

FAITH

HOPE

LOVE



FAITH HOPE LOVE

Week 1

FAITH, HOPE & LOVE | these three remain

Week 2

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Week 1

FAITH, HOPE & LOVE

| these three remain |

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Following Jesus. It's what we do if we claim in anyway to be "Christians." The first thing Jesus said to his disciples when he called to them was. "Come, follow me." Well how do we do so? What are the most important parts? Or at the least the fundamentals? If we boiled it down what would be left? This is the question we will be exploring in this series And throughout we are going to discover why the title of this book is the three words, **FAITH, HOPE & LOVE.**

READ 1 Corinthians 13:1-11

Paul shares in this passage about how important love is. If you did anything in the Christian life without it, that action would become useless and empty! He explains how vast love is (something we will explore in depth later in the series) and ends by sharing that where all the other good yet less important things will eventually fade away, these three remain.. Faith, Hope & Love.

1. Well what are they then?

How would you describe:

- FAITH? (belief & trust)
- HOPE? (looking ahead & acting now)
- LOVE? (unconditional & sacrificial)

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-3

2. What does this passage in Thessalonians imply about these three fundamentals?

3. Are these three understood by you and fundamental to how you live?

Faith, Hope & Love engage with us both internally (changing our character) & externally (changing the way we live). They change us on the inside and the outside. We're going to look at both these different facets over this series with a week devoted to each.

PRAY

Week 2

FAITH | belief

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Belief is a strange thing. We say that something we believe in is something that **we see** is true. However, it's different to a fact which says that something is true **indisputably**. As Christians we are called to believe, it's a big part of having faith. What is belief then? Why do we need it? Why is it important?

1. What would you say belief is? How would you describe it? What are things that we believe in (aside from God)?

2. If belief is about truth and reality then how is belief different to a fact (also about a truth and reality)?

3. As Christians why do we need to believe in God? What might be problems with belief?

READ Romans 10:8-13

4. Paul writes to the Church in Rome about understanding what we need to be saved. What are the two things? Why do you think they are important?

5. Belief seems to be an **inward understanding** of a truth. We "believe" that God raised Jesus from the dead and in believing that we recognise that this action saves us. Do you think that Jesus' rising from the dead actually happened? Do you think that if it does in fact save us?

6. Recognising the resurrection of Jesus is a fact is the reason we then believe that the action is from God and that it is for our salvation. Fact and belief need to go together. What crushes belief is actually doubt and fear. Have you ever doubted in something you believe to be true? What caused you to doubt?

READ Ephesians 2:1-10

God's love for us caused him to send his Son to save us [FACT]. However, it is by having faith that he did all this which is what saves us [BELIEF]. We need to have faith, to believe that God saved us yet we also don't believe blindly, we have proven facts on which we base our belief!

7. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith... " Grace is a gift. Something we didn't do. God saves us for free! Yet it is through faith, through believing in this gracious gift that we can take hold of it. Do you believe in grace? Do you believe that God loves you so much as to do all this for you?

8. Do you take time to work out all the things you believe in and back them up with fact? If a friend asked you what you believe in what would you say? How would you back it up?

Pray

This week take time to ask yourself (and answer) "What do I believe?" Check in on whether you trust in God's love and grace enough that what Jesus did on the Cross has sorted you out. Reread both passages. Pray that your belief may continue to grow and be strengthened as you continue to get to know Jesus and get to know God. Pray for God's help when you doubt, that he can make all things clear. Can you call out "Jesus is Lord"? Do you believe in your heart? Read up on some stories of faith shown in belief in Mark's Gospel [Mark 2:1-12; 5:21-43; 7:24-30]. What do these encounters with Jesus teach you about having faith?

Week 3

FAITH | trust

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Belief is the first step in faith. The second is trust. Once you believe all that God has done for you, then you need to live it. Trust is all about relationship with God, handing over control of your life to him. Do you trust God with your life?

READ Proverbs 3:5-6

1. What does it mean to trust someone? What are the expectations of trust? Who do you trust in your life?
2. Just as last week where we needed to "believe in our heart" this week we are called to trust with all our heart. How often do we only believe with our head or trust with our head instead?
3. When we just leave belief and trust with our head we can often stop seeing God as a person we have a relationship with. Belief and trust become just things we do. However, what would it look like if we use our heart? How does a relationship with God change faith (think back to last week)?
4. In v6 it says to submit. What does submission mean? What could it look like?
5. What parts of your life do you find difficult to submit to God?

6. What is the promise we find if we trust and submit? Do you feel you often have crooked paths?

READ Ephesians 2:1-10

We did look at this last week but we come back to this passage again with fresh eyes beyond just believing in what God has done. God's act of salvation requires an act of trust from us. To go along with being made alive we actually need to live and therefore trust in the one who gave us life!

7. Grace has saved us, a free gift. Do you find it difficult to trust in something given to you for free?

8. What does this passage show us about the life we get to live if we trust in God?

9. Do you feel these things are a part of your life? Do you feel alive because of Jesus?

Pray

Do you trust God? Take time this week to practice submitting everything to God. Ask that your faith may increase so that you can be reminded of your relationship with God, of his grace and love. Challenge yourself by submitting to God in an area you find difficult and ask for his help in this. Read the story of Lazarus' death in John's Gospel [John 11:1-44]. What does it show you about faith shown in having belief of who Jesus is and what he's done as well? What does it show you about trusting him with your life?

