

Understanding Faith Formation

*Theological,
Congregational,
and Global Dimensions*

Mark A. Maddix, Jonathan H. Kim,
and James Riley Estep Jr.

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Introduction

Dimensions of Faith Formation

As you pick up this book, you might be wondering, “Why another book on faith formation? Hasn’t enough already been written about this topic?” If you are asking these questions, you are not alone. As authors, we raised the same questions when contemplating writing this book. We acknowledge that significant work has been done in this area, particularly since the rediscovery of ancient spiritual formation practices. The surge of literature on spiritual formation has brought it to the mainstream of the church. We also recognize that James Fowler’s *Stages of Faith* was written over four decades ago and has since received significant praise and criticism in the literature. Fowler’s influence on the field is unparalleled and has provided significant research in how persons develop faith. Both progressive and conservative scholars have provided ample research building on Fowler’s theory to advance the discussion of faith formation.

Yet at the same time, we recognize that religiosity and faith development are in decline in the North American Christian context, particularly when it comes to church attendance and participation in Christian practices. The growth of the nones, those who have no religious faith, is affecting how faith is being expressed in our context. Religious apathy reflected as Moral Therapeutic Deism and a lack of biblical literacy have resulted in a recipe for frustration and concern among Christian faith communities. The church has good reason to be concerned about the next generation’s faith formation.

In light of these concerns, we believe that a book on faith formation is needed to address the theological, congregational, and global dimensions

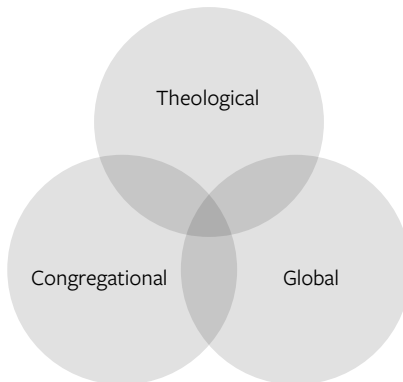
of faith formation. As authors, we are well versed in the literature of faith formation and believe that a book on faith formation can help educators, pastors, and church leaders understand and practice their faith more deeply. We also believe that there is a great desire among Christians to embrace new avenues of spiritual growth and development, particularly in the midst of a culturally diverse world.

Book Content and Design

This book, titled *Understanding Faith Formation: Theological, Congregational, and Global Dimensions*, is an attempt to develop an integrated and holistic approach to faith formation that has a strong biblical and theological core. We use the term *dimensions*, a mathematical term that means to give dimensions and properties to an area. Faith requires certain properties necessary for its formation. Our dimensions of theological, congregational, and global are three interwoven dimensions that work together to provide Christians with a framework for faith formation. All dimensions are necessary, and when one aspect is neglected, it hinders a person’s growth. Figure 1 provides an illustration of how these three dimensions work together.

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 focuses on the *theological dimensions of faith formation*. Chapter 1 defines and traces the meaning of faith through the Old and New Testaments. Chapter 2 reviews faith formation from the perspectives of the major movements in Christian tradition.

Figure 1
Dimensions of Faith Formation



Chapter 3 summarizes James Fowler's theory of faith development and the development of an evangelical view of faith formation. Chapter 4 provides a critique and the limitations of Fowler's theory based on content, structuralism, gender, and diversity.

Part 2 focuses on the *congregational dimensions of faith formation*. Chapter 5 explores the cultural challenges to faith formation, including biblical illiteracy, Moral Therapeutic Deism, and the rise of the nones. Chapter 6 illustrates the role that congregations play in forming faith through their rituals and practices. Particular attention is given to faith formation through worship, fellowship, preaching, mission and service, and justice. Chapter 7 focuses on viewing Scripture less as *information* and more as *formation*. The thesis is that Scripture was given to the church as a means to form persons into Christlikeness.

Part 3 focuses on the *global dimensions of faith formation*. Chapter 8 illustrates the powerful transformation that takes place as people engage in cross-cultural mission trips. As people engage in cross-cultural experiences, they experience disequilibrium that results in learning and growth. Chapter 9 focuses on the multiethnic and multicultural dimensions of the diversity of the kingdom of God, noting that cultural context is critical in understanding faith formation. Chapter 10 provides an understanding of faith formation outside North America by focusing on faith formation in global contexts.

