

Faith

11/05

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

Faith Defined

(Hebrews 11:1; James 2:17-25; Alma 32:21-22; AF #4)

01 – “...the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness...” (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 1:1)

02 – “As we have seen in our former lectures...**faith was the principle of action and of power in all intelligent beings**, both in heaven and on earth... we understand that when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force. It is by words, instead of by exerting his physical powers, with which every being works when he works by faith.” (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 7:2-3)

03 – “The terms faith and belief are sometimes regarded as synonyms; nevertheless each of them has a specific meaning in our language, although in earlier usage there was little distinction between them, and therefore the words are used interchangeably in many scriptural passages. Belief, in one of its accepted senses, may consist in a merely intellectual assent, while faith implies such confidence and conviction as will impel to action. Dictionary authority justifies us in drawing a distinction between the two, according to present usage in English; and this authority defines belief as a mental assent to the truth or actuality of anything, excluding, however, the moral element of responsibility through such assent, which responsibility is included by faith. Belief is in a sense passive, an agreement or acceptance only; faith is active and positive, embracing such reliance and confidence as will lead to works. Faith in Christ comprises belief in Him, combined with trust in Him. One cannot have faith without belief; yet he may believe and still lack faith. Faith is vivified, vitalized, living belief.” (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pg. 87-88)

04 – “**Faith makes us confident of what we hope for and convinced of what we do not see.**” (Howard W. Hunter, *Ensign*, November 1974, pg. 97)

05 – “**You exercise faith by causing, or by making, your mind accept or believe as truth that which you cannot, by reason alone, prove for certainty.**” (Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, November 1994, pg. 60)

Principles and Prerequisites of Faith

(Alma 32:13-42; Ether 12:6; D&C 63:7-12)

Humility – Alma 32:13-19

06 – “**God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble.** Alma said, “Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble.” (Alma 32:16)

Let us choose to be humble.

We can choose to humble ourselves by **conquering enmity** toward our brothers and sisters, esteeming them as ourselves, and lifting them as high or higher than we are. (D&C 38:24; D&C 81:5; D&C 84:10)

We can choose to humble ourselves by **receiving counsel and chastisement**. (Jacob 4:10; Hel. 15:3; D&C 63:55; D&C 101:4-5; D&C 108:1; D&C 124:61, 84; D&C 136:31; Prov. 9:8)

We can choose to humble ourselves by **forgiving** those who have offended us. (3 Ne. 13:11, 14; D&C 64:10)

We can choose to humble ourselves by **rendering selfless service**. (Mosiah 2:16B17)

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We can choose to humble ourselves by **going on missions** and preaching the word that can humble others. (Alma 4:19; Alma 31:5; Alma 48:20)

We can choose to humble ourselves by **getting to the temple** more frequently.

We can choose to humble ourselves by **confessing and forsaking our sins** and being born of God. (D&C 58:43; Mosiah 27:25-26; Alma 5:7-14, 49)

We can choose to humble ourselves by **loving God, submitting our will to His**, and putting Him first in our lives. (3 Ne. 11:11; 3 Ne. 13:33; Moro. 10:32)

Let us choose to be humble.” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1989, pg. 7)

07 – “Although faith is called the first principle of the Gospel of Christ, though it be in fact the foundation of religious life, yet even faith is preceded by sincerity of disposition and humility of soul, whereby the word of God may make an impression upon the heart. No compulsion is used in bringing men to a knowledge of God; yet, as fast as we open our hearts to the influences of righteousness, the faith that leads to life eternal will be given us of our Father. (James E. Talmage *Articles of Faith*, pg. 97)

08 – “Why is it so difficult to accept things on faith? I think I can suggest an answer. It is because we are so conceited. Men of the world are in the world only because they adopt the philosophy of the world, which is the philosophy of self-sufficiency. It is not a humble philosophy-it is highly egotistical. It makes men themselves the arbiters of all things. They look to no higher source than themselves for the solution of all questions.