Week 4

HOPE | looking ahead

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Hope. Our second fundamental! Where faith enables us to believe and to trust our God in the present though we may not see everything, hope adds that we may not see everything **just yet!** Hope is so important in this world because as we look around it can be looking quite hopeless. God shows us Jesus and gives us promises. Hope is all about looking ahead to when those promises are going to be made reality!

1. Have you ever gotten into a difficult situation that was so bad it caused you to lose hope? What was it like?

2. How did you regain hope? How did having hope help?

READ Hebrews 10:23-25

3. In this passage we are called to hold onto hope because God is faithful. What ways does the author show us which helps us hold "unswervingly" onto our hope?

4. How does spurring on and meeting together to encourage one another help us hope more?

Week 5

HOPE | action

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Have you figured out the hope that you profess? Which of God's promises do you look forward to the most? Hope doesn't stop at looking ahead to all this great stuff. Hope also calls us to act in the here and now! We can't pretend something to come is so great if we don't think it's worth bringing into our world today. Think about all that Jesus did? Didn't all his actions mirror what God promised to come?

1. How does having hope in the future translate to acting in the present?

2. Think about your school experience. When you think of all the assignments, tests and exams that you sit, do you ever feel like they are absolutely useless to your actual life? Then why do you do them?

READ Acts 2:42-47

3. As Christians, we hope in something to come (in the same way you might hope for a certain career) yet so often it doesn't translate into how we live in the here and now (as does our study sometimes). In what ways did the early church practice hope in their day to day lives?

4. What did these acts reflect of what the church thought would be coming?

5. What do your actions say of what you think is to come in the way you speak to, share with and live alongside people?

READ Romans 8:22-25

6. Do you think the world is as it should be? What's wrong with our world? What are things that frustrate you?

7. Paul talks of the whole creation groaning and us groaning with it to be made right. How does hope save us from this pain?

8. We are called to wait patiently for what we hope for? How good are you at being patient?

READ Mark 1:14-15

9. Jesus constantly talks of the Kingdom of God that is to come. After his first words, he begins to show the people what that kingdom looks like and also to encourage them to start living it out too, at least in part. We need to both be patient for the kingdom to come "active patience." Where we wait for what we hope in, yet actively start bringing it about. In what ways can you bring about the Kingdom of God today?

PRAY

Take time this week to look at stories of the Jesus. Read about the Kingdom of God and think about what that Kingdom will look like and what it looks like right now [Check out Matthew 13]. How did Jesus start bringing about the Kingdom of God? If God is the ruler of the Kingdom and we are the subjects, what does serving God look like? Pray for opportunities to actively bring about the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Justice, Peace, Generosity & Hospitality.

Week 6

LOVE | unconditional

STUDY QUESTIONS:

As we read in the first week Love is the greatest of the three fundamentals! What makes love so great? When have you experienced love from someone that blew you away? Have you ever had times when you've felt unloved? This strange emotion and action is at the very heart of our relationship with God. Without love, we have nothing.

READ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

1. What is the impact of being Christian and not showing love?
2. What do we gain by having love? How do all our other actions become useless without it?
3. How does verse 4-8 differ from your idea of love?
4. Put your name in the place of love and see if the description of love fits the description of your life. How does it match up?

Love is tough. It's an action which involves courage and resilience to our own wants, and also to the hurt that others have shown toward us. When we look at love, we need to realise that in some ways, when God shows love to us, it is tough for him to do. We've hurt him and others and that makes loving us difficult! Here we learn that what God shows us is an unconditional love.

6. What does unconditional mean? Could you think of things that someone could do that would cause you stop loving them?

READ Mark 12:28-34

7. The two greatest commandments that Jesus gives us are to love God and love each other. What are the challenges of doing both these things?

8. Do you love God and love others unconditionally?

Loving people can be hard and sometimes loving them stands direct in opposition to other feelings we have towards people. When we get stuck in this dilemma we need to constantly go back to whether or not we ourselves want to be in relationship with God! We cannot continue in hating or not loving others if we want to lay claim to the love God shows us!

READ Romans 5:6-8

9. Can you think of any reason why you should still not love someone in light of God's love for us despite us turning our backs on him?

PRAY

Take time to sit with your own recognition of God's unconditional love for you this week. Explore the stories of Jesus and particularly his death on the cross [Read Matthew 27:11-66]. This action was done by God so that he could deal with the sin that separates us and reconnect us back to him. If we follow Jesus, our lives must also be lives of forgiveness to those who we are separated from and be reconnected with them too. Are there people in your life you need to forgive? Pray for courage, patience and all the other definitions of love this week that you may obey God's command of love!

6. John also says we are not alone when we seek to show love. Who is the Holy Spirit? How does the Spirit help us show love?

READ Philippians 2:1-11

7. What does Paul expect of us in our own relationships with each other?

8. What are you willing to lose? Is there anything in your life you'd be unwilling to part with? Would that thing come before the life that God has brought to you in Jesus?

PRAY

Take time to write down your week. Look at your timetable and list what your priorities are in your day to day life. How much is to do with yourself? If a need arose for another, would you be willing to give up the most important things on your list? Pray for courage to sacrifice time and possessions when need arises but also pray that in your current relationships you can look to others needs above your own at all times!

We've finished this series on FAITH, HOPE & LOVE. As we've explored you may have realised that while the fundamentals are incredible and powerful giving us great blessing in life, they're also not glamorous. They are hard work, involving courage, trust, action and sacrifice.

After exploring these three fundamentals what is going to change in the way you follow Jesus?

Are you willing to make these the three things that remain?

Are you going to follow Jesus?