Discussion questions and suggestions for further reading are provided at the end of each chapter so that the book can be used in an academic classroom, Sunday school class, or small group. The book is designed to help people engage in conversation about matters of faith and how faith is formed in a person's life. We hope this isn't just an academic exercise but a resource to help people grow in their Christian faith.

Case Study

One way to illustrate the theological, congregational, and global dimensions of faith formation is through a case study. Janet is a white female who is in her forties and has been a person of faith for many years. As Janet studies the Bible with other Christians and learns more about a biblical understanding of faith as expressed in Scripture, her faith is being developed through the *theological dimension*. As she participates in the regular rhythms and patterns of worship as an active member of her local church, her faith is being developed through the *congregational dimension*. And because Janet is part of a congregation that consists of people from a variety of ethnic contexts, her

faith is being developed through the *global dimension*. How she grows in her faith may be very different from how believers from different ethnic contexts grow in their faith, and she will need to own her own biases and limitations in order to understand more fully the diversity of the kingdom of God.

Faithful Reading

As you read this book, whether for assigned reading in class or as part of a discussion group or Bible study, we encourage you to enter into the narrative by placing yourself in the dimensions of faith formation. In other words, we would like you to consider where you are in your faith formation and what practices you need to develop to continue to nurture your faith. We also ask that you consider your own context, whether you are in a monolithic context, with people who look and act like you, or a multiethnic context, with people who are very different from you. Faith is always expressed and lived out in a particular context that requires you to reexamine some of your presuppositions about your faith and to recognize that people from other cultures may mature in their faith in different ways.

We wrote this book because of our love for people, for the growth of the church, and for the kingdom of God. It is our prayer that the reading and the discussion of this book will increase your faith and Christian practice and ultimately help you grow in your relationship with God.

Part 1

Theological Dimensions
of Faith Formation

1

Faith Formation in the Bible

One of the authors remembers going shopping with his daughter. After wandering through countless similar stores for a couple of hours, he finally broke down and asked, “Have you found anything?” She replied, “I don’t know what I’m looking for, but I’ll know it when I see it.” Faith is like that. *Faith* is a word often used but rarely defined. We recognize it when we encounter it but find it difficult to explain. In fact, most would be hard-pressed to express a coherent or encompassing description of faith. When asked about faith or faith formation, believers often react with a list of synonyms, like *trust*, *fidelity*, *growth*, or *maturing*, or they quickly quote Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” However, as a concept, faith usually remains more ill-defined and elusive than often realized.

For example, faith is what we believe—that is, *the faith* (Jude 3, 20)—but we are also saved by grace *through faith* (Eph. 2:8), walk *by faith* (2 Cor. 5:7), and live *by faith* (Rom. 1:17, citing Hab. 2:4). In fact, the author of Hebrews asserts, “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (11:6). Faith is the identifying mark of a Christ follower (Acts 10:45; 1 Thess. 1:6–7), but how is faith formed? How do believers grow in Christ?

To ascertain the biblical concept of faith formation, one has to sift through the vocabulary of Scripture as well as through all the passages on faith, belief, and faithfulness so as to filter out irrelevant passages and concentrate on those passages that provide insight into the process of faith formation in the life of the believer. It is not enough to do a lexical or grammatical study of

faith in the Old and New Testaments; we also have to study their contexts so as to determine the processes, contributing factors, and even deterrents to faith formation.

Likewise, the theological traditions that comprise the heritage of Christianity often reflect the church's wrestling with questions surrounding the nature of faith and its formation, and hence the biblical and the theological must be engaged in concert with each other. This chapter draws a portrait of faith and its formation as it occurs in the Old and New Testaments, providing a picture or snapshot of the subject, while chapter 2 presents a moving picture, a film, of how the church's theological traditions have addressed central issues in understanding the germination of faith and how it forms.

