

DO I HAVE
THE RIGHT
KIND OF
FAITH?

DO I HAVE THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH?

Is it possible to have the wrong kind of faith? Or is it enough just to believe in something? And if that's the case, isn't one religious idea just as good as another? After all, like the peanut butter commercial says, "Everybody believes in something."

What does the Bible say? To answer these questions, our staff of writers has put together this book to show that there is only one faith that will stand the test of time.

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THAT'S FAITH!

Calmly and confidently, the scientist explains that the universe is billions and billions of years old and that it all started with a Big Bang. As he flashes pictures of faraway galaxies and planets, he gives many interesting facts. But when he assures his listeners that it all began by mere chance, he expresses a belief for which he has no scientific proof. *He has faith in his assumptions.*

Dressed in an end-of-the-world robe, a young woman stands patiently beside the road. She is trying to sell roses to uninterested drivers as they stop for a red light. She smiles, and without complaint she goes about her simple life of peddling flowers. She gives up yet another day of her life to a cultic leader who claims that God told him he is the Messiah. *She has faith in her leader.*

The dust of another hot midday swirls around hundreds of figures as they bow reverently and humbly toward their holy city. Fanatically devoted to the religion of their ancestors, these people

of Middle East heritage pause three times every day to pray to the one they call Allah. *They have faith in Allah.*

The sophisticated crusader zealously campaigns for man to put his trust in man. He calls for an end to the restrictive forces of religion and God. He pleads his case for freedom from absolute morals and from the promise of eternal consequences for sin. He says that man and man alone brings progress into this world. *He has faith in man.*

Candles light the room like miniature lanterns, casting a wavering glow over the tiny religious figurines on the shelf. Day after day, the elderly woman who worships at this mini-shrine devotes herself to rituals she was taught many years before. Unobserved by the outside world, she prays for her deceased husband's soul. *She has faith in her religion.*

The housewife gets into her car, puts the key in the ignition, and turns it. Without even giving it a second thought, she starts the car. She stops to pick up the cleaning, sure that her garments have been taken care of. She stops at the grocery store on the way home and purchases three cans of tomato soup, two loaves of bread, and a package of hot dogs, trusting that each of these items is perfectly safe to eat. Back home she picks up the phone and dials, never thinking that the mechanism might not work. She performs hundreds of acts like that every day. *She has faith.*

faith (fath) *n.* **1.** A confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing. **2.** Belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence. **3.** Loyalty to a person or thing; allegiance. **4. a.** Belief and trust in God. **b.** Religious conviction. **5.** A system of religious beliefs. **6.** A set of principles or beliefs.

FAITH: RIGHT AND WRONG

What makes a faith right? With all these voices calling for us to trust their messages, how can we know which one to listen to? Buying peanut butter is one thing--it may not really make that much difference which one you put your trust in. But it may make a difference when you're choosing an investment counselor or a heart surgeon. It certainly could make a difference when you're selecting a parachute. Or when you're deciding what to believe in as you confront the issue of life after death.

The rightness or wrongness of faith is determined by its object--by what you believe in.

- Right faith is not just a warm, secure feeling.
- Right faith is not a blind, wild, irrational hope.
- Right faith is not an end in itself.
- Right faith is not based on one's imagination.

The conclusion, therefore, is this: *The rightness of faith is determined by its object!* Your faith is right if you put your trust in the right thing.

For centuries, people have struggled with this matter of faith. They have made some tragic mistakes by trusting in people and things that failed them. Like the passengers on the *Titanic* or the followers of cultic leader Jim Jones, they have had the wrong faith.

But all too often that's what man does. All too often he doesn't know who or what to trust in.

THE WRONG KIND OF FAITH

People will always believe in something. Yet, as we have just seen, they often put their faith in the wrong thing--something not worthy of their trust and allegiance. This was true when the pagans of past ages invented their own gods of wood and stone, and it is true in our age of mushrooming scientific knowledge and astounding technological achievements.

