hear my prayers, provide for me, protect, give me peace, and forgive me.

Do you see the irony here?

The hard truth about Jesus is that he calls us to repent of our sin and follow him. This is true faith.

Jesus calls us to *turn away* from sin in our life, walk the other way, day by day. He does not call us to just hide it, or feel bad about it. He calls us to '*repent*', which literally means to '*turn around*'. Jesus calls for action! Belief in action! He calls for faith.

Are there things in your life that you need to repent of? Things you need to turn away from?

True Faith

Are you beginning to get a clearer picture of who Jesus is, and what he means by faith?

It is a deep, spiritual choice to make Jesus the Lord and King of your life, your soul, your destiny. Jesus puts it this way:

‘Jesus said, ‘The most important commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and strength.’ (Matthew 22:37)

That is an intense commitment right there. That is not just ‘lip service’ or belief. That is a lifestyle. That is from the inside out. This is faith in Jesus, and it will define who you are.

Would you like to take a step of faith and repentance even now? Would you like to commit your life and identity to Christ?

Look at these two incredible invitations and promises of Jesus:

‘Jesus said, ‘Anyone who believes in me, they have crossed over from death to life.’ (John 5:24)

‘Jesus said, ‘I am the door, and anyone who comes through me will be saved, and they will come in and go out and find new life.’ (John 10:9)

The Story of Jesus – The Gospel

Have you ever heard someone refer to the ‘gospel’? Gospel really just means, ‘good news’.

So the ‘gospel’ is the ‘good news’ about Jesus.

What is this gospel, in simple terms?

Here is the backdrop and the summary in a nutshell:

God made the whole earth and all people. Life is amazing, and beautiful. However, we also know that in life there is deep evil. It is in the heart of everyone. This evil – our sin – separates us from a holy and good God, and is also the cause of death. We will all die. We needed to be rescued from our sin, and also rescued from death.

God became a man, Jesus Christ, and came to earth. Jesus was perfect, holy, and full of love for all people. Jesus came to pay for our sin with an incredible sacrifice – his own life, his own blood. He took our sin on his own soul, and died with it. He paid for it.

Then Jesus rose from the dead and offered us two things: Forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

These are the two things that we all need most. We need the evil in our hearts – and in our past – to be forgiven. And we need to live forever. We need to know that like Jesus, we will rise from

the dead.

So the 'gospel' message of Jesus is this:

Jesus is God. He came to earth and died for our sin. He rose again and offers us forgiveness of sin, and eternal life.

If we want what he offers – forgiveness and life – Jesus calls us to repent of our sin and put our faith in him.

My friends, this 'gospel' message of Jesus sounds really spiritual, because it is really spiritual! And Jesus promises that when we do take that step of faith, he pours out his own Spirit into our heart, mind and soul. The Holy Spirit comes into us, now and forevermore.

The apostle Paul puts it like this:

'The message we speak is not a human one, but a spiritual one... spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.' (1 Corinthians 2:12-14)

Step of Faith

Sometimes a good way to make that commitment to Jesus, to mark it in your life, is to take a moment and pray.

True prayer is from the heart, it is not about the specific words. So if your heart is ready to make a commitment to Jesus, you could simply – and sincerely – read these words as a prayer:

***Dear Jesus, I want to put my faith in you.
I want you to be my Lord, my King.
I want your Holy Spirit inside of me, now and
forevermore.***

***Jesus, please forgive my sin, and help me to
turn away from sin in my life. Help me to
repent.***

***I thank you for your love for me. I thank you
for the new life you give me. Amen.***

New Life in Christ

If you have put your faith and trust in Jesus, everything has changed! Look at this verse:

‘Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come.’

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

The apostle Paul puts it this way:

‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me...’

(Galatians 2:20)

Now remember, as we mentioned before, it is a deeply spiritual reality – this new life you have in Christ. It is very real, and very spiritual. You are a new person. Others can’t see a change on the outside, but everything has changed on the inside. And your path in life changes.

When you decide to follow Jesus, you enter a battle. It is a spiritual battle. Two kingdoms are at war: the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of the world. We are told that the devil is the ‘prince of the world.’ We all can feel this.

But as followers of Jesus, we need to be very committed to growing in Jesus, and being separate from the ways of the world. You will be challenged in this very soon – and always!

When I was a teenager I started following Jesus.

I was 16 years old. The first things that I needed to do was step away from sin, and some bad friendships and activities. What happened was I found myself alone – and lonely – very quickly. If I had decided to keep going to the parties and hanging out like before, well, I would not have been lonely. But I was now following Jesus, I had a true faith in him, and I was not going to do those things anymore.

After a while my old friends began to question me about my faith. They were interested. They were cynical at times, also, but interested. I remember one awkward but very deep conversation at school with a group of guys. At the end of the conversation one of them said, *‘OK, let me just ask you one more question: Do you see yourself as sort of on a mission by God to tell the rest of us about Jesus?’* (I knew I was being set up here, to look weird!)

