

Important Words:

FAITH

Meanings of the Words We Use

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You have called us to fear, love and trust in You above all things. Grant us faith in Your Son by Your Spirit that we might do these things rightly. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

1. How might you define the word “faith” if someone asked you what it meant?

Answers will vary. Faith is a word that is central to us as Christians. Yet we don't have a common definition that fully encompasses what this gift of God truly is. Many will speak about faith as knowing something. Others speak about it as the prime thing Christians do in our relationship with God.

2. Look up the word “faith” in a dictionary. How is it defined there? Are these definitions consistent with your thoughts about faith as a Christian?

Below are three parts of the definition given at *Merriam-Webster.com*:

- allegiance to duty or a person
- belief and trust in and loyalty to God
- belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion

Again, answers may vary, but it is very likely that many of these ideas will resonate with participants.

3. How does faith come about? Is it up to each person to work it within themselves? Read 1 Corinthians 12:3.

First Corinthians 12:3 says, “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit.” This passage clearly teaches us that faith is not ultimately the work of each person. While it is worked in people, the work itself is that of the Spirit. Other Scriptures say that He does this work through the speaking of

His Word (Rom. 10:17) and through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (Col. 2:12). What a joy to know that God himself is the faith creator and that we are not called to create this in ourselves.

4. Is faith about what you know? Read Matthew 21:32.

Matthew 21:32 says, “For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.” This passage does seem to suggest that faith is about what our minds know. It says that to believe requires changing one's mind — and yet a change of mind alone does not say everything we need to about faith.

5. Who (surprisingly) knows the truth about God and yet could never be spoken of as having saving faith? Read James 2:19.

James 2:19 says, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe — and shudder!” Even the demons know about the true God and His nature. Yet they certainly do not have saving faith. This reminds us that to have faith is not just to know things about God. While knowledge is part of faith, it is not all there is to consider when speaking about faith.

6. What other parts of our body other than the mind do the Scriptures speak about in relation to faith? Read Romans 10:9–10.

Romans 10:9–10 says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” The Spirit here says that both the heart and the mouth are involved in faith. Those with faith believe in their hearts and therefore speak God’s truth with their mouths.

7. What does faith bring forth in our lives? Read Galatians 5:22–25.

Galatians 5:22–25 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” As the Spirit works faith, fruits of such

faith grow. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control come forth in our lives.

8. Does faith only work godly characteristics within us, or does it bring forth specific works? Read Romans 3:31.

Romans 3:31 says, “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” Faith is that which brings forth true obedience to the law of God. We love God and our neighbor in the ways God says in His Word.

9. Thinking about all of this, how might we define faith as Christians?

Lead the participants to understand that faith is the gift of knowing and trusting the truths of God and, therefore, living according to them in our daily lives.

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, without Your Spirit we cannot have faith in You. Fill us with faith and all the fruits of Your Spirit, that we might serve You and our neighbors with our entire lives. Amen.