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## What is Faith?

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## What is Faith?

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Faith, like religion, is not impossible to define, but somewhat difficult to group into a single fixed description. There are no laws that require a person or a group of people to have faith; therefore faith comes from our own personal choices and happenings in life. Based on my own experiences in life so far, faith has been a pivotal part when it comes to my outlook on life and my trust in others as well as in myself. Faith also plays a leading role when it comes to my sister, Idia. Having a family member with a mental disability undeniably creates numerous challenges in life, but faith makes it somewhat more manageable and easier to be hopeful about the future."



*Uwa Oduwa*

## **WHAT IS FAITH?**

Faith, like religion, is not impossible to define, but somewhat difficult to group into a single fixed description. There are no laws that require a person or a group of people to have faith; therefore faith comes from our own personal choices and happenings in life. Based on my own experiences in life so far, faith has been a pivotal part when it comes to my outlook on life and my trust in others as well as in myself. Faith also plays a leading role when it comes to my sister, Idia. Having a family member with a mental disability undeniably creates numerous challenges in life, but faith makes it somewhat more manageable and easier to be hopeful about the future.

Defining faith makes one truly consider and reflect on their life in the past, present and future. Personally, I define faith as a compelling and strong assurance in something or someone that my mind tells me is true. Faith can also be considered like an invisible security blanket that serves as a source for reliance and comfort. I am mindful that there is not necessarily any proof that faith exists or does not exist, but I remain firm on my belief of faith. Faith is a component of my instinctive knowledge that allows me to remain hopeful and confident about future situations in life. More importantly, faith does not have to be based on or associated with religion. A person

does not have to be religious to maintain faith. Even if a man, woman or child *is* religious, it does not matter what kind of religion they are affiliated with to have faith.

My definition of faith has come from many aspects of my life. A major part of my life that relies on faith relates to my older sister who has Autism and Agenesis of the Corpus Callosum. Diagnosed when she was younger, her disability limits the verbal and motor skills that usually develop in individuals at a normal rate and time frame. My sister, who is four years older than me, grew at a much slower rate than other children her age. When it came to everyday activities like walking and talking, she lagged behind her peers who did not have a neurological disability. At this point in time, my sister's vocabulary and overall speech mechanisms are restricted due to her disability and slowed brain growth. However, I have complete faith in my sister that her speech will develop and that she will be able to communicate on a higher, more advanced level someday.

When I was younger, I looked up to my senior sister just like anyone else would. As I got older and learned more about her circumstances, I started to become increasingly aware that I did not have the "typical" older sister. She would not be able to share stories with me about her friends, school, or any other things sisters would usually share. Despite all of this, our connection has always been an interesting factor in our lives, and has been the foundation of my faith in her. Many family members, friends, and even people who did not know us that well took note of how I was able to understand my sister at a young age, regardless of her extremely limited verbal abilities. As of today, I am one of the very few people in her life that has the capability to fully understand her when she is happy, distressed, angry, frustrated, or scared. I along with my mother, feel that my sister will never cease learning new words, sentences, or behaviors because

of our unrelenting faith in her. Now as I am able to grasp a better understanding of faith, I can see how it motivates, guides and comforts people about uncertainties in life.

Faith is not a foolproof means for answers, yet it provides people with a sense of reassurance to be forward-looking. Having faith in my sister is the biggest motivator of hope which makes me confident that she will continue to improve in all areas, especially verbally. My sister has also improved over the years by beginning to learn to say short sentence, such as “I want juice” or “I want water.” All of this provides assurance that my sister will continue to learn as long as she is consistently provided with the right resources, like a proper school that specializes in helping people with her disability, as well as my constant faith in her. She depends on me to guide her and to become more aware of the world around her.

As with faith, there is no physical evidence that my sister will improve, but I know that she will because I believe strongly in her. I also know that I cannot control the possibility of my sister *not* improving any more in the future, but it is my faith in her that makes it possible to not lose hope in her. I truly believe that she will continue to grow mentally as time progresses. I am also thankful for her successes so far. She is able to walk on her own two feet, and do many things that everyday people do, like eat and go out with her family, with moderate amounts of assistance.

Moreover, faith provides people with a sense of community. For instance, people who have similar stories find it easier to relate to one another and may feel compelled to share their experiences of life with one another. Faith can easily be brought up in conversations, religious or not, because virtually everyone holds a strong belief in something or someone. One could have faith in their sports team, their teacher, their friend, their abilities, and so on. Having faith in

something is just an aspect of our lives and it should not be binding or holding us back from achieving anything in life.

My definition of faith can also be related to other life experiences. Besides the firm faith that I have in my sister, I have faith in myself to do well and to make the right choices in life. I know that I cannot predict the future, so I use faith as a guide for the years yet to come. I clearly believe that the faith I have in my abilities will guide me throughout life to surround myself with morality, work hard at whatever I do, and have an overall positive outlook on life. My faith serves as a motivator to maintain a way of life that is healthy both mentally and physically. Not having faith in oneself only hinders one's potential. Faith can work as our inner support network, in addition to other sources of encouragement. There will always be occasions when someone may tell another person that they are incapable of doing something, but by holding onto faith can help to deter any detractors.

In addition to having faith in my sister, myself, and my family, I have faith in the future. The future can be considered one day from now, one year to come or an eternity away. Either way, having faith that the future will come and be fair makes everything seem worthwhile. Undoubtedly, the future will have obstacles, but by staying focused on my goals and faith, I should be able to live life feeling somewhat assured about what is yet to come.

The word "faith" is a powerful term that has influenced the lives of virtually every human being. People may each have a different stance on how they view or define their faith. Faith can have completely different meanings based on one's culture or beliefs. One cannot tell someone how to practice or how to have faith. Ultimately, it is up to an individual to define his or her true meaning of faith and to commit to it.