

Faith is something that you believe is true and trustworthy. Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.

Having faith means believing in what we know is true. Even if we cannot touch, taste, understand, or see the object of what we have faith in, we believe it is worthy of our trust, hopes, and dreams. Faith often also means the truth in which we have faith.

How does faith in God work for you? Is it constant, or are there times when it is stronger or weaker? Or is it not faith but how you embrace it that changes?

How often is faith considered in how you live each day of your life? Does the way you live shape your faith, or does your faith shape the way you live? Does faith shape how you live, or does how you live define your faith?

At times our faith vision is clouded by the brokenness of this world. Because we cannot see tomorrow, we sometimes are overwhelmed by today. And in other moments we are so obsessed with what we cannot see down the road, it can affect how we live today. If faith is faith, why would it ever be questioned if life disappoints? Or why only credit faith when life is full of blessing, success, and joy? Interesting questions all!

+

We learn to live by faith from an early age. The sun will always rise. A kiss should mean something. Food and water are necessary for life. Puppies are to be hugged and flashlights will help in the dark. A switch will turn on a light and a refrigerator will keep food from spoiling. And love will heal many of the scrapes and bruises of life. Faith!

And yet, appearances can deceive. When eyes are closed to faith, we miss gifts that are right before us. For instance, the world's judgment was Abraham and Sarah were too old to have a baby and if Jesus was Messiah he shouldn't suffer or die. However, a 90-year-old couple had a baby and a crucified Savior not only died but escaped an earthly tomb. God's touch allows much in life to take on a different shape than anyone expected! Jesus taught that faith means surrender!

We were reminded (in our Gospel reading) Jesus was ready to reveal his purpose and mission – but what he said didn't match up with the expectations of the disciples or crowds. They wanted no pain, no suffering, diseases healed, and wells that never ran dry. So anxious, were they, about their own vision, they had trouble focusing on the vision of Jesus. They were willing to have faith but needed to set the terms.

Peter had faith Jesus was Messiah but changed his mind upon hearing Jesus' path was different from what Peter wanted. Peter sought to shape Jesus' mission and ministry, while Jesus said, "let me shape you instead." Peter embraced faith, as long as his expectations were met. Jesus taught faith is a relationship of trust as I surrender to God and allow Him to shape me! Faith allows me to live no matter what life brings, and such

faith will color every response.

The dialog between Jesus and disciples followed the healing of blind man. It is a unique miracle, as with Jesus' first touch the man could see shapes but not make out what they were. That had to initially be a disappointment, right? When Jesus touched him again, he could see clearly! Was Jesus weak that day, or was this an opportunity to teach about trusting in God's ultimate power?

+

Peter was one of the first to have faith in Jesus as Messiah but was blind to the shape a Messiah would assume. Like the man whose healing took time, Peter's vision of Jesus was not as sharp as it would one day be. Jesus warned Peter of Satan's influence in his perception, for sin is like a cataract that clouds our vision.

Listen to this question again: *Does the way you live shape your faith, or does your faith shape the way you live? Does faith shape your life, or does how you live define your faith?* It can only be one or the other, so what is faith for you?

True healing takes time (and faith!) Assuming a shape contrary to the world's wisdom takes practice (and faith.) Against all human wisdom or understanding, the shape Jesus lifted up was that of a cross! Faith embraces what that shape represents and the power to change my life that it gives.

Think about the shadow the cross casts on the world. What a different image that is from what Peter wanted! Like the blind man, the Peter's understanding of faith came slowly, in stages, until he grew into it after Easter.

What is different is we have the complete story, which Peter needed to patiently trust and wait for to understand. He had an excuse for not understanding at first, for he hadn't yet seen a cross or empty tomb. Even so, faith kept him in the ballpark so he saw the come-from-behind-victory on Easter morning. with us. Although his earthy vision was cloudy, faith kept him in the game.

Picking up Jesus' cross is not about the weight or burden of the task, but about sharing the sacrifice that has set us free! To follow Jesus means going against the "world's way" -- It is not about being easy but about being faithful!

+

Consider the miracle of development life transitions through in a mother's womb. If anyone was asked at the moment of birth to stay or go, they would say, "Let me stay where it is safe and warm, and I have all that I need. Let me keep this comfortable shape I am familiar with!" Why leave behind all I am comfortable with?

Birth begins with a shock and all the pain involved in that process. Suddenly there are bright lights, a sudden and dramatic temperature change, a separation from what had been so familiar, and then a cry! And there is no turning back. But who now would give up what has been comfortable and familiar and go back to that old life?

Like a womb, faith nourishes, protects and gradually allows life to expand and develop. Like birth, faith is a complete surrender to God's living breath in us. It is the gift of life! The disciples were comfortable with what they knew. Even after Easter's surprise, they kept returning to the security and safety of a locked upper room. Ultimately Pentecost's holy inspiration changed their faith, clarified their vision, and the shape of their lives changed the world. Faith didn't change, but what changed was how the disciples grew into the faith that was their gift from the beginning.

Remember, the healing of a blind man took time. The perception of the disciples took time as well. As we celebrate the shapes of our lives, remember the powerful shape that is easy to take for granted -- the cross. And remember the question we began with? Does the way you live shape your faith, or will faith shape the way you live?

Faith is about ceasing to fight what we don't yet know and finding peace in what you do know. And that faith is defined in something as simple as a cross, and as deep as the empty tomb.

When I was in a moment of time, when darkness and emptiness were all around me, and I knew but was having trouble remembering where to turn, someone shared the following words about faith when I needed them most:

*"When you come to the edge of all the light you know
and are about to step off into the darkness of the unknown,
Faith is knowing one of two things will happen:
There will be something to stand on
or you will be taught how to fly."*

-tws