

"The of the Matter"

A Monthly

Source of Information for the Church

The Definition of Faith

A Bible study presented by Zack Gore to the church family during Zoom vespers last month. Zack considers the content of this study "a gift from God" as he literally awoke one morning with these thoughts on his mind.

One of the most seemingly confusing and intangible concepts in Christianity is faith. Have you experienced this? The Bible talks much about it, as if it is so elemental and extremely necessary, yet it can feel like a mystery to fully grasp. So, what really is it? Where does it come from? When is it critical to have? How can it grow? These are real questions everyone deserves the answers to because, well, your life depends on it.

First, we need a working definition of faith based on the Bible. Attempting to discuss faith without a solid definition would be like blowing about the ocean without a sail. You would be subject to the forces around you, yet have no method of steering a true course.

(James 1:6-8)

Second, every belief system has what I call a "root". This root ultimately feeds the rest of the system. Without the root, the rest of the system is worthless and crumbles. For Christianity, that root is the Bible. It is either God's word, all true and acceptable, or it is fiction and should be regarded somewhere between occasionally nice concepts and trash.

The Bible talks about faith in quite a few places, 458 times to be exact. All of the Biblical references in this text will be from the New International Version. The author of Hebrews states in chapter 11, verse 1: **"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."** James 2:14-19 reads, **"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.' You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder."** (See also James 2:26)

Boiling these passages down reveals various key elements. Faith has to do with a "confidence", with "hope", "assurance", and about things we "do not see". We are also made aware that faith **MUST** have "deeds" and "action" in addition to a belief, as well as a concept of faith being integral with the process of salvation. After analyzing these details, I propose the definition: Faith is an action based on something you believe in. On a fundamental level, we all have some form of faith each day. For example, we have faith our legs will hold up our bodies when we stand to walk to the refrigerator. It does not take much thought; however, we trust it will happen; therefore, we complete the action. Think about your job. We practice faith by believing we will be paid for the effort and service provided, so we show up to work each day.

Faith Versus Feeling

Having a definition now makes it much easier to navigate through what faith is and what it is not. Some folks may say, “Have faith. If you believe enough, it will happen.” This does not fall within the scope of the Biblical definition. Faith is not a feeling or mystical zone one must find him or herself in to vibe their way to a positive result. Please do not misunderstand. Feelings are important and may play a role in the aspect; however, as a “stand alone”, they are not faith. Feelings can change in a moment. They can be dependent on lighting, emotion, age, gender, most recent influence, and even your diet. Faith is a belief that, once grounded, does not change or sway, based on anything other than the “root”. Since we also know faith is coupled with action, when someone encourages you by saying, “Have faith”, what is really being said is “Believe and go DO something based on your belief.” This is closely related to the aspect of God’s will, but that is another topic.

Back to **Hebrews 11:1**, “**Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance...**” Some translations state evidence. Think of a courtroom scene. No jury will convict a defendant of guilt without evidence of proof. That is how powerful and how tangible faith is. There are rock-solid results of true faith. Feelings cannot produce this.

Faith As A Measurement

Jesus says in **Matthew 17:20**, “**... Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.**” This is a very interesting passage of scripture because it teaches us two new features of faith. There is an amount and it is amazingly powerful. A mustard seed is approximately one to two millimeters in diameter. Think of what faith the size of a basketball would do!

Paul reports in **Romans 12:3** that God has dealt each of us a measure of faith. What does this mean? Is a measure a certain amount? Yes and no. A measure is not a specific amount, such as a gallon or a kilogram. It is a term meaning full amount. God in His love has provided every single person from birth the full and perfect amount of faith for their life. No more, no less. Isn’t that comforting? There is nothing we can face that He has not equipped us to handle.

Where does faith come from? Looking back at **Romans 12:3**, it states “**God has dealt...**” In addition, **Romans 10:17** declares, “**Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.**” Essentially God provides everyone with an initial amount of faith; however, we can gain more through hearing and studying the Bible. Who wouldn’t want more of this amazing and powerful stuff? The question is—will we decide to live on the minimum or to pursue growth?