Faith in the Old Testament

When one reads the Hebrew Bible, perhaps one of the first observations that can be made regarding faith is that there is an apparent *absence* of faith as one may recognize it. While the word most often translated “believe” or “faith” (*ēmūnah*) occurs ninety-six times throughout the Old Testament, it most frequently is *not* used to describe the Hebrews' relationship with God. Rather, it is most often about human relations. The word *ēmūn* has a much broader meaning and occurs in a wide variety of contexts, requiring more contextualized translations. It basically means “to be firm, endure, be faithful, be true, stand fast, trust, have belief, believe,” with similar parallels in Aramaic, Arabic, and Syriac. For this reason, the translations of the Old Testament rarely translate it as religious faith. For example, the King James Version translates *ēmūn* as “faith” only twice, and the Revised Standard Version translates it this way only eighteen times. This is because the term *ēmūn* is rarely placed in a religious or personal context, more often being used in a legal context regarding covenants—that is, breaking or keeping faith between two people or nations (see Lev. 5:15; Deut. 32:51; Judg. 9:15–21).¹

But if faith is not the basic description of a relationship with God in the Old Testament, what is? The Old Testament describes humans' relationship with God as one of fear and trust.² Joseph P. Healey also correctly observes that “faith is described rather than defined in the Hebrew Bible. The description tends to be used in two ways, one where the relationship of Israel to Yahweh is described and the other where the relationship of certain key figures to Yahweh is described [e.g., Abraham, David, and the prophets]. The common characteristic of the two are their unswerving loyalty to Yahweh even in the

face of what appear to be insurmountable obstacles, and second is the purely gratuitous character of their chosenness.”³

Faith as a basis for relating to God is not readily found in the Hebrew Bible, but several instances do stand out in which faith is indeed a response to God and hence does occur in a more religious context than is typical. For example:

- “And he *believed* the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” (Gen. 15:6)
- “And Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they *believed* in the LORD and in his servant Moses.” (Exod. 14:31)
- “And he said, ‘I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no *faithfulness*.’” (Deut. 32:20)
- “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his *faith*.” (Hab. 2:4)

However, such passages are relatively few, especially in comparison to the New Testament’s treatment of faith. While *ēmūn* and its derivatives occur throughout the Old Testament, “with at least ten distinct categories in which the noun is used in Scripture,” eventually it “moves almost entirely to the use of the word in connection with God or those related to God” and primarily to describe God himself.⁴ The use of *ēmūn* applied only to God is further borne out by the fact that when God is the subject or the object of the verb, the Septuagint (LXX) translates it with *pisteuō* (“believe”) exclusively, with the exception of Proverbs 26:25.

In short, a study of faith in the Old Testament reveals more about God than it does about the faith of the Hebrew people. Therefore, while the Old Testament does serve as a background for better understanding Christian faith, to understand the nature, function, and formation of faith, we have to rely on the New Testament.

Faith in the New Testament

Faith is a more prominent topic and frequently occurring theme in the New Testament than in the Old Testament. Both the noun *pistis*, translated “faith,” and its verb form *pisteuō*, translated “believe,” are more prevalent, occurring over 240 times, with the adjective *pistos* (“faithful”) occurring 67 times. This word occurs in a variety of contexts, with each New Testament author

nuancing its use; for example, the noun *faith* never occurs in John's Gospel, whereas it is frequently used in Paul's writings. However, its use as the principle means of describing our response to and relationship with God is indeed consistent throughout the New Testament, and this use is unique in the ancient world. Dieter Lührmann notes that this notion of faith, the religious idea of faith, is almost exclusively a Christian concept, not even occurring in Hellenistic texts.⁵ Hence, while the word *faith* is nuanced differently throughout the New Testament,⁶ the use of *faith* in a religious context is distinctive to early Christian beliefs.

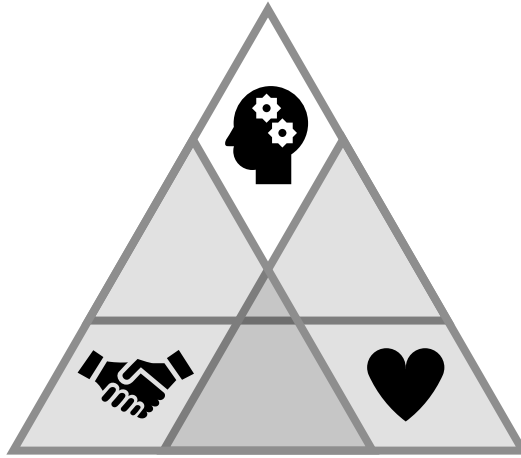
Faith conveys the idea of being persuaded and living a life consistent with a newfound truth—that is, the gospel.⁷ The New Testament word for *faith*, unlike its Old Testament antecedent, especially brings out “the main elements in faith in its relation to the invisible God, as distinct from faith in man.”⁸ Most times in the New Testament, faith is used in the context of trust and confidence in God.⁹ It is the process of coming to faith, perhaps the verb form, *pisteuō*, that occurs ninety-eight times in the Gospel of John alone. Given his purpose in writing, this is understandable: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by *believing* you may have life in his name” (John 20:30–31).¹⁰

