

A. Our culture suggests faith is the opposite of knowledge. Faith is a blind leap because God is unknowable. This is fideism.

Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*: faith in God requires “a mighty jump from the rational over to the unknowable.” “If faith were rational, it wouldn’t be—by definition—faith. Faith is belief in what you cannot see or prove or touch. Faith is walking face-first and full-speed into the dark.”

B. Many Christians sadly agree.

1. **Believing in God:** uncertainty is necessary for faith.

2. **Following God:** if uncertainty is necessary for faith, then we only have faith when we are uncertain. So faith means taking large, uncertain risks. Attempt something so hard that you will fail unless God comes through for you.

“When God invites you to join Him in His work, He presents a God-sized assignment for you to accomplish. You will realize that you cannot accomplish it on your own. If God does not help you, you will fail.”

“I have come to the place in my life that, if the assignment I sense God is giving me is something that I know I can handle, I know it probably is *not* from God.”

“It’s a frightening and utterly exhilarating truth, isn’t it? As God’s chosen, blessed sons and daughters, we are expected to attempt something large enough that failure is guaranteed...unless God steps in.”

Cf. Luke 4:9-10: what is the difference between **trusting** God and **testing** him?

Trust: from assurance to risk. It’s the risk of commitment, not the risk of ignorance.

Test: from uncertainty for assurance. Attempts to prove God.

C. Faith commits to a word from God: either a promise or command

1. Abraham (Hebrews 11:8—command; Hebrews 11:11—promise; Hebrews 11:17-19—promise and command)

2. Worldly success is not guaranteed (Hebrews 11:32-40)

3. We persevere when we trust God's promise (Hebrews 9:26-28) and obey his commands (Hebrews 12-13—live in peace and be holy, avoid bitterness and sexual immorality, entertain strangers, follow your leaders, do good and share with others).

D. Assurance of Faith

Dangerous medicine: because there are two kinds of people who lack assurance, those who should and those who shouldn't.

1. Look at your fruit (Matthew 7:15-23)

a. About hypocrisy

1) To non-Christians: hypocrisy is a sign we have something valuable, for no one pretends to be undesirable.

2) To Christians: hypocrisy is a special temptation for those who love God.

b. How to know your faith is real

1) Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (1746)

Signs that prove nothing: “that they are very great, affect the body, come with fluency and fervor, are not self-generated, come with texts of Scripture or an appearance of love, come in many kinds, or lead one to much zeal in duty, praise, confidence, or moving testimonies.”

The sign that proves everything: “Passing affections easily produce words; and words are cheap; and godliness is more easily feigned in words than in actions. Christian practice is a costly, laborious thing. The self-denial that is required of Christians, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life, does not consist in words, but in practice. Hypocrites may much more easily be brought to talk like saints, than to act like saints.”

2) Jesus, *Matthew 23*

23:1-3—preach > practice

23:5-7—“Everything they do is done for men to see”

23:25-28—difference between inner and outer, private and public life

2. Look with your faith (to Jesus)

a. Struggle with Sin

1. Good news: you're not alone. See John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

2. Bad news: you're worse than you think.

Pride: are you more impressed with yourself than with God?

Jesus wasn't surprised by your sin. He was counting on it.

3. Best news: all you need is faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Jn. 3:16)

b. Struggle with Faith

1. Look to Jesus, as snake bitten Israelites looked to the serpent (Jn. 3:14-15; Num. 21:4-9)

They would be saved as long as they looked to the mounted serpent.

21:8, רָאָה--see

21:9, נִבַּט—look

The quality of their gaze did not matter. Some may have been selfish. Some may have doubted. All were saved who looked to the snake.

2. Zachary Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*: though our faith is weak and imperfect yet it is “nevertheless true and unfeigned.” The righteousness of Christ forgives both our sinful works and the flawed faith that lays hold of him.

3. What you see depends on where you look. Assurance is ultimately found by looking to Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2).