Faith As Muscle

Speaking of growth, faith is like a muscle. My training is in physical therapy; therefore, I think structurally. Muscle is made up of groups of small fibers and when a load or force is applied, the muscle responds up to its capacity. If an increased force is repeated over time, the muscle will adapt by building additional fibers, therefore, creating hypertrophy or growth. The converse is true. Without a challenge, a muscle cannot grow and, in fact, will atrophy, or shrink, over time.

Have you ever heard an interview with an Olympic athlete when someone asked, “Tell me, what has your training routine been these last few years?” and the athlete’s response was, “Well, I like to sit on the sofa and watch television. Sometimes I eat a few pizzas and every other month I work up the motivation for a light jog.” Yeah, me neither, because that would be ridiculous. If faith is like a muscle, shouldn’t it be trained and exercised? Wouldn’t it make life’s trials seem more bearable if we could apply stronger faith? Just as working out our

muscles helps us face physical challenges, working out our faith through the daily studying of God's word and use of our faith during tough times helps build it. **"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." James 1:22.**

There are many examples of tremendous faith in the Bible. Look at Moses and put yourself in his shoes, or should I say sandals. He believed God so much that he walked through a sea on dry land (**Exodus 14**). He later hit a rock with his staff knowing water would come out.

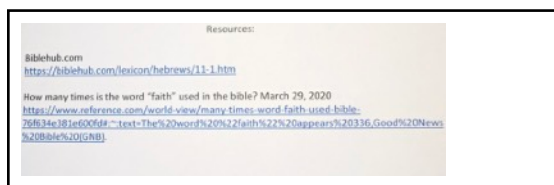
(**Numbers 20:11**). What about Joshua. He marched around Jericho every day for a week. He was ridiculed and there were plenty of opportunities for him and his army to be embarrassed and turn back. Instead they pushed on in faith knowing for certain that God would keep His promise (Joshua 6). Jesus Himself is the ultimate example of faith. He and the other members of the Trinity devised the plan of salvation prior to the fall of humanity; however, when he faced the cross, he was not able to see past it. Even so He continued forward believing in His Father, as well as that His sacrifice would be enough.

Faith is not stagnant. It is critical to exercise it, **"because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:3-4**

Faith and Salvation

Is faith necessary to be saved? **Hebrews 11:6** says, **"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."** Similarly, **Ephesians 2:8-9** states, **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."** Finally, **Galatians 3:11** reveals, **"Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because the righteous will live by faith."** It is very clear from these passages we cannot save ourselves and works gain us no merit toward salvation. The only way to please God and received His saving grace is through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. This is correct; however, things should not end there. Remember, faith is an action based on something you believe in. True faith that pleases God and is effective for salvation will naturally have an action associated with it. Maybe it includes sharing the gospel with others, turning away from specific temptations, spending more time in the Bible, or standing for Jesus in an environment which is especially non-Christian. Ultimately, it means living a life pursuing and training for Heaven.

I urge you not to be bogged down by complicated definitions or misleading formulas. Faith is simple. God has already given you the necessary amount. He designed it to assist you through life as well as be the key which opens the lock (Jesus) to eternity. Now go, **"...live by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5:7). "for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4)**



Right: Snowy Egret on Clear Lake. Photo by David Anderson



Church News

Sanctuary Open For Worship

Restrictions have eased to allow worship in the sanctuary with the maximum attendance of 125. The members are grateful for being able to worship inside. This began with services on February 13, and attendance has averaged about 100.

A Youth Pastor Is Coming!

His name is Eric Kablanow. He is currently at the Seminary, at Andrews University. He is planning to be here sometime in May. Praise the Lord!

Friday Night Zoom Vespers

Vespers at 7:00 pm on Friday evenings continues to be a favorite time for our church family to connect with each other. Please join us in welcoming the Sabbath with music, a devotional, a time for thanksgiving and prayer requests and sweet fellowship.

