

Faith & Love

Faith comes first.

A person comes to God in/through faith (belief):

Hebrews 11: 6 *And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.*

Love comes after.

There is no way to love someone without knowing them. He already loves us as He's always known us.

1 John 4: 19 *We love, because He first loved us. (NASB)*

By coming to Him in faith we are simply responding to His love. He is the initiator.

He promises time and again throughout His Word that when we seek Him, we will find Him. Here's just one example:

2 Chronicles 15: 1 *Then the Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded, 2 and he went out to meet King Asa as he was returning from the battle. "Listen to me, Asa!" he shouted. "Listen, all you people of Judah and Benjamin! The Lord will stay with you as long as you stay with him! **Whenever you seek him, you will find him. But if you abandon him, he will abandon you.** 3 For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach them, and without the Law to instruct them. 4 But whenever they were in trouble and turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him out, they found him.*

Here is another verse that sheds some light on God's character:

James 4: 8a *Come close to God, and God will come close to you.*

Notice that He doesn't seek after us. To get our attention, He can do any number of things. But for us to really know Him, we have to do the seeking and this takes time and effort as do all valued relationships.

The more I know God personally, the more I love Him. The more I love Him, the greater my faith in Him becomes. Our faith and love for Him go hand in hand.

As a child, and like most children, I had implicit faith in my father. I could jump from the monkey bars and into His hands without wavering because I knew him and loved him. I had great faith that he would catch me. God wants the same from us, which is why He requires "child-like" faith:

Mark 10: 13 *One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.*

14 When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." 16 Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.

Faith in God does not happen overnight. If we are truly "born again" (of the Spirit), we all start off as babes in Christ and need to grow and develop into young men and women of God.

Keep in mind that Abraham walked with God at least 38 years before he was asked to sacrifice his only (legitimate) son.

David spent many years with God as a young adult working as a

shepherd and was able to develop a great faith in God after experiencing God helping him kill lions and bears while watching the flocks.

1 Samuel 17: 34 But David persisted. "I have been taking care of my father's sheep and goats," he said. "When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, **35** I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. **36** I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! **37** The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!" Saul finally consented. "All right, go ahead," he said. "And may the Lord be with you!"

Without a relationship with the Lord, which God requires (love the Lord your God), we will never grow in faith.

Yes, faith comes first which introduces us to God in the first place but in order to grow and have deep roots we must love Him and learn to love Him more and more.

Ephesians 3: 14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. **16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. **17** Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. **18** And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. **19** May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

This helps us to understand why the greatest commandments are:

Matthew 22: 36 "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"

37 Jesus replied, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **40** The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

Out of this relationship, obedience should come naturally.

God desires obedience more than sacrifice, which brings glory to Him:

1 Samuel 15:

22 But Samuel replied,

"What is more pleasing to the Lord:
your burnt offerings and sacrifices
or your obedience to his voice?"

Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice,
and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.

23 Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft,
and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols.

So because you have rejected the command of the Lord,
he has rejected you as king."

John 14: 23 Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.

So how could we ever obey Him if we fail to hear His voice because we don't know Him? It becomes our heart's desire to obey Him when we love Him.

What does obedience mean to you on a day to day basis? Is it simply doing good things and making sure we don't do wrong? I can tell you most assuredly that God desires much more than

simply staying away from evil and doing good works.

He wants your heart, completely.

Jeremiah 29: 12 *In those days when you pray, I will listen.*

13 *If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. 14 I will be found by you," says the LORD.*

When you know Him and trust Him enough to give Him your whole heart, it will be your greatest desire to do what He wants you to do. This does not mean that you'll never be without sin, please don't have that expectation. What can be expected, however, is a transformed heart and that, my friends, is the greatest!

Hosea 6:

6 *I want you to show love,
not offer sacrifices.*

*I want you to know me
more than I want burnt offerings.*

1 Corinthians 13: ¹³ *Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.*

If you do not know how to seek Him or how to develop this relationship, feel free to reply to this message and I'd be happy to discuss it with you.

Will you take the time to know Him?

"Dear Lord, thank you for loving me. Thank you for getting my attention and letting me know that you desire a relationship with me. Please help me to get to know you more and help me to stay on your path. Draw me close as I'll draw close to you. In Jesus' name, amen."

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