Today man turns in many different directions in an attempt to find the right thing to believe in. Unfortunately, he usually winds up putting his faith in himself and in his own methods, philosophies, and systems of belief.

When it comes down to the final analysis, the wrong kind of faith is faith that is resting on man. This is wrong because man is finite in his understanding, limited in his power, and sinful by nature. The above diagram represents the instability of faith that has man as its object.

In the following pages, we will be looking at some common examples of the wrong kind of faith: faith in *humanism*, faith in *escapism*, faith in *occultism*, faith in *mysticism*, faith in *sacramentalism*, faith in *legalism*, faith in *selfism*, and faith in *universalism*.

FAITH IN HUMANISM

One of man's wrong objects of faith is himself. Humanism, the modern expression of man's belief in man, has its roots in the Renaissance. The rediscovery of Aristotle, a renewed interest in the arts, the spirit of exploration, improvements in farming techniques, and the decline of the feudal system brought mankind a surge of confidence. Alberti expressed the new thinking when he wrote, "A man can do all things if he will." Müller continued the thought when he said, "We see the future of man as one of his own making."

We have witnessed a revival of man's belief in man during the past quarter of a century. The 1960s were years of great accomplishments. Diseases like polio were conquered, and we landed a man on the moon. John F. Kennedy, expressing the spirit of the age, said confidently, "All man's problems were created by man and can be solved by man."

Humanism rests on the conviction that man's intellect as he uses the scientific method can bring solutions to all his problems and answers to all his questions. Man needs no outside help. He has in himself all the resources he needs. Moreover, humanism says that things will continue to get better and better. Some kind of cosmic force which lies behind evolution guarantees continued progress.

Humanistic futurists focus on the year 2000 as the year we will enter a millennial-like state. Their hope in a worldwide paradise is based on a number of factors:

- Interplanetary travel
- Space stations
- Genetic engineering
- Global communication
- Ocean exploration
- Medical advances
- Futuristic housing
- Solar energy

B. F. Skinner expressed the hope of the futurists when he wrote, "We have not yet seen what man can make of man."

However, along with the great triumphs of man come terrible suffering and grievous injustice. The cruelty of our civilized world, which produced the Nazi concentration camps, is still with us. Crime rates keep rising all over the world. The number of teenage suicides is escalating. The contrast between the overfed rich and the starving poor becomes increasingly pronounced. The tension of living in a world in which a madman could start a nuclear war increases. Drug abuse, venereal disease, abortion, and other social evils continue to become more and more of a problem.

Man's moral development certainly isn't keeping pace with his growing scientific knowledge and power. Therefore, some of the men who have adopted the humanistic approach to life are now full of gloom and despair. Consider this quote, found in the *Russell/Einstein Manifesto*: "We have found that the men who know the most [about the future] are the most gloomy."

Koestler recently wrote, "Nature has let us down. God seems to have left the receiver off the hook, and time is running out."

Humanism is not realistic. Man's unbounded confidence in himself is unwarranted. As a result, humanists must either engage in wishful thinking or become totally pessimistic, or they must step outside their belief system and talk about a "cosmic intelligence" that will somehow guide things to a proper conclusion.

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in humanism is wrong faith: Psalm 39:5-6; 49:6-7; 118:8; 144:3-4; 146:3; Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 17:5-8; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Timothy 6:17.

FAITH IN ESCAPISM

A second wrong object of faith is escapism, the belief that we can find peace and solace in the make-believe world of alcohol and drugs. An increasing number of people, young and old, are using artificial means to escape the reality of life and to seek comfort in an unreal world.

Alcohol abuse is widespread, and those who misuse it are inflicting terrible harm on themselves, their loved ones, and society.