If you need the Zoom logon and password, you may call

Allison Kurtz. 707-489-0910
or Dave Anderson 707-234-9233

Mission/Vision Statements

Our current Mission Statement

To Know Jesus

To Share Jesus

To Follow Jesus

Changing Lives Today

And For Eternity

will remain as our Vision Statement.

The new Mission Statement, based on the Great Commission in Matthew 24, is

Filled With The Holy Spirit,
Discipling,
Baptizing,
Teaching, With Love.
Preparing All For Jesus' Return.

The church, in business session, February 21, voted to adopt this new Mission Statement.

Volunteers Needed at the Community Service Center:

Work on refurbishing the Community Service Center has been going smoothly and even more rapidly than expected at first. During February, dry wall, taping and texturing was finished; kitchen cabinets and cupboards, shelving, and new cabinets and counter in the work room were installed; door and window trim finished; and painting should be finished by the time this newsletter is published. Flooring is starting immediately, and volunteer labor would help save money on this last major phase during the 1st week of February. Help would mostly involve moving boxes and racks of clothing to open space for the flooring crew, then putting them back in finished areas. A schedule is being prepared to show when help will be most needed. Please contact Marshall Merklin (909-786-7618) for information and scheduling.

Church News Continued

Indestructible—Build an indestructible life in a world that is falling apart

Pastor Roy Ice from Faith For Today has prepared an online webinar series for April 9-13, 2021. The topics will include attitudes, wellness, activity, relationships, and existence—a life of faith. Our church has registered to participate as an outreach ministry. We will benefit from Facebook advertising in both Lake and Mendocino counties and will receive a list of names and their interests.

The church members are welcome to watch these webinars too. Like any of the viewers, all that is required is to register.

Dr. Bev and Rita Giebel are strong and courageous women! After a six-year search and many prayers, they have found an “out-of-the-way” location in Troy, Montana, thirty miles from church and shopping in Libby. Their niece arrived from Fargo, North Dakota on moving day, February 11, and traveled with them through ice and snow to their new home. They experienced miracles of God’s deliverance from harm along their way. They are now settling into a new location where they are making friends.

They will be challenged with the cold for some time, as spring won’t arrive where they are until June. They do not have cell service, but their address is P. O. Box 1474, LIBBY, MT 59923. We will surely miss them, but pray that God’s blessings and peace will surround them.

“Healthy You”

What’s your BMI?

That is your Body Mass Index. It is defined as a value derived from the mass and height of a person. Find yours from a BMI calculator on the internet.

The largest studies in the United States and around the world found that having a normal BMI, from 20 to 25, is associated with the longest life span. Put all the best available studies with the longest follow-up together, and that can be narrowed down even further to a BMI of 20 to 22. That would be about between 124 and 136 lbs. for

Right: Dr. Bev & Rita
Giebel Photo by
David Anderson



But, even within a normal BMI, the risk of developing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and several types of cancer, starts to rise towards the upper end, even starting as low as a BMI of 21. A BMI of 18.5 and 24.5 are both considered within the normal range, but a BMI of 24.5 may be associated with twice the heart disease risk compared with 18.5. As a single measure, BMI is clearly not a perfect measure of health. But it is still a useful starting point for important conditions that become more likely when a person is overweight or obese. In my view it is important to know your BMI. But it is also important to realize its limitations. This information is not meant to discourage you but to encourage you to continue on your journey of making healthy lifestyle choices.

By Dave DeBooy

UJA NEWS

Kindergarten Jamboree Every year our Kindergarten teacher, Wendi Olivera, provides a fun Jamboree where prospective parents and students may come and enjoy a morning visit in her room. Unfortunately, this year, due to COVID-19, we are unable to have this special event.

