

## FAITH

### Overview

Speaker: Adult

Talk #3

Length: 15-20 minutes

### The Aim of the Talk

The purpose of this talk is to invite the participants to trust God's love and purpose for their lives. Such trust is the essence of faith. Weaving your own story into the information as much as possible will help strengthen the invitation to faith; that is, to consider what living their own lives by faith would mean by seeing your life as an example. In this way, your assignment is not to give a lecture or sermon but to bear witness. That means to share what you've seen, heard, and experienced of faith in God and how God is trustworthy through your own life. Think of and look for ways that faith plays a role in your daily life—from relationships to decision-making—in everything you say and do. Think about times you struggle with feeling isolated and labeled by yourself and/or others; reflect on how remembering that God created and loves you helps in those times. Get in touch with the ways that faith is more than just an abstract belief for you, where you see it being lived out in active ways by you and by others. What you discover will be the richest content for your talk.

### Before Writing Your Talk

The following pages offer resources to help you connect your story and experiences with the theme of the talk.

- Begin with reading through “Exploring the Theme.” As you read, highlight points that stick out to you, points you really want to emphasize in your talk.
- Then move to the “Engaging Your Spirit” section. This section is to guide your reflection as you prepare for the talk. You do not need to include them in your talk, but you may include what reflection came up for you, if you would like. The participants will engage with some of these exercises during their table discussions following your talk.
- Spend time in prayer over the “Exploring the Theme” and “Engaging Your Spirit” sections. Pay attention to personal stories that come to mind, making notes on the specific thoughts and words.

- Open yourself to God’s love, pay attention, and see what happens. Do not feel like you have to make every point in the “Exploring the Theme” section; rather, use it as a guide for your writing.

## Exploring the Theme/Talk Outline

“Will you join me in the ‘Prayer to the Holy Spirit’ found on page 7 of the *Worship Booklet*?”

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations; through Christ our Lord. Amen. You may be seated.”*

## Introduction

- Choose a brief, simple way to introduce the talk to give participants an idea about your topic.
  - Share a “Chrysalis Moment,” a time of transformation when you discovered a new aspect of faith.
  - Share the story of the man hanging from the branch or another reflection from the “Engaging Your Spirit” section.

“My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and the title of this talk is FAITH.”

### 1. Faith is trusting God’s love and God’s purpose for you.

- a. It’s not easy, and it’s part of our life-long journey. Before you can say yes to God being in control of your life, you need to first have accepted that you are God’s beloved, made in God’s image and created with a unique purpose.
- b. Each and every one of us is created special by God, and God loves every single one of us more than we can possibly imagine. Once we begin to really realize and accept that, then we can begin to trust God’s purpose for us as well.
- c. This trust helps us shed negative labels.
  - i. Without confidence in God’s grace, we become fearful and isolate ourselves from God and others.
  - ii. We can all relate to times of feeling separated from others, through exclusion, embarrassment, or expectations that aren’t met.
  - iii. When we feel isolated from others, we start to think badly about ourselves and do things that we might not usually do because of that growing unfounded belief that we are worthless, useless, or meant to be miserable.

- iv. We label ourselves, and we label others—but we know that God labels us “very good” and “God’s beloved.” The labels we use and the ways we often think about ourselves and others are constricting, confining, and contrary to living the full and free life of grace, love, and peace that God wants to give us.
- d. Faith, on the other hand, frees us from the control of limiting labels, isolation, and fear.
  - i. In Christ, God wipes away any negative labels. God names us in ways that reflect our true identity as God’s beloved. When we celebrate ourselves as God’s beloved, it empowers us to be real and free as we move forward on our Christian journey.
  - ii. Sometimes it takes extraordinary people or events to remind us of our belovedness by God, but having faith in God and God’s good plan for us can be a part of seeing us through tough times.
- e. Faith isn’t just believing abstractly or blindly assuming something’s true.
  - i. Christian faith is not a passive belief that God exists. It’s also not a simplistic answer for every problem in life.
  - ii. It’s possible to say it and not practice it. Faith requires courage to live our lives fully, trusting God’s grace and guidance all our days.
  - iii. Faith is “letting go and letting God” lead us into the fullness of life that we find in Jesus Christ.
  - iv. It is a sense of God’s presence, an awareness that there is more to life than what we can see, touch, hear, and smell.
    - 1. Faith is confidence that God is good and can be trusted.
    - 2. Faith is trusting scripture and tradition, alongside our experience and reason, that we can have a relationship with God.
    - 3. It is actually trusting that God will give us what we need to grow in God’s purpose for our lives.