I said, *‘Well, in one sense yes, I do. Jesus tells us to tell others about him, and that is a mission.’*

The guys looked at each other with smirks, and we left it there. But the truth is, to be a follower of Jesus is to be ‘outside’ of world values and systems. We need to be in the world, but not part of the world. We need to meet with people, talk to them, but stand out as a person who identifies with Christ. This is not easy. But God honors it so deeply! Look at this word of Jesus to a group of people:

'I see your works... You have kept my word and have not denied my name... I will make you a pillar in the house of God all your days...' (Revelation 3:7-13)

To keep God's word and not deny the name of Jesus – this matters to God.

Reading the Bible

The most important 'diet' of your life, from this day on, is daily time with the Lord. Even if only ten quiet minutes alone with Jesus.

What I do is very simple. I make a cup of coffee, I sit and read one chapter of the Bible, and I pray. What I mean by pray is I sit quietly with Jesus, and I listen for his voice. As I listen, I also whisper my own heart, like, *'Dear Jesus, I need your help today. I'm overwhelmed.'*

These ten minutes of 'quiet time' with Jesus will become the dearest time of your day, your life. And remember, when your quiet time ends, Jesus still goes with you, and you can whisper and listen all day long, all night long.

'On my bed I remember you. I think of you through the watches of the night.'

(Psalm 63:6)

If you don't already have a Bible, maybe see if you can buy a cheap one online or at a bookstore. I use a really cheap paperback Bible, and I underline and write notes all over it. I have had to duck-tape the cover a couple times to hold it together. Look for an **NIV** or an **ESV** version of the Bible. They are easy to read, and good translations. But there are lots of good versions, so just take your pick.

The next ten pages are for the next ten days.

Just one page a day – a verse to read, and some questions to consider. Have your pen ready!

#1

Your New Identity

'To all who received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.' (John 1:12)

What are your thoughts on this verse?

#2

The Holy Spirit in You

‘You were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth... When you believed you were marked in Christ with a seal, the Holy Spirit, who is a guarantee of our inheritance to come.’ (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Write what you note here about the Holy Spirit, and your thoughts about your inheritance in God:

#3

True Family

‘Jesus looked around and pointing at the people said, ‘Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, my sister, my mother.’ (Matthew 12:50)

When you step into faith in Jesus, you become part of a new family – your truest family. Think about this for a minute, and write some thoughts, or just a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus:

#4

Being True to Jesus

'They claim to know God but deny him by their actions.' (Titus 1:16)

What are your thoughts on this?

#5

Always With You

‘Where can I hide from your Spirit? If I go up to the heavens you are there. If I make my bed in the depths you are there...’

(Psalm 139:7-12)

Jesus promises to be with you always. He often promised this to his followers. You can talk to him anytime, anywhere. How does this make you feel?

#6

Peace

'I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.'

(Psalm 4:8)

This is one of my favorite 'nighttime' verses. I would encourage you to write this out below a couple times, and try to memorize it for life. Say it every night when you lie down to sleep.

#7

Your Tribe

'Run from the evil desires of youth. Pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, together with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart.' (2 Timothy 2:22)

What are some *'evil desires of youth'*?

How can you *'pursue righteousness'*?

According to this verse, who are you supposed to pursue righteousness *with*? Do you know anybody who fits that category?

#8

Perseverance

‘Jesus turned to those who believed and said, ‘Whoever holds to my teaching is really my disciple. They will know the truth and the truth will set them free.’ (John 8:31-32)

Who was Jesus talking to here?

Can you give an example from your own life of what it would look like to *‘hold to Christ’s teaching’*?

How does the teaching of Jesus – and holding to it – set us free?

#9

Fellowship

‘Let us consider how we can spur one another on to love and good deeds. Do not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but continue to encourage one another...’ (Hebrews 10:24-25)

‘Fellowship’ really just means spending time with other true Christians.

The most important thing is always our time with Jesus, alone and quiet each day – and throughout the day! But it is also important to spend time with other true followers of Jesus. You need their support, and they need yours.

How can you plan to spend time with other true Christians?

#10

Wisdom

‘Wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving...’ (James 3:17)

True wisdom is not about words, but about spirit. People can easily *‘talk the talk’* – even God talk. But Jesus is interested in *‘walking the walk’*.

True wisdom is seen in a person who lives in a pure way, and then pursues true peace with people.

Write your thoughts on this ‘heavenly wisdom’ here:

The end of this booklet is only the beginning!

My friend, thank you so much for working through this book! Thank you for your step of faith, and then working through the ten days of reflection and journaling.

Please talk to a Christian you trust about what good churches exist near you, and that maybe you could visit?

Please continue every day to read your Bible and talk to Jesus, walk with Jesus!

Please also consider downloading my APP (1Peter1:3), and reading more devotionals, watching videos, sharing them with others! All details for this APP are here on the home page of the website:

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'Our citizenship is in heaven.'

(Philippians 3:20)

'Jesus is close to the brokenhearted.'

(Psalm 34:18)