Let's Talk About: Faith and Belief

Do you believe in God? Why?

It is important to believe in God. It is also important to have faith. This may make you wonder if there's a difference between belief and faith.

Let's Define

Definitions would be helpful to understand these two terms and how they relate to one another. The dictionary defines belief as the "mental act, condition, or habit of placing trust or confidence in another." On the other hand, faith is the "assent of the mind to the truth of what is declared by another, resting solely and implicitly on his authority and veracity; reliance on testimony."

While these two terms may be used interchangeably, there is a difference between them. Belief is when you accept that something is true. To begin this lesson, you are asked if you believe in God. To believe in God means that you believe that God is real. That He exists. Faith, on the other hand, is having confidence in what someone else has said or done. It is the reliance upon the testimony or authority of another. Can a person have belief and not faith?

Absolutely. For example, one can believe that there is God but not have faith that God would care about him or her or be willing to do something for him or her, despite what God proclaims in the Bible.

Let's return to our original question. Do you believe in God? If so, why do you believe?

Now let's ask about your faith. Do you have faith that God forgives your sins?

Do you have faith that God loves you?

God's Authority

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that "**faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**" The Greek word for "faith" is πίστις (pistis) which means "moral conviction, reliance upon." In other words, faith is the reliance upon the hope and assurances of things that we do not see but have been told or have read. So, what has God promised to you? What are the assurances that you should place your hope in?

Read 1 John 5:13. What does God promise in this verse?

This is a great example of the difference between belief and faith. Explain what God asks you to believe in this verse? What does He ask you to have faith in?

God promises to forgive your sins. Now read 1 John 1:9. What assurance does God provide? Do you have faith in that assurance?

God assures us that if we confess our sins, He will forgive us.

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The Hall of Fame of Faith

Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the "Hall of Fame of Faith." The Bible provides examples of incredible men and women of faith and how that faith was lived out. Read some of these examples and explain how each person lived out his or her faith?

Moving from Belief to Faith

Each of these people believed in God. They all likely believed that God could do miraculous things. However, there were times when their faith did not align with their belief. Hebrews 11:11 tells us that Sarah had faith that God would give her children eventhough she was "past childbearing age." That was not always true, however. Read Genesis 18:12-15. Did Sarah always have faith?

These verses explained that she had doubts. She even laughed at the promise of God. To be honest, it is quite easy to believe in what God says and what the Bible tells us about Him. However, believing is not enough. We are called to have faith in what God says about Himself and what He will do.

Think about a recent crisis. Did you believe that God could help you through that trial? Do you have faith that He would?

The truth is that many of us pray in belief but not in faith. We pray, knowing that God can do amazing things, but don't believe that He is likely going to act in a way that benefits us or resolves our situations. Do you find yourself praying this way?

Sometimes this can seem confusing. Read Matthew 21:22. This verse says that if I am "believing" in what I pray for, I will receive it. The confusion arises because the word translated as "believing" is πιστεύω (pisteuo), which comes from the word πίστις. This word means "to have faith in, to entrust oneself or put one's trust in." Sadly, belief is a poor choice of words. This is a complete trust in God that He will deliver and provide for us. Do you approach God asking for things in faith?

You Must Have Faith

Return to Hebrews 11:6. What does this verse tell us that we must believe in?

This verse tells us that we must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Do you believe that is true?

Now, do you have faith that God rewards you for putting your trust in Him?

If you don't, this verse tells us that it is impossible to please God. We must move from a point of believing in the words of the Bible to having faith in what it says.

Where are you struggling to have faith in the assurances that God provides?

Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:6 - **And 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.**

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