Consider these facts:

- There are more than 20 millions alcoholics in the U.S.
- More than 1 million are injured by drunk drivers every year.
- More than 25 thousand are killed by drunk drivers every year.
- 80 percent of fire deaths are alcohol related.
- 65 percent of drownings are alcohol related.
- 30 percent of suicides are alcohol related.
- 65 percent of murders are alcohol related.
- 35 percent of rapes are alcohol related.
- 55 percent of assaults in the home are alcohol related.
- 60 percent of child abuse instances are alcohol related.

The young are afflicted in increasing numbers. Since 1980, 5 million teenagers have been treated for alcoholism. Many times it begins as early as age 11 or 12. Some 8- and 9-year-olds are alcoholics. The youngest alcoholic treated in the U.S. was 3 years old, and a surprising number become alcoholics at ages 5 and 6.

Drug abuse is also at an epidemic level. Cocaine, marijuana, mescaline, LSD, and many others are used to escape reality, to avoid the fear of death, to dream utopian dreams, and to fade into mental and emotional oblivion.

Alcohol and drugs are the wrong objects of faith. The artificial realities they create are not real, last only a short time, and are increasingly disappointing. Sometimes the "trips" are bad, producing suicide attempts, insanity, and wild psychological terror.

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in escapism is wrong faith: Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-33; Isaiah 5:11; 28:7; Luke 21:34; Romans 13:13-14; Ephesians 5:18.

FAITH IN OCCULTISM

A third wrong object of faith for many people is the world of the occult. A surprising percentage are turning to spiritism or even Satanism in this enlightened age. A recent newspaper article gave the account of a teenage boy who was found hanged on his closet door, his unclothed body surrounded by occultic objects and two black candles burning in the room. Police continue to report the discovery of slain animals in remote areas that appear to have been sacrifices on satanic altars. They suspect as well that the mysterious disappearances of vagrants and prostitutes may be linked in occultic rites requiring human sacrifice.

Several factors have contributed to the growth of the occult:

- *The death of rationalism.* Man sees the inadequacy of reason, so he goes outside of it.
- *Our preoccupation with the unknown.*
- *The influence of Eastern religions.*
- *Occult publicity through movies and books.*

- *Escapism.* A person can avoid the complexities and responsibilities of modern life by going to an astrologer or clairvoyant.
- *The reality of the supernatural world.*

Satan and his demonic forces are real. We should therefore expect some people to turn to the occult as an alternative to belief in God. This is done in the following three ways:

Superstition: This form of occultism is most evident in practices such as selecting a lottery number or rolling dice. A basketball coach who always wears the same, "lucky sport coat," or a professional baseball player who never steps on the foul line when coming off the field, are in the same category.

Spiritism: This belief says that the dead can be contacted and can communicate with the living. Mediums may be consulted in every major city in the United States today.

Satanism: In some areas, Satan himself is worshiped. A Church of Satan operates in San Francisco, and the "church of Antichrist" has several branches. The names of some popular rock groups and the words of many of their songs reflect their satanic influence.

Satan is real. To deny his existence would be to deny the Bible. When the Lord Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He demonstrated how we should act toward the devil. When Satan demanded worship, the Savior replied, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Mt. 4:10).

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in occultism is wrong faith: Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:6,27; Isaiah 8:19-22; 47:12-14; Matthew 4:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:20-22; Revelation 21:8; 22:15.

FAITH IN MYSTICISM

A fourth false system of belief to which many people hold today is mysticism. They speak of a supreme power rather than a supreme being. They believe that this supreme power is part of everything and in everything, including themselves. They use prayers, chants, and incantations to put themselves in harmony with this supreme power. They may give themselves to meditation, self-denial, and fasting, and may even engage in painful rites and ceremonies. Through these means they try to purge themselves of the physical world, which they believe is a lesser reality, so that they may become one with the higher reality of the invisible world.

Mysticism is rooted in Eastern thought. Because it denies the self, it tends toward fatalism. Its followers often feel an overwhelming sense of worthlessness and view the loss of personal conscious existence as an ideal state.

