

Five Steps to Faith

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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Step One: Try

To get faith, first we need to try it. We need to ask ourselves the questions that faith answers, and see how we feel about the answers.

We begin with the most basic question of all:

Where do we come from? Is it possible that everything—the universe out there and also the universe within us—is just here, from nothing, for nothing, and is on its way *to* nothing? Or does it make more sense to us that the world and we were made, made by God?

So why did God make us? Is it possible that we were made for death? Is it possible that we who were made to want life so desperately were given life so that life could be taken away? Or is it not evident that we were made for life, life with God who made us?

Why then are we here, in *this* world? Is it possible that we are here merely to kill time before we go to heaven? Or is it not obvious that we are here for something important? And what is more important than love? And by loving don't we grow in love, and in our likeness to God? And by becoming more like God, aren't we growing in our ability to share His life when finally we see Him face to face? And by this process, isn't God giving us some responsibility for who we are, the chance to become our own person?

So if what we do is so important, why do our lives depend on so much we cannot control? After all, we do not choose our parents, or where we are born, or when, or countless other events that form us as the people we are. Is it possible that God just lets these things happen—that He has left us here at the mercy of luck, or other people's badness, or even our own created weakness? Is it possible that God left us here at the mercy of events that even He does not control?

Another way to look at it: When God made the world, did He know what was going to happen? Did He care? Is it possible He had no plan? And if He did plan the events of our lives knowing how we would respond to them, wouldn't this make us the people He wants us to be while at the same time giving us a role in our own creation?

What do you think?

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Why does to “try” faith reveal to us the truth? To try faith reveals the truth because God knew that we would hear about faith from many people, that most would seem sure, and that often they would contradict one another. Therefore, He knew that unless there were some way for us to see the truth for ourselves, faith would not be possible. For this reason, the truth of faith was written into human nature and will be recognized by anyone who looks for it in the right place.

How precisely do we look for the truth of faith? We ask ourselves the questions that faith answers and *consider the alternative*.

Step Two: Decide

So often we are urged to “have faith,” to “believe.” Having faith and believing are spoken of as acts of the will. It is not, however, the human experience that we can believe because we want to. Indeed, when people do believe what they want to believe, we speak of it as bad. Therefore, the question is put to us: How is faith an act of the will? Is there anything we can do to have faith?

The answer is yes; we can decide. We can ask ourselves the questions that faith answers and decide what we think.

Unfortunately, we resist this decision. We also know that if we decide we do believe, we will have to live differently. We know that we will have to let people see that we believe. This is scary. It seems safer to hang on to a vague faith that asks for little. The problem is, a faith that asks little offers little. It does not give the gifts we get if we really believe.

Therefore, we need to decide. And how do we do that? We look at what faith says. We consider the alternative. We see what makes more sense.

Does it make sense that we are just here—yes or no?

Can it be that we were made for death—yes or no?

Is it imaginable that we are here to just kill time? Isn't growing in love that makes us greater—yes or no?

When God made the world, did He know what was going to happen—yes or no?

Since, in fact, the truth is clear, what stands in faith's way is our reluctance to decide, to take a stand, and to be faced with the need to live it out.

Of course, properly understood, faith offers so much more than it asks.

Look, see, decide.

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Another reason we don't decide: We think we that already have. We don't disbelieve so we think that we believe. We are not against faith. Indeed, we hope that what faith says is true. But if asked how we would live differently if we did not have faith, we would have nothing to say.

We confuse hoping that something is true with actually believing it. The first takes nothing. The second takes decision.

Step Three: Trust

Sometimes we are reluctant to decide about what we believe partly because we don't believe that we can know the truth. We know what we feel but we don't feel that we know. We don't feel sure about matters of faith. Still:

We feel, for sure, that the world has come from somewhere.

We cannot imagine that we were made for death.

We definitely feel that love is the way.

And we do feel that things happen for a reason. We can hardly feel otherwise.

What we do not realize is that these feelings *are* our knowledge of the truth. They are the response of our whole self to questions involving the whole of reality. This is how the truth of faith is supposed to be seen.

We can say this because these experiences are the best we have. They are the best that anyone has. They are surely telling us the truth. After all, God would not have put us here without the power to do what we are here for. We are here to grow in the love that prepares us for eternal life. We must have been given the ability to see the truth that makes this possible.

Trust—yourself.

Step Four: Jump

Faith may begin as we ask ourselves the questions that faith answers, but the proof of faith is in the living. Living faith, we experience the superiority of a life that only faith makes sense of. Living faith provides the ultimate evidence that what we believe is true.

Herein lies a problem. In order to feel sure about our faith, we need to begin to live it before we feel sure. In this sense, we must just jump in.

What do we need to do? Actually, it's quite simple.

To vindicate our faith in heaven, we need to let go. We need to look at anything we thought we absolutely *had* to have and, in the name of our faith in heaven, acknowledge that we don't absolutely have to have it. This is not to say we don't want it, but now we acknowledge that we don't have to have it.

To vindicate our faith in love, we need to love. We need to do something for someone's else sake. We need to give and not worry about getting something in return. To do what is good and not worry whether anyone will notice. To do what is good because it is good.

To vindicate our faith in God's plan, we need to embrace, ourselves and our lives. We need to choose to be ourselves regardless of what others might think. We need to acknowledge what we regret, and accept it as our life. We need to say, "come what may," and mean it.

Just do it. Just jump in.

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Another reason that faith needs to be lived in order to be had: To choose something, we must reject what contradicts it.

Everyone knows that you cannot bet on both sides in a game and win. To win you need to choose—for one and against another. We understand this when it comes to sports, but sometimes we miss it when it comes to faith.

We say we believe. We say we pray at home. We avoid the big sins.

But we never speak of our faith. We do not in any sense practice it. We give or serve as little as we can get away with. And if we can get it, or get more of it, we must.

Sometimes we are tempted by the idea that we are having the best of both worlds. In reality, what we have is the worst. With one foot in faith, we often feel guilty. But, with the other foot in the world, we still suffer over what we do not have, or what others might be thinking.

To gain from faith we have to choose it. This means that we have to unchoose what contradicts it.

Step Five: Now

Since faith involves sacrifice and even risk, the time for faith is never now. We can always find some reason not to do what is risky, especially if there is no one to force us and, because others would rather not be challenged, society tells us not to.

The time for faith is now. Therefore we must make it now. We must recognize that no other time is coming, and that only our decision can give us the greater life we seek.

If what we seek is a greater life, why not now? If not now, when?

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We need faith now because if we wait until something terrible happens, it may be too late.

When something terrible has happened, we become upset. Often we become too upset to consider the questions that faith answers. We have had no chance to live the answers out. We have had no time to become accustomed to a whole new way of looking at life.

In contrast, if we have already done the basic work that goes into believing, if we have already become accustomed to faith's way of looking at life, when we need it we will have it. Faith will work for us when we need it because it worked for us when we didn't.

Faith: *You need it before you need it.*

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