

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: A Faith Learned

Lesson 1: What is Faith?

Objectives:

- Students will reflect on how they experience a relationship with God.
- Students will articulate what faith means and how it can be manifested.
- Students will examine Biblical stories of faith and compare them to their own experience.

Materials Needed

- ☐ 3-5 different images per group of students for visual synaptics (e.g. full page magazine ads, old wall calendar pages, or images from the internet) **Leader's Note:** If you enjoy using this type of activity with your group, it would be worth laminating the images for future use in another context.
- ☐ 1 copy of Appendix 1 (Faith Stories) per group
- ☐ Bibles for each group
- ☐ optional: costumes for skits
- ☐ 2 pieces of chart paper and a marker

Minds On

Begin with your students sitting in a circle and ask the group to discuss what faith means to them. If your students don't have a church background, it may be helpful to share Hebrews 11:1 as a definition of faith and starting point for this discussion.

Prompt: How do you experience God? How is your relationship with God different from other relationships?

Leader's Note: Depending how your group responds, this opening discussion could take only a few minutes, or it could fill much more time, especially if more students are willing to share and if they comment on each other's answers. Use your judgment to either encourage a large group discussion or move more quickly into the smaller group activity below.

Divide your students into groups of 3-6 (depending on overall group size), and give each group a selection of images to look at. Have each person choose one image and complete the following sentences within their group:

"My faith in God is like this picture because _____"

"My faith in God is not like this picture because _____"

If students do not have a personal faith in God, they may complete the phrase as "Faith in God is like/not like..."

After students have had time to share in their groups, bring everyone back together in a circle and invite some students to share their analogies if they wish.

Action

Prompt: Some people say Christianity isn't just a religion, it's a relationship. But it can be hard to describe how a relationship with God really works - we can't see him with our eyes or hear him with our ears or Facebook him when we need advice.

Leader's Note: At this point you can also relate any of the concepts students raised in the Minds On activity.

Prompt: Over the next few weeks we'll be learning about ways that we can know our relationship with God is real. These are ways that we experience God and ways that God changes us to be more like him – love, justice, hope and joy are all part of God's plan for us and for the world. The foundation for all of these things is faith, and that's what we will discuss tonight, exploring what it means, how it looks and sounds in our lives, and how we can share it with others.

Invite students to form groups of 4-8 depending on the size of your group. (There are three different passages to choose from – Daniel 3:8-18; Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 7:1-10. If you have a smaller group, you may choose to only use one or two passages; if your group is very large, then you may choose to have more than one group discuss the same passage.)

Using the questions in Appendix 1, distribute copies of the half page questions to each group. Assign one passage to each group. Each group will read one of the passages, put the story into their own words and discuss the questions in the handout. You may want to give out more than one copy of the questions to each group to help the discussion.

Leader's Note: If it suits your group, you could offer your students to create skits that act out the faith stories in each passage before they are discussed. Depending on time constraints and the size of your group, this may affect how many passages you use.

When all the groups have finished, gather everyone together and ask for volunteers to describe how their passage depicted faith. Write the answers on a big piece of chart paper to create a collection of words and actions that show faith.

Consolidate/Debrief

Ask students to think about times that they have shown or seen faith in their own lives.

Optional Prompt: Have you seen someone trust God for a situation? How did they act or what did they say? Have you seen someone act a certain way because of their faith?

Answers can be added to the same piece of chart paper. Ask your students to reflect on what words or actions they could use in their own life to grow their faith or to show their faith to others in the coming week.

Have students pair off and choose one idea to “live out” their faith in the coming week, then they can pray for each other. Depending on the maturity of your group or if you have newcomers, you may choose to close in prayer for the whole group or allow students to be dismissed whenever they finish in their pairs.

Leader’s Note: If possible, follow up during the week or at your next meeting to learn what opportunities students are finding to show their faith.

Appendix 1

Questions for Reflection:

Hebrews 11:1 says, *“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”*

As a group, put the story in your passage into your own words. Ask your leader/youth pastor to explain any words or ideas you don’t understand.

1. Who in the passage showed faith?
2. How did they show it – what did they do or say?
3. What would you do if you were in the same situation?
4. What is the unseen thing that person/those people had confidence in?
5. How could the story have ended differently?
6. What is the most important aspect of this story for someone who wants to learn more about faith?

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Daniel 3:8-18

⁸ At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! ¹⁰ Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹ and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹² But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

¹³ Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴ and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Matthew 9:18-26

¹⁸ While Jesus was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.”

¹⁹ Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

²⁰ Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹ She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”

²² Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

²³ When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, ²⁴ he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. ²⁵ After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶ News of this spread through all that region.

Luke 7:1-10

¹When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.