Paul warned of the dangers of mysticism when he wrote:

Let no man defraud you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind (Col. 2:18).

The mystic denies self and thus denies the possibility of personal salvation. Yet with all his vaunted humility, his problem is his own "fleshly mind"-- his refusal to submit to God as He has revealed Himself in Christ.

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in mysticism is wrong faith; Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Corinthians 2:7-16; Colossians 2:18,23.

FAITH IN SACRAMENTALISM

A fifth wrong object of faith for a growing number of people is sacramentalism. They believe that by participating in a series of religious rituals they receive God's grace. They speak of a sacrament as "a visible symbol of invisible grace."

Sacramentalism arose during the Middle Ages and was developed by the Scholastics. Thomas Aquinas said that the sacraments have virtue in themselves. They are therefore seen as channels of grace and are administered by a priest. The participant receives righteousness by using them.

The church has long practiced two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, as commanded in the Bible. It was probably inevitable that some would mistakenly give these ordinances the same spiritual power as the written Word of God. The Roman Catholic church gave these two ordinances sacramental force and added five others: confirmation, penance, extreme unction, ordination, and marriage.

The Seven Sacraments

1. *Baptism*: thought to be the door to the Kingdom of God and to the other sacraments.
2. *Confirmation*: thought to complete what baptism begins and to confer grace in ever-increasing strength.
3. *Eucharist*: believed to confer the food of spiritual life in the body and blood of Christ.

4. *Penance*: said to remove the guilt of daily sin as baptism is said to remove the guilt of original sin.
 5. *Extreme Unction*: said to heal the soul of sins that are not remitted by penance.
 6. *Ordination*: said to empower a person to administer the sacraments.
 7. *Marriage*: thought to make the union of man and woman perpetual and bring it into harmony with the picture of Christ and the church.
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The Bible, however, teaches us that salvation is by grace through faith, and faith alone. Paul declared, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). He also wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

The idea that sacraments convey God's grace to us is foreign to the New Testament. Baptism is presented clearly as a symbol of our union with Jesus Christ through faith (Rom. 6:1-5), and the Lord's Supper is shown to be a simple memorial (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-34).

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in sacramentalism is wrong faith: Isaiah 1:11-15; Jeremiah 6:20; Hosea 8:13; Mark 12:33.

FAITH IN LEGALISM

A sixth false object of faith for many people is their own good works. People like to think that they can please God by their own efforts. It may be something as simple as giving up smoking, or something as self-sacrificing as giving everything away. Some people think that if they obey a long list of do's and don'ts they will impress God with their sincerity. In any case, legalism is a religion of human achievement. It is man trying to earn salvation by something he does.

The Pharisees were extreme legalists. They added hundreds of minute regulations to the Mosaic law and tried to get others to live by them. At the same time, they were fiercely proud of the righteousness they felt they had earned because of their meticulous obedience to all the regulations. But Jesus firmly denounced these men. He publicly rebuked them for putting their laws and regulations above the people. He showed them that God receives sinners who come to Him humbly, but He rejects the proud who place confidence in their good works.

Some converts to the Christian faith in the early church, still influenced by their background in Judaism, thought that the apostles should require the circumcision of Gentile believers (Acts 15:1). Others felt that salvation was still linked to the observances of the Jewish dietary regulations. The church council under the leadership of James, however, made it clear that legalistic rules were not to be imposed on Gentile believers. And the apostle Paul repeatedly rebuked those who were trying to mix law-keeping with the gospel of God's grace. In Colossians 2:16-17 he wrote, "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things

to come, but the substance is of Christ" (see also Rom. 14; Gal. 1--3).

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in legalism is wrong faith: Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 23:1-36; Galatians 2:16; 5:1; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:8-9; Colossians 2:16; Titus 3:5.

