

2. WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith is more than just saying that God is real and that salvation through Jesus is a free gift—it also involves committing our lives to God. It is something we do with our lives and our hearts, not just with our minds. We have to act on our faith in order for it to be real in our lives.

For example, say you're standing on a dock by a boat. If you step off the dock into the boat, you are acting on your faith that the boat will hold your weight and keep you out of the water. If you just say you believe the boat will hold you, but you're not willing to step into the boat, that's not much of a faith.

Faith is accepting what God has done for us and receiving it as a gift, one that we can't possibly earn on our own. The desire to make ourselves deserving of God's love is strong, but the truth is that we can never deserve God's love. The amazing thing is that we don't need to earn our salvation—believing is enough. We respond to what God has done for us by putting our faith into action and living as God instructs us to live in the Bible.

When life is going well, it's easy to feel like God is on our side and that he is working out things in our life for good. But what about when life gets hard? What about when we experience pain and loss?

The lives of the men and women that the Bible credits as having great faith (see Hebrews 11) were not always filled with joy. They all experienced pain, frustration, and disappointment, but they made it through the hard times by faith. Their faith was based on who they believed God to be and what they believed about God's character and nature, rather than on their perception of the good or bad things happening in their lives.

Because we believe that God really is a God of love, we have hope even when life is hard. Even though we still feel pain, hurt, and loss, we can cling to God, who will give us what we need to make it through the tough times.