

I. **DEFINITIONS.**

- A. The best definition of faith is found in Hebrews 11:1:  
*Now faith is substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.*
- B. There are several words that can be used to describe faith:
  - 1. From Classical Literature-- to obey or to be persuaded.
  - 2. From the OT-- to trust or rely on.
  - 3. From the NT-- to be convinced or to be persuaded; to convince or to persuade; to believe.

II. **ACCORDING TO W. E. VINE.**

- A. Trust (Rom. 3:25; 1Cor. 2:5; 15:14,17; 2Cor. 1:24; Gal. 3:23; Phil. 1:25; 2:17; 1Th. 3:2; 2Th. 1:3; 3:2).
- B. Trustworthiness (Mt. 23:23; Rom. 3:3; Gal. 5:22; Titus 2:10)
- C. What is believed (Ac. 6:7; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 3:25; 6:10; Phil. 1:27; 1Th. 3:10; Jude v3,20).
- D. An assurance (Ac. 17:31).
- E. A pledge of fidelity (1Tim. 5:12).
- F. A firm conviction (2Th. 2:11,12).
- G. A personal surrender to Him (Jn. 1:12).
- H. Conduct inspired by such a surrender (2Cor. 5:7).

III. **THE BASIS OF FAITH.**

- A. To walk by faith does not mean to walk without proofs or evidence upon which one bases his/her faith.
- B. Our faith, as Xians, is based on proofs of the following nature:
  - 1. Revelation. The only way man comes to see into all things created or spiritual is by revelation of God. Man through his wisdom does not come to know God (1Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:17).
  - 2. Experience. The Bible teaches that a man is to come to know the truth through experience. By living the Xian life, experiencing what God has taught, we come to prove His will as right and good and in this way come to believe in it (Rom. 12:2).
  - 3. Experimentation. Closely related to this is the fact that through experimentation we come to believe. Knowledge comes through tasting and seeing that the Lord is good (Psa. 34:8).
  - 4. Evidence. Our faith is also based on evidence. Such evidence would include the teachings of Jesus, His miracles, His resurrection, fulfillment of prophecy, etc. (Ac. 10:36-43).
  - 5. Reason. The basis of faith may also be reason, in that through reason we find grounds for our faith. Paul, and other NT writers appealed to reason by stating an accepted fact and then drawing a conclusion (1Cor. 15:16).
  - 6. Testimony. The most often used basis of faith for all people is testimony. Courts of law rely on the testimony of witnesses to establish the facts of a case. Xians rely on the testimony of the apostles and other NT writers as a basis on which to believe (Jn. 20:31).

IV. **DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FAITH.**

Note this scripture, Mark 9:24.

A. **Parents' Faith.**

- 1. As children receive instruction, they build a foundation of basic Bible knowledge and patterns of living for their religious and social lives.
- 2. God expects parents and other adult Xians to reinforce this foundation with examples of obedience, devotion, and faith in their lives (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:6,7; Eph. 6:4).

B. **Borrowed Faith.**

1. A borrowed faith does not carefully scrutinize how the foundation of God's word impacts the religious and social lifestyle of the individual. It often functions as a rote or conditioned response.
2. For a child, this faith is fine, especially as he has parents to guide and show him how to live. But such rote responses usually frustrate adults.

**C. Creedal Faith.**

1. This faith recognized the value of Biblical facts and doctrines, upholding them as sacred. However, it still fails to come to grips with what the facts, doctrines and laws are all about.
2. Creedal faith tends to view the laws as laws for the sake of law. Many times adults will derive the law of teaching not from the Bible, but from respected people they have known.
3. Those with creedal faith often collapse when their respected and revered personages reveal their feet of clay by some heinous sin. Creedal faith often is not really faith in the Lord, but it is faith in a mere human.
4. Creedal faith tends to become the aloof, mechanical compliance to law. Creedal faith also raises its head where people argue for their misbehavior on the basis of heritage. Paul faced creedal faith when Judaizing teachers placed confidence in the flesh of circumcision (Gal. 6:12,13).
5. Creedal faith tends to argue: "This is the way we've always done it." Granted the practice may be exactly what the Lord wants, but we must render that practice because He wants it and not just because this is the way we have done it.

**D. Questioning Faith.**

1. This faith questions, scrutinizes, and even sometimes rebels. For obvious reasons, some refer to this as an adolescent faith. And as w/chronological adolescence when many teens disown their families and their values to which they have been exposed, many people fall away from the Lord and quit their religious sojourn.
2. When we honestly question our faith, we are asking for validation of what we believe.
3. Sadly, many people fail to find answers to their questions. Sometimes they fail to even look for answers. Satan has successfully marketed the idea that religion and faith are infantile and that real maturity demands jettisoning belief in God and His ways.
4. Other people look for answers in wrong places--emotionalism, psychology, experientialism, relativism, philosophy, science, etc. Not all of these disciplines are necessarily worthless, but they fail to provide the correct answers.
5. When a person begins to question their faith, a support group is extremely important. Too often, though, brethren are quick to scrutinize and condemn one who struggles w/his faith. Often those who are so quick to condemn never have seriously come to grips with the questioning phase. Their faith is still rooted in the creedal faith; hence, they are unable to sympathize with the struggle. They may criticize by saying, "If you would only study your Bible more, you would find the answers." Such quick terse answers do little to help the struggler through the test.
6. Successful passage through the questioning phase results in the mature faith when one can confidently claim, "This is my faith!"

**E. Maturing Faith.**

1. Trust, security, faithfulness, and joy accompany this level. The person with this faith recognizes that he may not be able to learn everything, but he can rest in the confidence that he knows and lives with the One who does.
2. Mature faith does not necessarily abandon all the other levels of development, but it puts them in perspective. Sometimes maturing faith will declare, "This is what God has said, I may not understand it, but I must follow it."

**V. KINDS OF FAITH.**

**A. Saving Faith.**

Saving faith is illustrated in Hebrews 11. The following are honored because they did their service for God on the basis of and by faith: Abel (11:4)... Enoch (11:5)... Noah (11:7)... Abraham (11:8,17)... Sarah (11:11)... etc. (Gal. 5:6; Jas. 2:21,22).

**B. Dead Faith.**

1. This is a faith without works or with belief only (Jas. 2:24,26; 2:19).
2. Some people fall away (have a dead, inactive faith) because their faith remains in one of the first two phases. For them Xianity, often appears burdensome, tedious and generally un-joyful. They also tend to need constant cajoling to worship with the Lord's people. They eventually find it is just as easy to quit the Lord as it is to serve Him.
3. Others who quit may have been victims of well-meaning but poorly informed brethren who failed to offer support when their faith was tried. So turning to some source for help, they often find the answers in all the wrong places and become embittered against the church.
4. Simply speaking this person publicly confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, but will not obey Him.

**C. Vain Faith.**

This kind of faith is described in 1Cor. 15:1,2,14,17.

**D. Obedient Faith.**

1. There are many accomplishments to an obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).
2. Notice the following about works:
  - a. Legal works or law-keeping cannot save because of the weakness of the flesh. For this to save it would require perfect obedience (Jas. 2:10; Rom. 3:20).
  - b. Meritorious works are those which earn forgiveness and man can "boast" of saving himself. For this to save man would have to have only good works, all the time (Rom. 3:10; 5:7,8).
  - c. Works of faith are the tests of our faith or conditions of faith by which we receive the gift of grace. What avails is "faith working in love" (Gal. 5:6).