FAITH IN SELFISM

A seventh wrong faith for many people today is a broad category which may be called "selfism." It may have a number of different labels--"positive thinking," "possibility thinking," "New-Age thinking," or "holistic teaching." All of these faith systems are alike in that they speak about a powerful spiritual force within us, which we can tap if we only know how to get to it. A prominent New-Age promoter, Shirley MacLaine, has written, "Each person is a universe. If you know yourself, you know everything."

This concept of a divine force in us and around us is so vague that it allows for a great deal of diversity of belief. Some people dabble in astrology as their means of getting in touch with this all-pervading force. Others try to do so through mood-altering drugs. Holistic healing supporters say that we can tap this same all-permeating power within us through dieting, biofeedback, hypnotism, or mind-control. Educators who refer to an "inner self" may promote yoga, centering, fantasy, imaging, and similar techniques as the means by which this force can be used to develop human potential. The term *selfism*, then, applies to the faith of those who see a divine power residing within man waiting to be used.

Sad to say, some people who claim to be evangelicals have fallen into a form of selfism. Although they refer to a personal God

instead of an impersonal, all-pervading force, they seem to advocate the same method of getting to this God. They tell us that we can use the force of our intellect, with divine help, to eliminate all negative thoughts from our minds. They say that oppressive thoughts of sin and evil ruin our self-esteem and influence us to fail. A popular spokesman for this group wrote:

I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to the human personality and, hence, counterproductive to the evangelical enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition (*Time*, March 1985, p.70).

This man's influence is widespread. Many are following his lead and are preaching a gospel of wealth, prosperity, and success. By focusing their thoughts on the positive and forcing out any negative thinking, they are striving to achieve personal and spiritual happiness through success.

How contrary to the teaching of the Bible! Paul instructed each Christian to "esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3). He reminded Timothy that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Every form of selfism--from New-Age pantheism to pseudo-evangelical positive thinking--represents a faith that does not please God.

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in selfism is wrong faith; Proverbs 27:2; Daniel 4:28-37; Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:11; John 12:25; Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 2 Corinthians 10:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

FAITH IN UNIVERSALISM

A very popular faith many people have adopted is that of universalism. It is the idea that because God is love, He will not send anyone to hell. They believe that a loving God would never sentence one of His creatures to eternal destruction. Everyone, according to this view, will ultimately spend eternity with God.

Now the Bible does teach that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8,18). No one can deny that. But God is also a God of holiness (Lev. 11:44-45; 16:2; 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:16). Because He is holy, He cannot ignore sin. He must judge it. He must bring punishment to the sinner. The Bible teaches that the one who sins will die (Ezek. 18:4), and that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The issue of our sin must therefore be settled. That's why God in love did provide for us a way of salvation, as we will see in the next section.

What does the Bible say? The following verses show that faith in universalism is wrong faith: Daniel 12:2; Matthew 7:22-23; 13:38-42,49-50; 25:41-46; Revelation 20:12-15.

Those who proclaim a gospel of love without doing justice to the teaching of the Bible about God's holiness may be very sincere. In fact, humanists, escapists, occultists, mystics, sacramentalists, legalists, selfists, and universalists may all be sincere in what they believe. But sincerity is not enough. A person can be sincere but sincerely wrong.

SUMMING IT UP

The popular mood today is toleration. The idea is expressed as follows: "Let everybody do his own thing. What a person believes doesn't matter much anyway. Just so he's happy." People who say this are making a serious mistake. There is a right kind of faith and there is a wrong kind of faith. Left to himself, man will put his

confidence in the wrong objects of faith. We looked at some that are popular today: humanism, escapism, occultism, mysticism, sacramentalism, legalism, selfish, and universalism. God's Word shows us clearly that faith placed in these objects will end up smashed on the rocks of disappointment and despair.

THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH

To answer the question "Do I have the right kind of faith?" we have first examined eight examples of the wrong kind of faith. And we have seen that all of them are inadequate because they have the wrong object.

These faiths--which originate in man, depend on man, and end with man--are contrary to the teaching of the Bible. It is in God's revealed Word that we can discover the right object of faith--Jesus Christ.