Instead, a short video has been created to give information about our school and kindergarten program. We will be delivering flyers to the preschools and other usual places which will include a QR code to make it easy to quickly access the video. If parents are interested, they may make an appointment to visit the campus and the Kindergarten classroom.

We would encourage you, our church family, to help us share the news about our wonderful school with your family and friends. Currently, we have ten students who

have already registered for Kindergarten next year! Praise God! We may end up with a waitlist, so please stress the importance of letting those you know to call the school office without delay!



Photos: by Wendi Olivera



UJA NEWS continued.Open Enrollment For The 2021-22 School Year

Here's a letter from Principal Rick Nelson that covers the details:

I am pleased to announce that we are open for registration and enrollment for the coming 2021-22 school year. It is our colors they can see! Humans can perceive visible light between red (700nm) and violet (400nm). The hope and prayer that this school year will begin getting back to a normal routine on campus.

To begin the process, go to our new and improved website:
www.ukiahjracademy.org.

Once there, click the dropdown menu at the top center/right labeled "Parents", then click the link "FACTS Family Portal Login".

Login to your account using **uk-ca** district code. You will use the same username and password you used to enroll this year. (If you have not created an account, click the link for creating a new account).

Once in the portal click "Apply/Enroll", then "Enrollment/Reenrollment". You should find a link for the 2021-22 school year for each current student. Click on the link "Start Enrollment Packet".

You will notice the registration fees have changed. We have consolidated the registration, supply, book rental, and lab supply fees altogether. The registration fees for grades K-4 is \$425.00 and for grades 5-10, it is \$550.00.

We are offering a 40% discount on registration fees paid by March 15, or a 10% discount paid after March 15 and before June 11, 2021, the last day of school. You will find these discounts reflected in the enrollment packet.

We are honored that you have chosen UJA and feel privileged to have been your school family this year!

Dates To Remember

March 19: End of 3rd. Quarter

March 22-26: Spring Break

March 29: Teacher In-service

NO SCHOOL

March 30: 4th. Quarter Begins

No COVID Cases

The parents have cooperated well with the COVID regulations and there has not been one case that has originated on the campus.

Keep UJA in Your Prayers

Principal Rick Nelson and his phenomenal staff cherish your daily prayers for the school.

The staff are introducing many children to Jesus for the first time. A joyful spirit pervades throughout the classrooms.

Veggie Food Store

Directed by Cheryl Witzel, the Veggie Food Store is planning to open for customers, beginning Thursday, March 18, from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. Everyone must be masked and social distancing respected. Only one customer at a time will be permitted.

Here's a schedule to help distribute the customer flow: 2:00 - 2:45 pm: For people with students at UJA 2:45 - 4:00 pm: For all other people who do not have UJA students.

Books with a Mission

Books have always been a part of my family. Although my mother only completed the ninth grade, she was very instrumental in instilling a love of reading in all of her five children. Every evening she would read our Sabbath School lessons (sometimes 2 or more for the age disparity), followed by a chapter from a Primary or Junior Reading Course Book. She always bought both sets from the ABC each year.

