

HIS STORY

Defining Faith

Before we look at how faith should work itself out in our lives, we should probably first define faith itself. It's no good pushing forward in a study of faith if we don't know what faith actually is.

► How would you define faith?

According to the author of Hebrews, faith is "the reality of" something which currently cannot be seen. This is why Paul said the Old Testament patriarchs were justified by their faith in the promise—a promise that had not been seen (Rom. 4). The Old Testament saints hadn't seen the object of their salvation (yet), but they trusted in God's promise to one day provide it—and He did in Jesus Christ.

► How does it affect you to know that even if you wanted to, you couldn't buy righteousness through your own works?

Examples of Faith

So it is faith alone, not our works, that justifies; however, this doesn't mean we don't work! We know that faith alone justifies, but we also know the faith that justifies is never alone. In other words, faith without works isn't really faith.

What is the place of works in the Christian life? Well, works aren't optional or random. The Bible says we were created for good works (Eph. 2:10), so Christians must work—it's part of our very purpose Christ-followers. Still, we have to see our good works in the revealing light of grace, together with the vital doctrine of "faith alone." We have to understand that our good works are not done to repay God for what He has done or for our own glory.

Enduring in Faith

What is it that can hold us back as we run and so easily ensnare (trap) us? The obvious answer is sin. When we take our eyes off of Jesus and fix our gaze on the world around us, we set ourselves up to fall (or even dive) into sin. Even sin that has been forgiven can be a crushing weight that will trip us up and hold us back.

Still, sin is not the only thing we need to be concerned about. Even good things can distract us from focusing on Jesus. The author of Hebrews says to focus our eyes on Him (12:2). Why did the author say this? I think it's because it's easy to pursue spiritual disciplines, religious efforts, and theological studies as the end game. We want to look more holy, be more knowledgeable, or seem more put together. This is not walking or running by faith at all; this is works-based self-righteousness.

► How does Jesus keeping His faith all the way to the cross encourage your faith?

Essential Doctrines

Faith: *Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by receiving Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith because it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.*

Leader Note: Because some content from the Personal Study Guide will not be available on the One Sheet, make sure to adapt the session based on how you use the material with your group.