Christ Is The Right Object Of Faith

Even from a human perspective, Jesus was the kind of person people are looking for to believe in. He was a wise master teacher. He had such power and personal magnetism that great crowds followed Him. He was a man of high principle and impeccable character. He spoke with authority. He refuted the falsely pious of His day. He was a man of truth, integrity, prayer, and patience. Yes, He was the kind of man to believe in. But even more important, Jesus is the right object of faith because He is God.

His Deity. The following are just a few of the many verses throughout the Bible which indicate that Christ is God:

In the beginning was the Word [Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn. 1:1).
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we

beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14).

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son [Jesus Christ], who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (Jn. 1:18).

To the Son [Jesus Christ] He [the Father] says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Heb. 1:8).

When Jesus Christ was born, the second person of the eternal trinity became man. Without losing His deity, He took on Himself our human nature (Phil. 2:5-11). Although this is hard to comprehend, the deity of Christ is clearly taught in Scripture (Isa. 9:6; Mt. 26:63-65; Jn. 10:30; 14:9; 17:11; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

Because Christ is God, faith placed in Him has unshakable stability. Consider the following:

- Christ is eternal (Jn. 1:1; 17:5).
- Christ is all-knowing (Jn. 16:30; 21:17).
- Christ is all-powerful (Jn. 5:19).
- Christ is unchanging (Heb. 13:8).
- Christ is everywhere (Mt. 18:20; 28:20).
- Christ is the Creator of all (Col. 1:16).
- Christ is the Upholder of all (Heb. 1:3).

Wrong faith puts its trust in an object that is finite, fickle, and limited in knowledge and power. The contrast is obvious!

His Activity. Faith in Jesus Christ is further strengthened when one considers what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do for us. For example:

- Christ became human to rescue us from eternal death (Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:9).
- Christ lived as a man, giving us an example to follow (1 Pet. 2:21; 1 Jn. 2:6).

- Christ suffered and died to free us from the penalty of sin (Mk. 10:45; Heb. 9:26-28).
- Christ rose from the dead, proving His victory over death and His power to provide eternal life (Rom. 6:8-11; 1 Cor. 15:20-22).
- Christ is in heaven preparing an eternal home for those who have put their faith in Him (Jn. 14:2).
- Christ intercedes on behalf of His children (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).
- Christ defends believers against Satan's accusations (1 Jn. 2:1; cp. Heb. 9:23; Rev. 12:10).
- Christ provides the supernatural peace of God (Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:6-7).
- Christ will raise the bodies of believers from the grave and transform them into an incorruptible, immortal form (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Th. 4:15-17).
- Christ will reward the faithful and condemn those who have not trusted in Him (Jn. 5:24-30; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Rev. 20:11-15).
- Christ will rule the earth with His saints for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4,6).
- Christ will create an eternal new heaven and earth that will have no death, sorrow, crying, or pain (Rev. 21:1-6).

The Testimony Of Scripture. The Bible says that Jesus is to be the object of our faith. We must put our trust in Him if we are to have our sins forgiven and to be at peace with God. When the Philippian jailer asked the apostle Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" he replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). Elsewhere, the Bible says:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16).

He who believes in Him [Jesus Christ] is not

condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:18).

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:11-13).

According to these verses, he who believes in Christ will be saved, will not perish, and will not be condemned. But the one who refuses to put his faith in Christ is already condemned and does not have eternal life.

Putting Faith In Christ. If your faith is in anyone or in anything other than Christ, your faith is inadequate. It is the wrong kind of faith. To have the right kind of faith, the Bible gives the following steps:

1. You must *admit* your sinfulness and desire to turn from it. Jesus said, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3).
2. You must *believe* that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He rose again the third day" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).
3. You must *trust* in Jesus Christ alone as your personal Savior and Lord. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." By an act of faith, by a deliberate choice, you must accept God's offer of salvation through His Son and be willing to let Him take control of your life.