Toward a Biblical Model of Faith

Based on the concept of faith in the New Testament and in the Old, a composite picture of faith, a snapshot, can be formed. A common idea of faith used throughout the centuries has been a threefold faith centered on Christ through the mind, the will, and action. While faith is indeed a gift of God (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4–6; Eph. 2:1–4) and not merely a human attainment, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the biblical witness shows that faith has these three dimensions. While numerous sources affirm this view, Gregg R. Allison provides a recent and thorough treatment of faith in the Bible. He describes our “holistic response” to God in faith as a matter of “rightly affirming the truth (*orthodoxy*), rightly feeling the truth (*orthopatheia*), and rightly practicing the faith (*orthopraxis*).”¹¹ Figure 1.1 depicts his idea.

Along the same line, Healey notes that in the Old Testament, faith is connected to remembrance (cognition), overcoming fear (affection), and doing (volition).¹² In the New Testament, when Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14–17, he reminds him that Scripture's formative influence includes the mind (“acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for

Figure 1.1



salvation,” v. 15); will (“all Scripture is breathed out by God,” v. 16); and life transformation (“profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,” v. 16), so “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (v. 17).

Here is a breakdown of Paul’s threefold model of faith in Christ.

“*Believe that . . .*”: *faith as cognition*. Sometimes the noun *pistis* denotes the content or object of our faith, what we believe (Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 4:1, 6; James 2:14–16; Jude 3). Beyond the notion of faith being a noun—that is, the faith—it is in part also what we believe and a means of knowing. We know and wrestle with truth by reasoning, but having faith is also part of our way of knowing. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Similarly, Paul explains the cognitive dimension of faith in 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12, writing, “Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” The relationship between faith and reason will be explored more in the following chapter, but for now, note that Scripture indeed includes cognition as a vital aspect of faith. The object or subject of faith is crucial since faith is not separate from what we place our faith in.

“*Believe in . . .*”: *faith as trust*. Romans 1:18–25 explains that humanity has the ability to intellectually affirm the existence and power of God, but that is only one kind of faith. Biblical faith is not the mere affirmation or acknowledgment of a propositional truth but placing trust, certainty, in it. As previously noted, in the Old Testament, trust is the concept that often parallels

faith in the New Testament, and the sentiments of Psalm 31:14 echo this: “But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my God.’” Faith builds a relationship with God by placing trust in him. This is why John could pen, “But to all who did receive him, *who believed in his name*, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). This is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God.

“*Faithful*”: *faith resulting in service*. While faith is not equivalent to works, a life of faith should manifest itself in works of service. Paul states in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” And James 2:22 says, “You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works.” Genuine faith is reflected in a genuine change of life, manifested by fruitfulness, service, and good works—not for salvation but because of it.

Biblical Insights into Faith Formation

It is important to differentiate between faith formation and faith development. This is not just a matter of semantics; the distinction between formative processes and developmental processes is significant. Oftentimes the term *faith development* is associated with theories of a more psychological nature, such as those of James W. Fowler and Fritz Oser,¹³ which emphasize the human phenomenon of faith. *Faith formation* leans less on psychology and human development and more on what James E. Loder described as the transforming moment, not an innate, purely human experience but a divine encounter.¹⁴

Scripture contains numerous metaphors for faith formation, such as maturing (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:6; Eph. 4:12–13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 4:12; Heb. 5:14; James 1:4), bearing fruit (Isa. 5; John 15:1–16; Gal. 5:19–23), and the process of growth (1 Cor. 3:6–7; 2 Cor. 10:15; Eph. 2:21; 4:14–16; Col. 1:10; 3:10; 2 Pet. 3:18). However, as valuable as a metaphor may be, it rarely conveys specific detail about the actual process of faith formation or what contributes to it. Several passages of Scripture provide more specific insight into faith formation in the believer, giving direction and substance to the process, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Paul admonishes the Corinthians, “We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that *as your faith increases*, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged” (2 Cor. 10:15). Faith is often not 100 percent but a balance between believing and wrestling with disbelief. The transparency of the father who asked Jesus to heal his child displays this:

“Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’” (Mark 9:24). Faith may have its starting point, but it is also meant to increase, gaining ascendancy over our unbelief so as to characterize our lives. This is echoed by Paul when he writes about those who are “weak in faith” as opposed to others (Rom. 14:1–4).