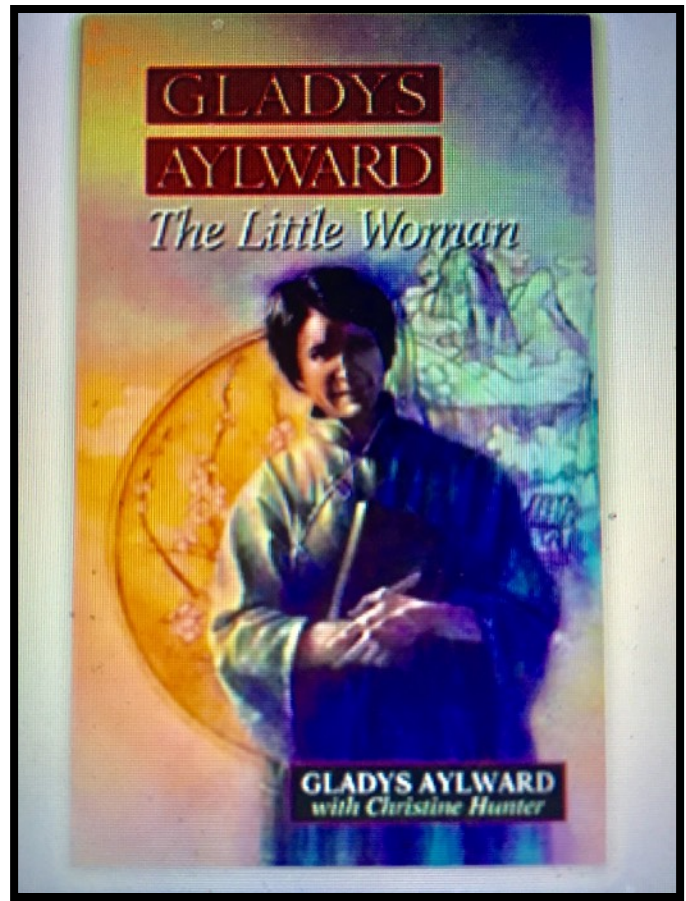
Some of my favorites were the mission stories that captured our hearts and minds and took us to far-off places of danger and adventure. Doing God's work was very rewarding to so many of the missionaries and the people with whom they shared the gospel and health message.

Through the years I have continued to include mission stories while reading to my children nightly and for my own inspiration. One book I found a few years ago was Gladys Aylward: The Little Woman.

It is the most incredible story of a young woman, who against great odds, traveled to China, without support from any mission, to assist an elderly missionary lady in her work there. Danger, Adventure, and Great Love are the three themes that run throughout this book. As it takes place before World War II and into the start of it, it is graphic in a few places, telling stories of people standing up for their beliefs in a changing world.

As I looked for it on Amazon, I found there are a number of writers who have written Gladys' biography. Amazon prime members can even watch an hour video, that includes some of her photos and recordings of her talking to audiences. It is in the book section under Gladys Aylward: The Small Woman with a Great God (below it says "watch video here"). So thankful we can all continue to be missionaries whether here or abroad.