The time to choose to trust in Christ, to make Him the object of your faith, is now. Paul wrote, "Behold, now is the accepted time;

behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). You can do it today by bowing your head and praying something like this:

Dear God, I know that I am a sinner and that in my own strength I cannot do anything to please You or to earn eternal life. I believe that You love me and that You sent Your Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin. I will now put my faith in You and trust completely in Jesus Christ to rescue me. I desire to turn away from my sin and to let You take control of my life. Save me and be my Lord. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer in all sincerity, you can honestly say, "Now I have the right kind of faith!"

HOW MUCH FAITH IS ENOUGH?

How much faith does a person need to:

- parachute out of an airplane?
- cross a bridge?
- get married?
- sit on a chair?
- ride a rollercoaster?
- jump into a life raft?
- become a Christian?

In each of these cases, you might feel fear or confidence to some degree. But would those emotions be accurate indicators of faith? You could be terrified and yet decide to parachute out of an airplane. Or you could feel very confident and yet decide not to jump into thin air. Faith is more than a feeling.

Faith is primarily a decision to entrust ourselves to something or someone, based on available information. This decision involves the knowledge of essential facts, a personal acceptance of those facts as true and valuable, and a commitment to act in accordance with those facts.

For example, how much faith would it take for you to cross a footbridge over a canyon? First, you would collect some basic facts by visually evaluating the structural reliability of the bridge. Then, if you concluded that it was safe, you would cross the bridge.

Biblical faith operates in much the same way. First, you must learn from the Bible basic information about God, man, sin, and Christ (Acts 10:34-43; Rom. 10:17). Then, once you realize that these facts are true and that they demand a personal response, you must make a decision to believe what God has said and to trust Jesus Christ as your only hope of forgiveness and eternal life (Jn. 10:9; Acts 20:21).

So, how much faith is enough? To answer this, consider the following questions: Do you know the basic information about God, man, sin, and Christ? Have you recognized your hopeless condition without Jesus Christ? Have you accepted His offer of rescue? Have you responded in trust and obedience? If you have answered yes to each of these questions, your faith is enough.

You may ask, though, about the amount of faith you need after you have put your trust in Christ for salvation. Do you have to have great faith in God to get you through the trials of life?

Again the answer is found in whether or not your faith is in the right object. Christ told His disciples that faith in God, even if it was the size of a mustard seed, would be enough to move a mountain (Mt. 17:20). The amount of faith is not the issue, it's the object of our faith that determines its effectiveness.

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF FAITH

Abel: God accepted Abel's offering given from a heart of faith (Heb. 11:4; Gen. 4:2-4).

Noah: When God looked over a rebellious earth, He saw that Noah alone lived by faith (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:8--9:29).

Abraham: As the "father of all those who believe" (Rom. 4:11), Abraham was declared right with God because of his faith, not because of human works (Heb. 11:8-19; Gen. 15:6).

Joseph: Genesis 39 through 50 shows that Joseph's faith was strong in temptation (39), in unjust imprisonment (40), in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams (41), in ruling Egypt (41--50), and in giving his last instructions from his deathbed (50:22-26; Heb. 11:22).

Moses: He chose to devote himself to God's care and direction rather than to depend on Pharaoh's riches (Heb. 11:24-28; Ex. 2:1--4:31).

Rahab: She gave evidence of her faith in the God of Israel when she sheltered Jewish spies (Heb. 11:31; Josh. 2).

David: David believed that the Lord could use him to kill a giant (1 Sam. 17), deliver him from a jealous king (1 Sam. 15--31), give him military victories (2 Sam. 5,8,10,21), and forgive his sins (Ps. 51).

Samuel: As a child, Samuel expressed his faith in the Lord (1 Sam. 3:10). He then devoted his life to serve Him (1 Sam. 1--24).

