

5. What is faith?

Jesus asked a very important question, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8) What kind of faith will Jesus be looking to find? God looks for a faith that trusts his word with complete confidence. Scripture states, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) Faith takes God at his word and trusts, even when the outcome is yet unknown, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith is the vehicle that drives us to God. God honors faith, because faith honors God. "Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6) The kind of faith that pleases God always has two components; (1) it affirms the existence of God and (2) seeks after the God who exists. Faith always involves right believing, which produces right behaving. When you really believe something, it will always change what you do. For example, if you believed there was a fire next door you would get help! Scripture asks, "If someone says he has faith, but does not have works...can that faith save him?" (James 2:14) The answer is always "no." If there is no response to God, it is because there is no real faith. Real faith in the real God always produces biblical obedience. "Faith" that seeks to separate belief from obedience is not real faith. "Faith apart from works is dead." (James 2:26) Only faith in Christ produces good works. "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22) The basis of faith is God's word (Romans 10:17). The object of faith is God (Proverbs 3:5-6; Acts 20:21). The content of faith is Scripture (Matthew 7:24). The reward of faith is salvation (Ephesians 2:8-10). The enemy of faith in God is faith in self, "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool." (Proverbs 28:26) Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:24)

Bible passages to read: Luke 8:4-18; Hebrews 11:1-6; James 2:14-26

Questions to ponder:

1. What is faith?
2. What kind of faith pleases God?
3. Describe the difference between faith that pleases God and a "faith" that does not.
4. What does real faith in God believe and therefore do?
5. Do you have faith in God?