...I think that altogether too often we permit thinking complexes and sophisticated reasoning to warp our intuitive judgment and entammel the spontaneous feelings and emotions of our souls. **So, when I prescribe that acceptance of Christ as a condition of orthodoxy, I mean acceptance without reservation – a whole-souled intelligent, joyous acceptance of him that proclaims him Lord, Savior, Redeemer and Mediator with the Father and lays claim on his mercy, his grace and his love for all the finer things we know in life.** What hope – what peace and satisfaction such a full acceptance of the Christ brings to the heart of man, only those who have received a testimony of Jesus will ever know.” (Stephen L. Richards, *CR*, April 1935, pg. 30-31)

Founded in the Future – Joshua 3:13-17; Ether 3:9-11

09 – “Knowledge is related to the past because our experiences of the past are those things which give us knowledge but faith is related to the future – to the unknown where we have not yet walked...There many things which are invisible to our senses and not subject to positive proof. The scientific approach to proof is by experimentation in the laboratory. The result of this scientific method has a greater influence upon our thinking than we realize, because it produces positive proof resulting in knowledge. We cannot overlook the great good this approach by science has upon the lives of persons, but how about those things which lie outside of the realm of positive, tangible proof? This question brings us to the **higher law**...to those who are touched by the Spirit, faith will stand in the place of such evidence of things unseen... Faith...gives one an assurance or a **confidence in things which are yet in the future**...Faith gives a feeling of confidence in that which is not visible or susceptible of positive proof...Those who lose or lack faith, live in the past – there is loss of hope for the future.” (Howard W. Hunter, *CR*, October 1962, pg. 22-24)

10 – “Faith to be faith, must center around something that is not known. Faith, to be faith, must go beyond that for which there is confirming evidence. Faith, to be faith, must go into the unknown. Faith, to be faith, must walk to the edge of the light, and then a few **steps** into the darkness. If everything has to be known, if everything has to be explained, if everything has to be certified, then there is no need for faith. Indeed, there is no room for it.” (Boyd K. Packer, *Faith*, pg. 42)

Based in Truth – 1 Nephi 10:17; Alma 32:21; AF #4

11 – “Faith as so defined is not saving faith; it does not lead to life and salvation; an assurance that crops will grow is not an assurance of a celestial inheritance. Saving faith centers in the Lord Jesus Christ and through him in the Father.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, pg. 164)

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12 – “Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

First, the idea that he actually exists.

Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes.

Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will.

For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and **glory** of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 3:2-5)

13 – “We have, in the revelations which he has given to the human family, the following account of his attributes:

1- Knowledge

2- Faith or Power

3- Justice

4- Judgment

5- Mercy

6- Truth

By a little reflection it will be seen that the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity is necessary to enable any rational being to exercise faith in him; for without the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity men could not exercise faith in him for life and salvation; seeing that without the knowledge of all things God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures; for it is by reason of the knowledge which he has of all things, from the beginning to the end, that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life, and if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God had all knowledge it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him.” (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 4:4-11)

14 – “**In him [God] the principle of faith dwells independently, and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings centers for life and salvation.**” (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 2:2)

Trial of Your Faith – Ether 12:6; D&C 63:7-11

15 – “**Faith must be tested. Some become bitter when oft-repeated prayers seem unanswered. Some lose faith and turn sour when solemn administrations by holy men seem to be ignored and no restoration seems to come from repeated prayer circles. But if all the sick were healed, if all the righteous were protected and the wicked destroyed, the whole program of the Father would be annulled and the basic principle of the gospel, free agency, would be ended...** If pain and sorrow and total punishment immediately followed the doing of evil, no soul would repeat a misdeed. If joy and peace and rewards were instantaneously given the doer of good, there could be no evil—all would do good and not because of the rightness of doing good. There would be no test of strength, no development of character, no growth of powers, no free agency...There would also be an absence of joy, success, resurrection, eternal life, and godhood.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pg. 77)

16 – “There are two kinds of faith. One of them functions ordinarily in the life of every soul. It is the kind of faith born by experience; it gives us certainty that a new day will dawn, that spring will come, that growth will take place. It is the kind of faith that relates us with confidence to that which is scheduled to happen...

There is another kind of faith, rare indeed. This is the kind of faith that causes things to happen. It is the kind of faith that is worthy and **prepared** and unyielding, and it calls forth things that otherwise would not be. It is the kind of faith that moves people. It is the kind of faith that sometimes moves things. Few men possess it. It comes by gradual growth. It is a marvelous, even a transcendent, power, a power as real and as invisible as electricity. Directed and channeled, it has great effect.

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But faith must be faith. One man tried ‘experimenting’ with faith. He had spoken of his certainty that an event would transpire, and his desires were not brought to pass; the event he so much yearned for did not happen. Afterward, his bitter comment was, ‘Well, you see, it didn’t happen. I didn’t think it would.’

