

## How to Believe

- I. Faith is a necessary component for anyone who wishes to bring God pleasure.
  - a. Faith makes God's people "commendable" to Him (Heb. 11:2, 4-6, 16, 39).
  - b. We have the ability to AMAZE God by two things: our faith (Matt. 8:10), and our lack of faith (Mark 6:6).
  
- II. Faith is confidence in God to do what He said He would do.
  - a. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith with the words "assurance" and "certainty."
  - b. Abraham is said to have faith because he was "fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised" (Rom. 4:21).
  - c. Must we have "psychological certainty" in order to have faith?
    - i. Psychological certainty is the perfect knowledge that God will answer whatever we pray for.
    - ii. It is wonderful to have psychological certainty regarding things we pray for, however this is not required for us to have faith.
    - iii. Psychological certainty comes down to a question of "God can" vs. "God will." Fortunately, we have examples of Jesus' response to both scenarios in Scripture:
      1. In Matthew 8:2, a leper tells Jesus "If You are willing, You can make me clean," and his faith is rewarded (8:3).
      2. In Mark 9:22, the father of a demon-possessed boy says, "if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us." The man is rebuked for his lack of faith (Mark 9:23).
      3. These two examples reveal that faith is more an issue of God's ability than His willingness.
      4. With that said, the person of faith also understands that God is **normally willing** to answer our prayers out of sheer kindness (Matt. 7:9-11), and unanswered prayers are the exception, based on the sovereign wisdom of God (2 Cor. 12:7-10, 1 Jn. 5:14-15).
    - iv. The lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego display for us that when we lack psychological certainty about God's will, the proper way to exercise faith is to trust that He will likely deliver us, but even if He doesn't, He will act in accordance with His perfect wisdom (Dan. 3:16-18).
  
- III. We exercise faith by focusing our "spiritual eyes" upon Jesus.
  - a. We all have spiritual eyes with which we can see God's greatness (Matt. 13:13-15; 2 Cor. 4:4-5, 18; 5:7; Eph. 1:18).
  - b. Looking to God with our spiritual eyes is synonymous with having faith.

- i. Seeing IS believing (John 3:14-15).
    - ii. Following the most famous chapter on **faith** in the whole Bible (Hebrews 11), the author exhorts us to “fix our **eyes** on Jesus” (Heb. 12:2), indicating a connection between the two.
    - iii. Old Testament saints exercised their **faith** by focusing their spiritual **eyes** upon God and upon the rewards He offers those who trust Him (Heb. 11:9-10, 13-16, 23-27).
  - c. Unbelief is synonymous with spiritual blindness (Matt. 15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26; John 9:39; 2 Cor. 4:4).
  - d. Even believers see God’s greatness unclearly (1 Cor. 13:12), but we have a lifetime to develop our spiritual vision (Eph. 1:18).
  - e. We focus our spiritual eyes upon Jesus by directing the thoughts of our **mind** and the affections of our **heart** toward heavenly things.
    - i. The synonyms for “looking” to God in Heb. 11:14 are “thinking” (11:15) and “longing” (11:16). This means that the patriarchs exercised their faith (i.e., looked to God) by thinking with their **minds** about their heavenly reward in Christ, and then longing for it with their **hearts**.
    - ii. “[Instead of focusing your thoughts and affections upon man-made rules and limitations], **set your hearts on things above**, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things above**, not on earthly things” (Col. 3:1-2).
    - iii. Faith is not an accident that just happens to us by God’s grace; we have a choice and a responsibility to “take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).
  - f. Exercises of faith:
    - i. Set your cell phone alarm for every hour throughout the day, one day this week. When it goes off, take a few moments to think about heavenly things (Christ, His characteristics, heaven, our rewards, things we’re thankful for, Scripture memory, etc.)
    - ii. Imagine the fulfillment of what you are praying for. Every detail. Get that picture in your mind, and pray for it.
- IV. The test for all of our lives will be maintaining our gaze upon Jesus until the end of our race.
  - a. The Book of Hebrews was written largely to exhort Christians to persevere.
  - b. To persevere is to continue believing in God, to continue looking to Him for life, until our “race” (Heb. 12:1) is complete.
  - c. That race will include many obstacles (12:1-2), much opposition and weariness (12:3), and painful discipline (12:4-13). All of these will challenge our continual gaze upon Jesus.
  - d. Faith does not ignore impossibilities (Rom. 4:19); it sees them as trivial in light of God’s possibilities (Rom. 4:20-21; 2 Cor. 4:16-18).