

# Hope or Faith?

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LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—If someone were to drop out of the sky and ask you to explain the difference between hope and faith, could you do it?

Faith and hope are clearly two different things represented by two different Greek words (*pistis* for "faith," and *elpis* for "hope"). They are used often together, even side by side, as distinct concepts.

Notice two examples:

- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).
- And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

At my house we had something happen that in its own homey way illustrates the difference between faith and hope.

When you get up in the morning, get into your car, and turn the key. do you have "faith" or "hope" that it will start?

I would venture a guess that more often than not you don't sit there with the key in the ignition while thinking, "I hope this car starts." Usually you "have faith" the car will start, and it never occurs to you to think otherwise. You act as if you knew all along that the car will start. You just know that it will.

You may be thinking, "It might be true that you think your car will start, but you don't know a thing about the car I'm driving." And that is exactly the point. This very issue is an illustration of hope. "I hope this car starts this morning."

We recently had a bitter cold snap in my part of the world, and our expectation changed from certainty that the car would start to hoping it would start. "I hope the car starts this morning."

Look at the first verse of Hebrews 11 again: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Most mornings I have the substance of belief that my car key will work. I know this because of the evidence of a thousand prior experiences that the combination of spark plugs, battery, and gasoline will all work together to provide the spark I need. It might be something hoped for, but it is also expected. Faith that God will do as He promises is just like that.

This is not to say that hope is a lesser virtue than is faith. In fact, in that great love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 hope ranks high and is among the three great virtues that will "remain" even after all the great gifts of the spirit pass away (verses 1-3, 8-12).

Curious, is it not, that hope, which is the godly response to the uncertainty of things not yet assured, will remain in the Kingdom and will rank right up there with both faith and love?