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF FAITH

Nicodemus: This Jewish leader's actions give strong evidence that he put his faith in Jesus after he met with Him privately (Jn. 3:1-21; 7:50-52; 19:38-42).

Matthew: He gave up a lucrative tax-collecting job to follow Jesus Christ (Mt. 9:9).

Peter: This fisherman recognized Jesus as Messiah and made profound statements of faith (Mt. 16:18; Jn. 6:68; Acts 1--12).

Ethiopian Official: This man put his faith in Jesus after Phillip explained Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah (Acts 8:26-40).

Paul: He had to be blinded before he could see Christ as his Savior and Lord. His life and words became a testimony to salvation by grace through faith (Acts 9--28).

Cornelius: This military leader readily responded to Peter's gospel message (Acts 10:1-48).

Lydia: God opened this woman's heart to Paul's preaching, and she and her household were baptized (Acts 16:14-15).

Philippian Jailer: In a moment of crisis, this man asked Paul how to be saved, and his entire household believed (Acts 16:30-34).

Bereans: Many people in Berea heard Paul's message and studied what he said for accuracy before giving their lives to Christ (Acts 17:10-12).

Timothy: Through the influence of his grandmother, mother, and Paul, Timothy trusted Christ (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:14-16).

NOW I HAVE THE RIGHT FAITH

*by Betty Kwekel
as told to David C. Egner*

Two years ago I was not a Christian. My life was empty, and I felt hollow inside. I had been forced to admit to myself that the things I was trusting in were not living up to their promises. I was in trouble, and I knew it!

I had been raised in a very religious home. We went to church twice every Sunday without fail, and we prayed before each meal. I recited The Lord's Prayer every Sunday morning along with the minister, attended catechism classes, and memorized Bible verses. Everything we did in our home was influenced by our religion.

My parents sent me to a Christian school. There I heard the Bible read and taught, and some of my teachers even warned my classmates and me of the dangers of disobeying God. I didn't worry, though, because I was trusting in the religious dedication of my parents. But inside I began to rebel.

The week that I graduated from high school, when I was 17 years old, I went out on my own. I felt I didn't need my family or its religion, so I took my independence.

For the next several years, I trusted in myself and in my own ability to make myself happy. I was going to live my own life and do it my own way. I believed that I didn't need anything or anybody besides myself.

My life fell into a pattern: work during the day and parties at night. I drank regularly, sometimes heavily, and even smoked some

marijuana--doing what all my friends said I should do to live "the good life." I was constantly looking for a good time, and I didn't care what anyone else thought about it or how they felt.

But gradually, after several years, I began to realize that I wasn't going anywhere. Although my life was full on the outside, it was empty on the inside. I was supposed to be happy--but I was far from it. My pattern of working and partying had become pointless and depressing, so I began to think more about serious things.

I began attending a large church not far from where I lived, and there I was befriended by a young couple. They invited me to their house for dinner and really seemed to accept me as I was. Gently and patiently they urged me to trust in Jesus Christ as my Savior. They didn't have to tell me that the things I had been putting my faith in were false. I already knew that.

The day came when I realized I couldn't do it on my own, so I turned in faith to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to save me. He filled the empty place in my life. Although I know I've disappointed Him sometimes, I've been growing spiritually ever since. It was the most important decision of my life. Now I know I have the right faith!

CHECKING YOUR FAITH

In this booklet we've been talking about having the right kind of faith. Take a moment now to evaluate your own faith by placing a check in the appropriate boxes.

- My faith is not in my ability to control my own destiny.
- My faith is not in my good name and good living.
- My faith is not in my church or its ceremonies.
- My faith is not in my ability to improve myself.
- My faith is not in my ability to push all negative thoughts out of my life.
- My faith is not in my own sincerity.
- My faith is not in my power to tap some inner, godlike resources.
- My faith is in Jesus Christ.

Remember, when it comes to your own eternal destiny, it's essential that you trust the right Person. If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you can know you have the right kind of faith!