By Debbie Merritt



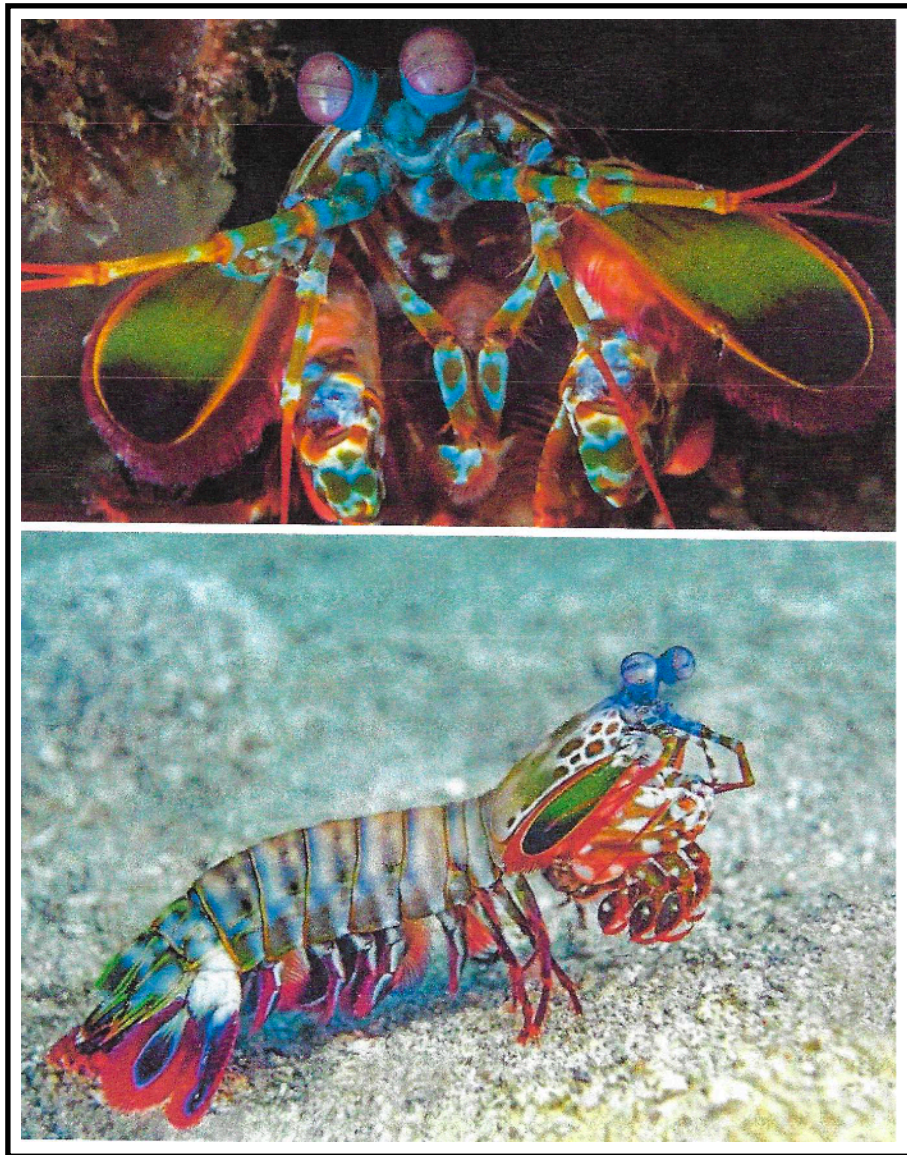
The Heart of the Matter is edited and produced by David and Donna Faye Anderson. You may contact them at 707-234-9234 or online. davendonaa@icloud.com.



Right: A Mallard Duck couple on Clear Lake Photo by David Anderson

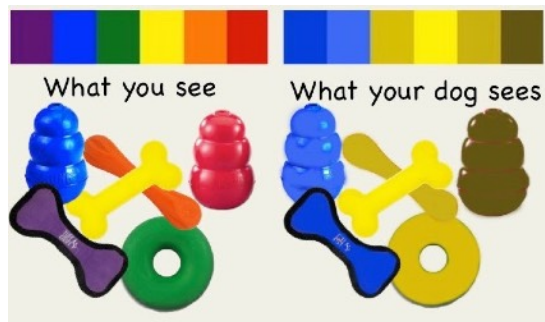
A Lesson From Nature

By Dan Kuntz

The mantis shrimp

What no eye has seen, no ear heard, nor the heart of man imagine, what God has prepared for those who love Him. 1 Cor 2:9 (ESV)

Do you know someone who is colorblind? My father has a tough time matching clothes up for church or work because of red/blue color blindness. Dogs only have two cones in their eyes and can discern yellow and blues but the rest is brown/grey. Dogs can see about 10,000 colors while humans who have 3 cones can see about 100,000 colors (if you aren't color blind).



Do you know who has the best eyesight in the animal kingdom? The Mantis Shrimp. Its average length is 4 inches, but some can reach up to 18 inches. These small aquatic creatures have 12 photoreceptors as compared to our 3; imagine the colors they can see! Humans can perceive visible light between red (700nm) and violet (400nm).

The mantis shrimp can see into the infrared (720nm) and deep ultraviolet (300nm). Imagine all the extra colors they can see and experience. Additionally the mantis shrimp can see polarized light; we need sunglasses or filters to do that.

This makes me think of 1 Cor. 2:9. What are we going to be able to see, hear, and comprehend when we are made new upon Christ's second coming? What will the universe look like through new eyes? How will creation appear unblemished after thousands of years of sin? Come Lord Jesus, come!



Early
spring
colors.
Photos:
by David
Anderson