**2. Share a “Chrysalis Moment” related to faith.**

- a. Share a time in your life when faith transformed from an abstract or blind assumption to something more active.
- b. What about this transformation process was difficult to embrace?
- c. What changed for you as far as your viewpoint of faith?

**3. Faith is active—both a noun and a verb.**

- a. Noun

- i. Faith is belief, trust, and those assertions that God is good, God loves us, and God has a unique design for our lives.
  - ii. We don't have to be pressured to do something or be someone that we know isn't right for us; our happiness comes from being true to who we are and who God is calling us to be.
  - iii. Our faith is there in our times of frustration or discouragement to remind us that God has something better for us, that God will bring us through to a life that is even more than we can imagine.
- b. Verb
- i. Faith is also putting those beliefs and trust into action.
  - ii. It's not enough to know it; we have to act on what we know.
  - iii. It means breaking down those walls that we build to isolate ourselves from God and others, to remove the things we put in place to shield ourselves out of fear and distorted thinking.
  - iv. We need to let our faith enable us to let go of things that prevent us from realizing our full potential as children of God, and to live in the truth that we are created and loved by God.
  - v. We will talk more in later talks about how we live this out.

**4. What does this look like? There are quite a few biblical pictures of faith.**  
(Choose two or three to highlight in your talk.)

- a. Hebrews 11 details the "Heroes of Faith" and gives an overview of many of them. Whose stories would you add if you could?
- b. Psalm 23 is a great expression of faith (see more in the "Engaging Your Spirit" section below). Which verses point to a kind of faith you need?
- c. Abraham and Sarah (see Genesis 12:1–2) heard and responded to God's call to leave what was familiar for the Promised Land God would show them. They are called the father and mother of faith. Where do you hear a call to leave what's familiar and step out to try something new?
- d. Also, Abraham and Sarah heard a promise that seemed impossible: that they'd have a baby in old age. They couldn't believe it, but they trusted in God anyway—and it happened! That baby became known as Israel, father of the nation of God's chosen people (see Genesis 18:1–15, 21:1–7). What does God want for you or this world that seems impossible to you?
- e. Daniel (see Daniel 1–12 but particularly chapter 6): Daniel held to his faith in God and the life God called him to lead, even when it landed

him in a den of hungry lions. Do you ever feel like you're about to be eaten alive? Do you live by fear or faith?

- f. Esther (see Esther 4): Esther spent much time in prayer, fasting, and waiting to decide how God wanted her to respond and how she would approach the king to save the Jewish people from destruction. This request to the king was risky for her own life, yet she was courageous and bold in her request.
- g. Peter (see Matthew 16:13-20): Simon was the first disciple to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah—even if he didn't fully understand at the time. What do you want to understand better? Later, Peter's fear got the best of him (see Luke 22:54-62), yet Jesus renamed him "the rock" and built the church on faith like his. Do you realize and believe Jesus wants to do something through you?
- h. We see clearly from these examples and the many others throughout the history of the people of God that faith is far more than just a fact that one knows or acknowledges. Faith is action; it is a way of life; it is something worth living and dying for.

**5. God does not promise us that a life of faith will be easy.**

- a. We may still struggle, we may still have dark times, we may still suffer—but God promises to be with us always.
- b. We will live a life of relationship with the God who created and loves us, who has a purpose for our lives. We will not be left alone.
- c. We will have "Chrysalis Moments," times of transformation that strengthen our faith and remind us of God's presence. (Consider sharing another one of your own "Chrysalis Moments.")

**6. This Chrysalis experience is one example of an act of faith.**

- a. By showing up as a team and as participants we are trusting that God will meet us here.
- b. Faith takes place in these small ways each and every day.
- c. May you keep taking these small steps of faith, and may you know you never go alone!

