

# WHAT IS FAITH?

by Guy M. Richard

**TO THE GROUP LEADER:** This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. The word *faith* can mean many different things to different people in different contexts. If you grew up in the church, *faith* was a word you used. Explain what faith is. (5-6)  
Faith can be a very fluid word, so try to begin the class by allowing them to take the discussion in different directions, but be careful not to spend a lot of time on this.
2. Read Hebrews 11:1 in several translations. From this verse, how can you prove that faith is more than just wishful thinking? (6-10)  
The word “*conviction*” (ESV) can also be translated “substance or evidence for what is believed.” For something to have “substance” to it means it is not just something floating in the air, or definable in different ways, depending on the observer. Faith is based on what the church (through the Bible) has taught over many years. The foundation of the church is its doctrine. Doctrine helps us to know what it is we believe by faith.
3. Now read Romans 12:1-2, especially verse 2. How does this verse tell us how we can *know* the will of God?  
To be able to *know* something means we have to use our minds to discern the meaning of what is being taught. It is not a matter of blindly accepting just anything; it is using our minds to tell truth from error and then believing the truth, based on the evidence (Heb.11:1). Take the group through the next section of verses to show them the will of God is not something we have to wait for, but it is clearly laid out in this passage (and throughout the rest of Romans).
4. Read Acts 2:48. What was it the apostles were “teaching?”  
Many people today do not like the word “*doctrine*.” In fact, the word is not in the Bible at all. The English word “*doctrine*” is always translated from the word “teaching.” The apostles taught what they learned from Jesus as well as what the Holy Spirit taught them after Jesus’ ascension. (Have them read out loud John 14:26 and 16:13-15.) Doctrine, therefore, is what the Bible teaches and not a matter of our own interpretations.
5. What is the relationship between *knowledge* and *faith*? (10-15)  
When a couple begins to date, they have an idea of what they think the other is like. It is not until they get to *know* each other intimately and personally that they begin to truly love each other. When we begin to grow in our faith, we begin to truly love our Lord. If we don’t get to know Him, we will never grow in love with Him. This growth takes faith from being just a rational understanding about Jesus to an intimate personal relationship with Jesus.
6. What relationship is there between *faith* and *trust*? (15-18)  
Continuing the idea of the couple in #5: we would only place the name of the other person on our bank account when there is enough trust. In fact, why would two people marry if this trust was not already built?

7. Is faith just what I believe, or is there more to it? (18-22)  
Before class, read through Rom. 12-16, picking out examples of faith in action (backing up what James 2:14 teaches). Paul is especially clear about faith being acted out in Rom. 12:3-8. Faith, then, is the foundation upon which we live our lives in faithfulness to the One who saved us.
8. On a scale from 1-7, how strong would you rate your faith? What can you do to strengthen it? (22-25)  
Here lies the Christian life. This is what it means to grow in Christ. The Holy Spirit's job is to make us like Jesus. Our job is to obey what we are *taught* by living a life reflecting the glory of Christ. It is a life-long process (called sanctification), which will only end when Jesus comes back or we go to be with Him.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

## APPLICATION

**Individual:** Here is a way to measure your spiritual growth: On the following pages is a chart of the Fruit of the Spirit. How do you honestly rate yourself on each part? On the two you scored yourself lowest, do a study of all the references in the NT where this fruit is explained. Once you understand what God is looking for by this part of the fruit, make a plan to spend a lot of time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to reveal all the ways you can demonstrate this fruit in your life. Then, at this time next year, reevaluate and note your growth in this area.

**Group:** Think about this together: What things need to be improved in your church in order for it to demonstrate faith? What things can you do as a group to bring this about? This might take a lot of prayer, both as a group and individually. Be realistic, but look for things that could really stretch your faith. Remember, God tells us He wants to do **measurably more** than we ask or could even imagine He would do. He is a big God with big plans. Let this be the motto that drives you: "Attempt such great things for God that they are doomed to failure if He is not in them."

## For Further Study

*Faith Victorious: Finding Strength and Hope in Hebrews 11*, Richard D. Phillips. P&R, 2002.  
*Legacy of Faith: From Women of the Bible to Women of Today*, Lydia Brownback. P&R, 2002.  
*Treasures of Faith: Living Boldly in View of God's Promises*, Sharon & Chuck Betters. P&R, 1998.

Find this and more at [www.pcabookstore.com](http://www.pcabookstore.com).

# PLAN YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

## LOVE

How do you evaluate your ability to love unconditionally?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

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## JOY

How do you evaluate your ability to “count it all joy”?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

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## PEACE

How do you evaluate your relationship with 1) God, and 2) others?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

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## PATIENCE

How do you evaluate the degree to which you are maintaining balance with 1) God, and 2) others?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

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## KINDNESS

How do you evaluate your ability to be wise and discerning in this area?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

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## GOODNESS

How satisfied are you with the way your life reflects the life of Jesus to others?

Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Satisfied

Between now and this time next year, I plan to improve in this area by ...

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