

How do I know if my faith is growing?

The answer to this question depends on your understanding of the word “faith.” God defines faith (Ex 19:4-6) as:

- a) Believing in the historical and real existence of God.
- b) Placing a trust in God, like Abraham, that engenders an obedience to His word.

When Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee, carefully examine Jesus’ calming the storm.

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (Matt 8:23-27, ESV)

1. When Jesus calms the storm, what new facts do the disciples learn about Jesus?

2. Carefully observe the behavior of the disciples before and after Jesus’ resurrection. In the context of growing your faith, what do you learn?

Before Jesus’ resurrection:

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” (John 20:19, ESV)

After Jesus’ resurrection, Peter’s sermon is before about 3000 Jewish men:

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. (Acts 2:14-15, ESV)

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Teacher Notes

The answer to this question depends on your understanding of the word “faith.” God defines faith (Ex 19:4-6) as:

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It is essential that the student understands what the word “faith” means. There are other lessons in this curriculum and deeper articles in this site that the teacher can use to prepare for this class.

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1. When Jesus calms the storm, what new facts do the disciples learn about Jesus?

Ask the student: what sort of miracles do you recall Jesus doing in the gospels?

Jesus previously miraculously provided food, healed the sick, and exorcised the demon possessed. Jesus was doing things only God could do at a personal level.

Ask the student: what do the disciples learn about Jesus in this incident of stilling the sea? What did the disciples realize?

The disciples realized that Jesus is Lord over nature. Jesus could control nature.

2. Carefully observe the behavior of the disciples before and after Jesus’ resurrection. In the context of growing your faith, what do you learn?

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Ask the student: what do you observe of the disciples’ behavior before and after Jesus’ resurrection?

Before the resurrection, the disciples were afraid of being identified as followers of Jesus. After the resurrection, they spoke boldly about Jesus to Jews.

Ask the student: what is it about the resurrection that emboldened the disciples? Why did they no longer fear death? Encourage the student to think about this within the context of the definition of faith: believing in the historical and real existence of God.

Faith is based on historical facts. When Jesus was on earth, He did things for human beings only God could do; but, the disciples learned something new - when He controls nature, Jesus is like God.

The disciples learned even more - Jesus' resurrection removed any doubt that the invisible God in heaven truly exists.

Ask the student: is knowledge that God exists sufficient for faith? Encourage the student to think about the second part of the definition of faith. Here's something to consider:

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” (John 12:49-50, ESV)

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:1-3, ESV)

Faith isn't just knowledge about the facts of Jesus and His work, but whether your trust in those facts engenders an obedience to God.

Now the disciples knew without a doubt that their Messiah was truly the Son of God whom death has no power over, and because of their trust in that knowledge, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) that was promised earlier (John 16:7-15). Thereafter the disciples spoke boldly and evangelized the truth about the gospel.

How does this apply to our lives? How do you know if your faith is growing?

Reading and listening to the Bible is a lifelong discovery about the facts of God, His Son and the Holy Spirit. Like the disciples, as you learn more, your trust deepens in the reality of God and His word such that you willingly obey and live by His word.

As your faith grows, you will see a change in your moral values and priorities in life.

With a growing trust and obedience in God's word, benefits, such as the fruits of the Spirit, will manifest (Gal 5:22; 2 Thess 1:3).

You can see your growth in faith as you grow in biblical knowledge and trust in its absolute truth. You'll discover that obeying God is the best thing to do and you'll learn the right view of the world (1 John 5:1-4), make changes in your behavior, and make better decisions in life.