**7. Fly with Christ!**

## Engaging Your Spirit

### *Reflection*

One night, a man was walking along a path and stumbled over a cliff, falling a considerable distance before catching himself on a branch. Looking down, he realized that he might be killed if he dropped to the ground, and there seemed to be no way to climb back up. So he began yelling for help. “Is there anybody up there?” he shouted. As soon as he yelled out, a calm voice replied, “Yes, I am here.” The man paused in surprise, then asked, “Can you help me?” The voice answered, “Yes, I can help you.” The man paused again, then asked, “Who are you?” The voice responded, “I am God.” After another long pause, the man asked, “What do you want me to do?” God answered, “Let go of your limb and depend on me to save you.” After an even longer pause, the man called out again, “Is there anybody else up there?”

This is a humorous story and not to be taken literally, of course, but it does illustrate how scary faith in God can sometimes feel. Have you been in a situation where it felt like you were at the end of your branch, so to speak? How did you get back on your feet? What role did faith play in that situation? What does having faith mean to you? What difference does faith make in your life? What would it take for you to have faith enough to trust God completely, no matter the situation?

### *Rephrase Psalm 23*

This psalm is one of the most well-known and well-loved in the entire Bible—and for good reason. It shows us a picture of someone in need who has faith in God—and that gives them companionship, peace, comfort, and everything else they need to walk in confidence, even in their darkest times. Read the psalm out loud, and notice which phrases jump out at you the most. Take a few minutes to ponder them and reflect on both why they speak to you and what God is saying to you through them. Now take the psalm and rewrite it—but as someone without faith, as someone who does not have any confidence that God is there or that God cares. What parts of your new psalm jump out at you the strongest? What parts feel the scariest or the hardest to deal with? Prayerfully read through the original psalm again, thanking God for the parts that feel already true for you, and asking God to lead you in ways to embrace the rest as well.

### **Labels (Mark 1:9-11)**

We all do it. We put people in little boxes and label them. Labeling works for boxes because we can sum up what's in a box. People, though, are not boxes, and we can't know what's inside another person, just as they don't know everything that's inside us. Jesus was known as "Jesus of Nazareth from Galilee," "carpenter," "son of Joseph and Mary;" others labeled him in various ways, such as a glutton and drunkard or as a troublemaker always hanging out with the wrong crowd. Reflect on the labels people have given you. Make a list of them. Do any of them describe you completely? Which are accurate? Which do you feel okay about? Which do you resent or despise? Now think about the labels you have given other people. Have those labels been accurate and complete? How do you think people feel about the labels you have given them?

Jesus discovered in baptism how he was known by God. Write a paraphrase of the blessing Jesus heard in verse 11. Read aloud your paraphrase. Imagine God wants you to hear this blessing for yourself through Christ. Prayerfully sit with this blessing, listening to what Christ calls you. Reflect on this experience in your journal.

### **Writing Your Talk**

- Use the "Exploring the Theme" section as your main guide as you write.
- Allow what you have learned and the experiences you have remembered to point to ideas and stories that will help you outline your talk and begin writing.
- You will want to speak from the heart, **to be honest and real**. As you share personal stories, make sure to do so in a way that does not pretend to have all the answers or everything figured out. Share authentically about the joys and the challenges of living out the topic of your talk.
- As you write, continue to remain open to God's love and presence in your life. Let writing your talk become a spiritual practice, a creative exercise that engages both mind and spirit to help you express your own thoughts, understanding, and experience. By doing so, you will be helping others experience God's love.

### **Be Sure to Include**

- Faith is trusting God's love and God's purpose for you.
  - You are God's beloved, made in God's image.
  - This trust helps us shed negative labels.

- It isn't just believing abstractly, or blindly assuming it's true.
- It is possible to say it, but not practice it.
- Faith is active—it's both a noun and a verb.
  - Include an invitation to consider what living their life by faith would mean for them.
  - One or two “Chrysalis Moments” to illustrate the parts of this talk that are most meaningful to you. See the *Chrysalis Team Manual* for a discussion of what “Chrysalis Moments” are (p. 37).

**For details and tips about how to write, rehearse, and present your talk, see the “Preparing Your Talk” section in the *Chrysalis Team Manual* (pp. 35-38).**

### Table Discussion Guide

1. What negative labels do I need God's help to shed?
2. What does having faith mean to me?
3. What difference would faith make in my life?
4. What aspects of faith are easy for me to believe? Which are more difficult?