



Receptive Faith

About Faith

This is an essential truth of orthodox Christianity: We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. *Sola Fide* was a critical doctrine of the Protestant Reformation (1500s). Faith is THE most critical human aspect of Christian living. Every single biblical commandment or instruction requires true biblical faith. Without true faith, any activity, no matter how religious it appears, is sin. Even so-called "good works" are sinful if performed apart from faith in the person and substitutionary work of Jesus. The writer of Hebrews penned "without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb 11:6) The Apostle Paul wrote this "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." (Rom 14:23)

So faith is a really big deal... But what is faith?

- What are the essential elements of true faith?
- What is the difference between true biblical saving faith and false versions?
- And what is the relationship between true faith and personal thriving?

A definition of Biblical (Receptive) Faith

faith v. Convinced that God is good and that He has adopted me as His child solely because of the work of Jesus performed on my behalf, I continually bring my needs to Him and accept His solutions.

- What are the foundational beliefs of faith?
- What are the essential actions of faith?

Hebrew 11:6 *"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."*

John 6:35 Jesus declared, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

Notice the parallelism – *believing* is paralleled with *coming to Jesus with a need*.

A similar parallelism is found in John 7:37-38 *"Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.'"*

- Do you need to calm anxiety, fear, or worry?
- Do you need forgiveness of guilt?
- Do you need relief from shame?
- Do you need light in your darkness?
- Do you need guidance, instruction, or wisdom?
- Do you need provision or resources?
- Do you need help with loneliness?
- Do you need identity?
- Do you need comfort?
- Do you need protection?
- Do you need help in temptation?
- Do you need affirmation?
- Do you need hope?
- Do you need meaning, or significance?
- Do you need something to sing and celebrate?



Faith is an ongoing human action of presenting to God one's needs, hungers, and wants with the goal of receiving and receiving and resting in the solutions He provides. This faith is prompted by Spirit-empowered convictions that God is a good father who has adopted us solely because of the work Jesus completed on our behalf.

More about Biblical Faith

1. Biblical belief (Saving faith) is more than you may think.

In the gospels we read of many people who actually saw Jesus, understood the content of his claims and teachings, who enjoyed the blessings of his miracles, and who exclaimed praises to God with amazement. Yet, we do not have evidence that they were all truly saved. In fact, many of these very same people later screamed out "Crucify Him!" Like the false disciple Judas, many knew about Jesus and yet did not have true biblical saving faith.

The same is true in our day. There are many people in our culture who are surrounded by Christianity – yet lack an active relationship with Jesus based on saving biblical faith. Jesus will say to them "*I never knew you.*" What about you?

2. Biblical faith has three elements Throughout Christian history, the standard definition of true biblical faith included three essential parts:

- a. Understanding – We must believe something. True faith rests upon ideas, beliefs, truths. Biblical faith requires an accurate (though not perfect) understanding of the truths of Christianity.
- b. Conviction – Understanding ideas is not enough - demons understand who Jesus is and what He did. True biblical faith has a passionate persuasion that the content of our faith is true, reliable, valuable, and beautiful. A gut confidence.
- c. Active Trust - True faith trusts, obeys, lives daily life in sync with convictions. People with real faith are not only hearers of the word but doers. This includes bringing needs to Jesus and accepting His solutions.

Crudely stated, real faith involves our heads, our guts, and our hands and feet. To have real saving faith we must have an accurate understanding in our heads of the basic ideas, statements, content, and facts of the Bible's teaching about Jesus. But intellectual understanding is not enough, the Holy Spirit of God must transform the ideas in our heads into convictions in our souls. We must be convinced of the beauty, importance, value, and wisdom of the biblical ideas - in our gut. In addition, true understanding and spiritual conviction will produce active daily trust - hands and feet. Hebrews 11 is full of illustrations of people who acted out their faith. True saving faith must include active trust and obedience. Obedience to God's instructions and good works are the visible fruit of invisible understanding and conviction. As the old hymn says "*Trust and obey. For there no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey*"

What do these verses teach about faith?

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Matthew 8:5-10

Mark 9:24

Luke 8:43-48

John 6:29

Romans 10:17

Ephesians 2:8-9

Hebrews 11:6

James 2:19

3. Biblical faith always has an object

If you trust - you must trust in some object.

If you believe - you must believe some idea.

Unbiblical faith has convictions and active trust in a wide variety of objects. We trust spouses, jobs, or even ourselves. Biblical faith believes and trusts Jesus (and His work - the Gospel) alone.

SIDE NOTE: Everyone has faith. (But the objects vary)

Faith is an ability and activity of all humans. All humans live by faith in an object - something, or someone. Our sinful condition forbids us from believing or trusting God, however we have full freedom to trust anything or anyone else. It seems inaccurate to call someone a "non-believer." It would be more appropriate to label such a person as a believer in a false god - an idolater. Christians are different because of the object of their faith.

4. Biblical faith is relational

Much of the Bible is about relationship. Sin is best understood as breaking up with and turning away from a relationship with God (Jer 2:13, 17:5; Ezek 6:9; Ps 18:21). In the Old Testament, people who sin are considered "adulterers" – people who have violated the covenant relationship with God. When we break his commands, we offend God, essentially saying with our lives that he is not good, he is not right, he is not for us, and we have a better way. True biblical Faith is built upon a deep conviction that God has loved me in Jesus, he is good, and my Father wants what is best for me. People with true saving faith have an active and interactive relationship with the Living God.

5. Biblical faith is an ongoing activity - a lifestyle.

Sadly, some wrongly believe that putting your faith in Jesus once is all that is necessary for salvation. This is not what is taught in the Bible. True biblical faith that saves someone perseveres and endures throughout one's life. Faith is an ongoing activity, like breathing, which once started permeates the entire duration of the Christian life. True followers are encouraged to continually walk in the faith (Acts 14:22). Following Jesus is a continual activity - all day everyday - an interpersonal interactive relationship. Those who's faith does not endure are in danger (Hebrew 10:39). We are called to be "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Hebrews 6:12; 12:1).

Application Questions:

- Can you think of any Bible passages that support or contradict this description of faith?
- What beliefs do you have that are barriers to receptive faith?
- What prevents you from exercising receptive faith?
- What are the probable psychological outcomes/benefits of receptive faith?
- What are the probable relational outcomes/benefits of receptive faith?

(Consider doctrines of adoption, humility, etc.)

If you want to believe but can't, stop looking inside; go to Jesus and say, "Help me believe." Go to him and say, "So you're the one who gives faith! I've been trying to work it out by reasoning and thinking and meditating and going to church in hopes that a sermon will move me—I've been trying to get faith by myself. Now I see that you're the source of faith. Please give it to me." If you do that, you'll find that Jesus has been seeking you—he's the author of faith, the provider of faith, and the object of faith. - Dr. Timothy Keller - Jesus The King p. 61