In a world filled with skepticism and doubt, the expression ‘seeing is believing’ promotes the attitude, ‘You show me, and I will believe.’ We want all of the proof and all of the evidence first. It seems hard to take things on faith.

When will we learn that in spiritual things it works the other way about, that believing is seeing? Spiritual belief precedes spiritual knowledge. When we believe in things that are not seen but are nevertheless true, then we have faith.” (Boyd K. Packer, *Faith*, pg. 42-43)

17 – “Signs may ‘have the effect of strengthening the faith of those who are already spiritually inclined, but their chief purpose is not to convert people to the truth, but to reward and bless those already converted.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pg. 713)

18 – “...that principle is eternal, undeviating, and firm as the pillars of heaven; for whenever you see a man seeking after a sign, you may set it down that he is an adulterous man.” (Joseph Smith, *TPJS*, pg. 157)

19 – “When I was preaching in Philadelphia, a Quaker called out for a sign. I told him to be still. After the sermon, he again asked for a sign. I told the congregation the man was an adulterer; that a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and that the Lord had said to me in a revelation, that any man who wanted a sign was an adulterous person. ‘It is true,’ cried one, ‘for I caught him the very act,’ which the man afterwards confessed when he was baptized.” (Joseph Smith, *TPJS*, pg. 278)

20 – “When the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was first founded, you could see persons rise up and ask, ‘What signs will you show us that we may be made to believe?’ I recollect a Campbellite preacher who came to Joseph Smith... and said that he had come a considerable distance to be convinced of the truth. ‘Why,’ said he, ‘Mr. Smith, I want to know the truth, and when I am convinced, I will spend all my talents and time defending and spreading the doctrines of your religion, and I will give you to understand that to convince me is equivalent to convincing all my society, amounting to several hundreds.’ Well, Joseph commenced laying before him the coming forth of the work, and the first principles of the Gospel, when [the minister] exclaimed, ‘O this is not the evidence I want to see some powerful manifestation of the power of God, I want to see a notable miracle performed; and if you perform such a one, then I will believe with all my heart and soul, and will exert all my power and all my extensive influence to convince others; and if you will not perform a miracle of this kind, then I am your worst and bitterest enemy.’ ‘Well,’ said Joseph, ‘what will you have done? Will you be struck blind, or dumb? Will you be paralyzed, or will you have one hand withered? Take your choice, choose which you please, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ it shall be done.’ ‘That is not the kind of miracle that I want,’ said the preacher. ‘Then sir,’ replied Joseph, ‘I can perform none, I am not going to bring any trouble upon any body else, sir, to convince you.’” (George A Smith, *JD*, 2:326)

21 – “...a visitation of an angel... would not leave the impression” that we “... receive through a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. Personal visitation might become dim as time goes on, but this guidance of the Holy Ghost is rewarded and continued, day after day, year after year, if we live to be worthy of it.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *DS*, 1:44)

Hearing the Word – Luke 8:11; Romans 10:17; Mosiah 5:1-4; Alma 32: 22, 26-43; Helaman 15:7-8; D&C 18:34-36

22 – “Faith comes by hearing the word of God through the testimony of the servants of God.” (Joseph Smith, *TPJS*, pg. 148)

23 – “When I read a verse...I am hearing the voice of the Lord as well as reading his words, if I hear by the Spirit.” (S. Dilworth Young, *CR*, April 1963, pg. 74)

24 – “In this brilliant discourse, Alma moves the reader from a general commentary on faith in the seedlike ‘word of God’ to a focused discourse on faith in Christ as the ‘Word of God’; grown to a fruit bearing tree...” (Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, pg. 169)

7 Levels of Faith

According to the Scriptural Text

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| 1 - Particle of Faith (Alma 32:27) | = | Heart swells; Understanding; Enlightened |
| 2 - Much Faith (Mosiah 27:14) | = | Prayers Answered; Strengthened (Alma 2:30) |
| 3 - Strong Faith (Alma 7:17) | = | Joy; Peace; Angels (Moroni 7:30) |
| 4 - Mighty Faith (Alma 13:18) | = | Brings souls to repentance |
| 5 - Exceeding Faith (Mosiah 4:3) | = | Born Again; Blessings of God (Alma 60:26); See the Lord (Ether 3:9, Alma 19:10); Fullness of the priesthood (Alma 13:10); Work mighty miracles (2 Nephi 3:24) |
| 6 - Exceedingly Great Faith (Moroni 10:11) | = | All things expedient; Foreordained (Alma 13:3) |
| 7 - Perfect Faith (2 Nephi 9:23) | = | Saved in God's Kingdom |