A Vocabulary Lesson

Based on the use of terms related to faith in the Scriptures, a relationship between these terms begins to emerge when focusing on the subject of faith formation. Generally speaking, the faith (*pistis*) is believed (*pisteuō*) and produces belief/faith (*pistis*) that grows into the characteristic in life recognized as faithfulness (*pistos*).

The faith (pistis). The faith, referring to the content of what we believe, is highlighted in Jude 3: “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” Christian faith does not exist in isolation, nor can it be self-vindicating. Faith needs a core, a center, something beyond ourselves on which it is positioned. In this regard, the center of faith is Christ, the gospel, or God’s Word or truth.

Believe (pisteuō). The verb *believe* requires an object and usually a preposition, for example, believes *that, in, into, or on*, denoting that the faith is not self-based but based on something else—that is, the faith.¹⁵ J. I. Packer acknowledges this: “The complexity of this idea [that faith requires an object] is reflected in the various constructions used with the verb [*pisteuō*].”¹⁶ *Believe that, pisteuein hoti* (Heb. 11:6; cf. John 2:22; 2 Thess. 2:12) emphasizes what is believed. *Believe in, pisteuein ev* (Mark 1:15; John 3:15; Eph. 1:13), *believe into, pisteuein eis* (John 1:12; Acts 10:43; 1 John 5:10), and occasionally *believe on, pisteuein epi* (1 Tim. 1:16), denote confidence in the object of faith—that is, Jesus. *Belief unto, pisteuein eis* (John 2:11; 3:16; 4:39; 14:1; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 1:29), signifies an action toward the object of faith, most typically Christ.¹⁷ Prepositions matter!

Belief/faith (pistis). Hebrews 11:1–3 says, “Now *faith* is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For *by it* [faith] the people of old received their commendation. *By faith . . .*” Faith is now something we possess, derived from the source of faith through the process of believing. Believing leaves a deposit of belief. *Belief that* is an affirming faith; for example, “I believe that” something is true. *Belief in, into, or on* connotes more than an affirming faith. It is a personal trust, commitment, or conviction that over time will begin to influence one’s identity and character.¹⁸ The

most common construction found in the New Testament (*pisteuein eis* or *epi* used with the accusative), which is virtually absent in the LXX and does not occur in classical Greek literature, expresses the process of moving out in trust, embracing the object of faith, and proceeding in confidence from it.¹⁹ Believing leads to belief.

Faithfulness (*pistos*). This is a descriptive quality of a consistent, dependable relationship—for example, between two people or, more frequently in the New Testament, between God and a person or even a congregation. This is the case with Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17), Onesimus (Col. 4:9), Epaphras (Col. 1:7), Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7), and the churches in Ephesus and Colossae (Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2). This is a quality attributed to both God and humans, with morality being a communicable attribute. God’s absolute faithfulness and humanity’s relative faithfulness to him are noteworthy, particularly in the Old Testament but in the New Testament as well.²⁰ Faithfulness is a quality of a mature, consistent, and pervasive faith in the life of the believer, the result of believing the faith over a long period, or as Eugene H. Peterson described the Christian life, “a long obedience in the same direction.”²¹

Add to Your Faith

Scripture describes faith as a gift, something we must rely on another to give to us. This has been echoed by the theologians of the church. But at the same time, the New Testament doesn’t treat faith as something instantaneous or as something that is immediately attained in its fullness. Rather, several passages insist that faith requires our attention if it is going to increase and reach maturity. Peter writes:

To those who have *obtained a faith of equal standing with ours* by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. . . . His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, *make every effort to supplement your faith* with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent

to confirm your calling and election, *for if you practice these qualities you will never fall*. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:1, 3–11)

Obviously, even if faith is a gift of God, we are instructed to care for it by adding to it qualities to insulate it and ensure its continued presence in our lives. Similarly, in perhaps one of the most controversial passages in the New Testament, James challenges the Christians in the diaspora to make their faith more tangible.

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:18–26)

This passage readily demonstrates that a faith that does not increase, does not grow, or remains intellectualized or merely inert in one’s life is not the kind of faith James maintains a believer should have or needs to have for a robust Christian walk.

