



fledge  
flĕj: to grow the plumage necessary for flight



## Lost Words: Faith Sloppy Definitions

In the last two editions of *fledge*, we talked about the lost word “sin” (part 1 & 2). In this issue let’s go into some thoughts on the lost word FAITH.

FAITH—more than any other word in this series—is under attack by a **sloppy** secular view of religion. On too many occasions I hear television interviews and conversations using FAITH to mean something of a personal yet subjective belief:

*“You have yours, I have mine, they are all the same anyway...”*

And then I flip the stations and hear about how we are to celebrate diversity, not just ethnically, but culturally and religiously:

*“Are you religious? Me too! Let’s celebrate!”*

It is widely believed that you should not say that another religion could possibly be wrong. It is called

“judgmental” or “bigoted” or “offensive” or “arrogant” or, if none of those words have enough punch, you’ll hear the ever-dreadful word, “intolerant.”

This is how a **culture devoid of God** redefines words that relate to Him. They use the same spellings and the same sounds. But they do not include the same meanings.

Mark Twain thought FAITH was “believing something you know ain’t so.” And you can search online for the meaning of FAITH and find that many skeptics define it as “believing something contrary to the evidence.”

Yet, when you go into a court of law, you will hear words like “in good FAITH” which is different than the way Twain and the skeptics define it.

Teen culture and many of their parents believe FAITH means “sincerity.” So if you have FAITH in God, it means you are “sincere” about God (whatever he, she, they, or it happens to be), whether you have any good reasons for it or not. And if you are “sincere” about your behavior, then that makes your behavior acceptable. I hear this reasoning regarding pre-marital and extra-marital sex too frequently.



*"It's okay to have sex because I really, sincerely love him."*

## Sincerity has become the premier virtue that sanctions everything.

In the church, we show how much the culture has influenced us when we talk of faith as "blind" or "a leap" or "childlike." We often use **FAITH** as a replacement to being thoughtful. Sometimes I wonder if we use **FAITH** this way to sound more "relevant" to those who have never heard about Jesus. **Being "relevant" at the cost of confidence** is not a smart way to go.

So how did Jesus think about **FAITH**? He never spells out a definition. You find it by paying attention to how the word is used in his culture.

Let's me quickly say he didn't think it was "childlike." A Bible verse used to defend this view of **FAITH** is found in Matthew 18:3. Jesus said we must become like a child. Yet, when we look at the verse in context (which we should do with all verses), we see in verse four that Jesus is teaching about the **humility of a child**, not the faith of a child. To read some more on "childlike faith," go [here](#).



Did Jesus think faith was "blind"? He knew the story of Abraham and how Abraham followed after God to go to a land that he didn't know. Yet was Abraham going blindly?

Let's think about this for a second. Suppose someone told you there was a waterfall ten miles away in the woods. Would it be blind of a person to walk to a waterfall through a dense forest with no compass, no map, and no survival gear? I think so.

But let's suppose a guide told you about a waterfall and said he'd take you there. You have a **compass**, a **map**, **provisions**, AND a **guide**. Would it be considered "blind" to go find the waterfall that way? Not at all. We are prepared. And we have someone who knows the way, even though we've never seen the waterfall ourselves.

This is how it was with Abraham. He had God as his guide. He knew the regions. He didn't move blindly, yet he is still called a person of **FAITH**.

There are many different examples in the life of Jesus that I could list—sightless men, hurting women, fearful fisherman. But what is important in these examples is that Jesus knows "a leap" or "sincerity"



won't get the job done. The object of one's **FAITH** is of the deepest importance.

**"Faith is only as good as its object,"** says Professor Robert L. Wilken of the University of Virginia. It is a "reasonable faith" said Hilary of Poitiers, the fourth century bishop, who likened faith to a **"rest with assurance, as on some peaceful watch-tower."**

Think about different ways you have used faith at home, at church, in conversations with friends. What has secular and skeptical definitions done to lose this word, **FAITH**?

How can you **refresh** this word in your life? What does this begin to tell us about a God who wants to be known and trusted?

In the next issue, we'll continue the discussion on **FAITH** and what it means for our walk with God.

**Got questions/comments?**

Feel free to **email us.**

or

**Join us for Ask! LIVE Wednesdays 6-9PM pacific**  
Bring any question or puzzling life situation