Forming Faith

(Alma 32:26-43)

25 – “Faith precedes the miracle. In faith we plant the seed, and soon we see the miracle of the blossoming. Men have often misunderstood and have reversed the process. They would have the harvest before the planting, the reward before the service, the miracle before the faith. Even the most demanding labor unions would hardly ask the wages before the labor. But many of us would have the vigor without the observance of the health laws, prosperity through the opened windows of heaven without the payment of our tithes. We would have the close communion with our Father without fasting and praying; we would have rain in due season and peace in the land without observing the Sabbath and keeping the other commandments of the Lord. We would pluck the rose before planting the roots; we would harvest the grain before sowing and cultivating...

It takes faith – unseeing faith – for young people to proceed immediately with their family responsibilities in the face of financial uncertainties. It takes faith for the young woman to bear her family instead of accepting employment, especially when schooling for the young husband is to be finished. It takes faith to observe the Sabbath when "time and a half" can be had working, when sales can be made, when merchandise can be sold. It takes a great faith to pay tithes when funds are scarce and demands are great. It takes faith to fast and have family prayers and to observe the Word of Wisdom. It takes faith to do home teaching, stake missionary work, and other service, when sacrifice is required. It takes faith to fill foreign missions. But know this – that all these are of the planting, while faithful devout families, spiritual security, peace, and eternal life are the harvests.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pg. 54)

26 – “The mere desire to obtain faith will not bring faith any more than the desire to be skilled in music or painting will bring proficiency in these things without intelligent action.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *CES Address*, July 24, 1934)

27 – “The Lord expects you and me...to do...all we can that lies within our power before we seek spiritual help... Brigham Young came to a home of some people who were ill, they were troubled with some kind of intestinal disorder. He said to the mother, ‘Have you taken any herbs?’ And she replied, ‘Oh, no, Brother Brigham, I have faith that if you lay your hands upon my head I won’t need any herbs or medicine.’ ...He pointed out through the window to a vacant piece of property and he said ‘**You might as well expect the Lord to cause wheat and corn to grow on that bare ground**

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without you ever plowing or planting as to expect the Lord to do something for you that you know what to do for yourself without you putting first the effort.” (Harold B. Lee, *BYU-Speeches*, 1956, pg. 5-6)

28 – “The prophet Alma presents an excellent explanation of the progressive steps by which one proceeds in his search for truth from a desire to experiment upon the words of the Lord to the ‘exercise [of] a particle of faith, yea, even . . . no more than [a] desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion’ of the words of the Lord; then by spiritual processes within one’s own soul his knowledge and testimony is made ‘perfect in that thing, and [his] faith is dormant. . .’ (Alma 32:27, 34.)

As one reads this whole text, he finds clearly prescribed the way by which all may receive a testimony or ‘knowledge by revelation’ as defined above: **first, desire; second, belief; third, faith; fourth, knowledge or testimony.**” (Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye In Holy Places*, pg.194)

29 – “...In the system of salvation, works follow faith, and faith follows evidence and evidence accompanies the revealed truth. For instance, God reveals the great and sublime truths contained in the Book of Mormon. Next, He sends evidence sufficient to convince mankind of the divine authenticity of these truths. Thirdly, this evidence produces faith in the minds of those who candidly and carefully examine it. Fourthly, this faith will lead the honest to do the works required of them in that book. And lastly, through the atonement of Christ, these faith and works combined together, will surely save them in the kingdom of God.” (Orson Pratt, *Lectures of Faith, True Religion*)

30 – Six Ways to Build your Faith (Ezra Taft Benson, *CN*, September 28,1986):

- 1 - Increase Love at Home
- 2 - Personal Prayer
- 3 - Study the Book of Mormon
- 4 - Attend the Temple
- 5 - Magnify Your Church Calling
- 6 - Perform Acts of Service

Accounts of Faith

(Hebrews 11; Ether 12)

31 – “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

“By this we understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him.” (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 1:14-15)

32 – “As faith, then, is the principle by which the heavenly hosts perform their works, and by which they enjoy all their felicity, we might expect to find it set forth in a revelation from God as the principle upon which his creatures here below must act in order to obtain the felicities enjoyed by the saints in the eternal world; and that, when God would undertake to raise up men for the enjoyment of himself, he would teach them the necessity of living by faith, and the impossibility there was of their enjoying the blessedness of eternity without it.” (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 7:6)