What about *Faith* and *Spirituality*?

It is common, and in fact too common, in contemporary vernacular for the terms *faith* and *spirituality* to be used synonymously, almost interchangeably. While it is not wrong to create a term to describe a biblical concept, confusing it with the biblical concept can lead to distortion.

The term *spirituality* is not found in Scripture. This is not a matter of translation preference or translation bias; rather, the original languages of the Bible simply do not have a word for it. The term was introduced in the seventeenth century by French Catholic theologians and eventually made its way into Protestant theology in the nineteenth century and later into evangelical discourse.²² The words *S/spirit* (*pneuma*) and *spiritual* (*pneumatikos*)

are used in the New Testament on numerous occasions, but they are distinct from its use of *faith*.

What else distinguishes these terms?

First, *spiritual* is exclusively a New Testament term. While the work of the Holy Spirit is present in both Testaments, his work is far more pronounced in the New Testament.²³ It should be no surprise, then, that a survey of an English concordance demonstrates that the word *spiritual* is absent from the Old Testament. Whereas the Greek πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), *Spirit*, in the New Testament finds its equivalent with the Hebrew רוּחַ (*ruach*) in the Old Testament, no equivalent exists that matches the Greek πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*), *spiritual*, in the Hebrew Bible. Again, this is not a matter of translation preference or bias; there is simply no word in ancient Hebrew for *spiritual*.

Second, while both *spiritual* and *faithful* are adjectives, requiring an object to modify, their application is distinctively different. The term *spiritual* is used in the New Testament in regard to a variety of animate and inanimate objects, denoting a state of being or quality of being celestial, heavenly, not originating from or limited by this world, or purposed for something other than the temporal. Table 1.1 contains a list of things described as spiritual in the Bible.

Table 1.1
Spiritual Things in the Bible

gifts (Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; 12:1; 14:1, 12, 37)	seed (1 Cor. 9:11)
law (Rom. 7:14)	nourishment (1 Cor. 10:3; 1 Pet. 2:2)
worship (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5)	rock (1 Cor. 10:4)
fervor (Rom. 12:11)	resurrected/heavenly body (1 Cor. 15:44)
blessing (Rom. 15:27; Eph. 1:3)	opposite of natural (1 Cor. 15:46)
truth (1 Cor. 2:13)	songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)
discernment (1 Cor. 2:14)	anti-Christian forces (Eph. 6:12)
words (1 Cor. 2:13)	wisdom (Col. 1:9)
man (1 Cor. 2:15)	house/dwelling (1 Pet. 2:5)
status (1 Cor. 3:1; Gal. 6:1)	

Faithful, however, is applied to a narrower list of subjects, most typically people and their ministry or God’s/Christ’s faithfulness toward us. It is not used in regard to an inanimate object, with the possible exception of “faithful saying” (*pistos ho logos*) in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:15; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11–13; Titus 3:8). While the two terms may be related, they are not interchangeable, and the concept of spiritual seems to be more broadly encompassing than that of faithful.

Finally, spirituality and faith are not mutually exclusive but complementary, meaning we must explain their relationship. While spirituality and faith are not synonymous, they do not negate each other's significance in the life of the believer. Spirituality seems to have a more experiential dimension, with a limited connection to cognition or rationale, a connection that is often relegated more to faith.²⁴

| Conclusion

There is more to defining faith in the Scriptures than what might be first realized. The Old and New Testaments provide distinct portraits of faith—not contradictory but not identical either. Likewise, the vocabulary used to give faith dimension and depth enlightens the study of its meaning, including its distinction from the related, but not identical, concept of spirituality. Faith seems to be both precise in its core but far reaching in its implications for the believer.

| Discussion Questions

- In regard to the three dimensions of biblical faith (mind, will, action), which one has primacy in your life?
- Can you identify some things that would increase your faith or some next steps that would aid in your spiritual growth (see 2 Pet. 1:1, 3–11)?
- How would you describe the relationship between faith and spirituality? What factors influence your response?

| Further Reading

Estep, James Riley, Jr., Gregg R. Allison, and Michael J. Anthony, eds. *A Theology for Christian Education*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008.

Leclerc, Diane, and Mark A. Maddix. *Spiritual Formation: A Wesleyan Paradigm*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2011.

Loder, James E. *Transforming Moment*. Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989.