



Learn Your Bible

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## Advanced Study AS005: Defining Faith

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**Read:** Hebrews 11.

**Introduction:** Faith is very important. There are over 200 references to faith in the Bible not counting the corresponding verb *believe*, which is mentioned 163 times, and the associated adjective *faithful*, mentioned 32 times in the Old Testament. A large proportion of these references are exhortations or commands to have faith (or to believe). We should, therefore, ensure that we properly understand what faith is and how it is to be exercised.

**1. Derivation.** The Greek word for 'faith' is *pistis*, which is derived from a word meaning *persuade*, so in essence faith is being persuaded of something.

Think about in what ways being personally persuaded can influence ones ....

- Trust in God and the Word of God.
- Response to the Gospel.
- Assurance of salvation.
- Confidence when facing death.
- Composure in times of trial.

The words 'faithful' and 'faithfulness' have the same Greek origin, but they more often used in the Old Testament, where they come from the Hebrew word *aman*, which carries the thought of 'standing firm'. Why do you think we use the word *amen* to conclude our prayers

**2. Faith, Belief and Doubt.** One can believe something to be true, but take no action on that belief. Faith is trusting oneself the what one believes. *Unbelief* is a rejection of belief – at its worst a deliberate rejection of belief. *Doubt* is a position of uncertainty. Look at the following passages: 1 Kings 18:21, Matthew 13:58, Mark 9:24 and Mark 16:14, and decide which each position (faith, unbelief or doubt) is being depicted.

**3. Faith in Action.** Faith has an element of action. We might think of it as being sufficiently persuaded as to take action on that conviction – action in the form of trust or commitment. Look at each of the characters in the Hebrews 11 passage and note down what actions they took because of their faith.

**4. Sources of Faith.** There are two: By a gift of God (1 Cor 12:9, Eph 2:8) and by hearing the Word of God (Rom 10:17,). What is needed on our part to receive or increase our faith?

**To think about:** It has been said that Hebrews 11:1 is a description of faith, not a definition. Do you agree with this statement?

**To dig deeper:** Work through the first four chapters of the Study Guide *Faith, Hope and Love*, which is available as a free PDF file by sending an email to: [orders@learn-your-bible.org.uk](mailto:orders@learn-your-bible.org.uk)