

Faith, Hope and Charity

You might think as a Christian you understand what these three words mean. And you most certainly as a Latter-Day Saint assume that you know what these three words mean. However, I know from conversations that I have and that I read, the grand majority of members still fail to grasp what these three words actually mean. For example, there are members who say “all you need to do is love” and there are other members who say “no, that is incorrect, that’s a sectarian notion!” Both are wrong and both are right. If you understand what the real definition of charity is then yes, charity is all that one needs. If you however have a warped definition of it, then you are incorrect in assuming that is all you need. First and foremost, before I even begin, people need to understand that there is a difference between brotherly kindness or love and that of charity. I don’t believe that I am going out on a limb when I say that the grand majority of members do not possess a fulness of charity, and I will explain this fully later when I define the terms. Brotherly kindness and “worldly love” refer to “treating your neighbor as yourself”, meaning you are showing acts of kindness. It is also important for me to point out at the onset that one needs to understand that with all of these terms there are currently in the world at least three understood definitions: the world’s definition, the sectarian definition and the Lord’s definition. Obviously the world and sectarians can have multiple definitions as things change over time but the Lord’s definition has not changed since the beginning of time. The first and most important thing that you need to understand about every single one of these words is that they are all action words, they are all verbs to the Lord. They are not feelings, they are not ideas, they are not arbitrary thoughts, they are not impossible to define- they are actions.

Faith

World View:

What does the world mean when it uses the word faith? Almost exclusively when I have heard the word faith used in the world it is used to convey an idea of trust, loyalty, fidelity etc. For example, “I have faith in my husband”, “I have faith that my car will get me there”.

Sectarian View:

Faith in the sectarian notion is used in multiple ways, one common way is “blind faith” where something bad happens and a religious person is unable to explain why so they simply say “just have faith” which translates to “there are no answers, just blindly follow.” It is almost synonymous with “don’t ask questions”, almost in a form of a threat. Another way faith is commonly used is to define something that is incomprehensible ie. you are not supposed to understand God, “he is in all things, and through all things, and in your heart...” you are just supposed to have faith in him- meaning faith is to believe in something that is nothing, for something that is incomprehensible is nothing. There are things that we don’t understand but we know that there is an explanation for it, a law behind it, we just don’t know it. The sectarian notion is that there is no law behind it, it is unexplainable, and to have faith is to accept that it is unexplainable and that you will never understand it. The last way that faith is commonly used is almost a synonym to karma- meaning “everything will work out in the end.” Almost a hakuna matata mentality, “have no worries”, or the way the Lord explains it “all is well in Zion.”

Lord's View/the Truth:

Basic:

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the act of doing what the Lord tells you to do. Faith without the do (work) is dead.

Intermediate:

Faith is the “substance”, “the principle of action in all intelligent beings” and is not only “the moving cause of all action in intelligent beings,” faith is also “a principle of power in all intelligent beings, whether on heaven or on earth.” Real faith has to be based on knowledge, on things which are true and faith that leads to life and salvation has to center in Christ. “Three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation: 1. The idea that he actually exists, 2. A correct idea of his character, perfections and attributes, 3. An actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will.”

Advanced:

With faith, hope and charity I will not attempt in this paper to give an advanced understanding of these words' definition; one must do this on his/her own. There is no better resource on faith, hope and charity than Joseph Smith's The Lectures on Faith, provided for free on my website.

Hope

World View:

Hope according to the world is almost entirely used to describe a desire for a positive outcome ie. “I hope I passed the test”. The other way the world uses the word is as a synonym for dreams, it is a list of things that you want to accomplish, have done, a bucket list kind of thing- these are typically not goals because goals, when done properly have steps that you need to take in order to accomplish them. Hope on the other hand in the world is just something that you throw out into the ether and “hope” that it comes back favorable.

Sectarian View:

Hope is that of a wish or a desire of something positive from the Lord.

Lord's View/the Truth:

Basic:

Hope is one's trust in the Lord. It is made manifest by listening or hearkening to the voice of the Savior.

Intermediate:

When one has hope he trusts that the Lord will fulfill all of his promises, this does not mean that he believes that the Lord will prevent bad things from happening and allow only good things to

happen; true hope, trust in the Lord, is made manifest, its action is when one listens to the Lord and then hearkens to it, does, what the Lord tells him to do. The act of doing what the Lord says (faith) is a manifestation of one's hope (trust) in the Lord. This is shown repeatedly by prophets who hear the Lord and then do and then when they are in a life or death situation they say something along the lines of "I know that the Lord has the power to save my life, but if he chooses not to and we die, I still know that he is going to take care of me." Hope is the act of enduring through life regardless of whether or not it is good or bad, for when you trust God you trust that he is doing what is best for you and those around you and that ultimately when the time comes the Lord will be your advocate with the Father. Our hope (trust) in the Lord is strengthened as we exercise (act) in faith.

Advanced:

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Charity

World's View:

When the world thinks of charity they think of donating money, time or resources to an organization or cause that specifically benefits a target group or audience, typically a minority/poor/needy.

Sectarian View:

They either confuse or conflate charity with love and brotherly kindness and adopt that definition or they turn it into, much like faith, an unquantifiable, unexplainable, unmeasurable "feeling" in your heart. The reason why they do this is to avoid judgment thus avoiding all responsibility and accountability and they can then set the terms themselves, terms that they know that they either are already fulfilling or can easily fulfill. So "charity" or love in the sectarian world or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is thrown out as an answer to any "what should we be doing" question and they do this because their definition of love and charity is all the things listed above. So, if someone presses them and says "what does that mean specifically?" they will just list off items that have absolutely nothing to do with charity but things that they know they themselves are already doing. They then can pat themselves on the back and take a sigh of relief as they exclaim "all is well in Zion!" For example, ask a woman in the church "what does it mean to be a nurturer of children?" The answer to this is simply, to teach, homeschool and raise your kids personally (I could do a whole paper on just this topic- this is crystal clear doctrine). But that will not be the answer given to you by 99.9% of women in the church- they will respond almost exclusively with "it means to love your kids!" Imagine for a second if you asked men what it meant to "provide the necessities of life" and their response was "it means to love your children!"- they would be laughed to scorn, yet that's what women do here. And the reason why a man might say that when asked that question (but doesn't) is exactly the same reason why women respond with "it means love" and why? Because if pressed on that answer and asked

what does that mean, women can respond with whatever they want, and they do! I have heard the craziest responses to that- it is completely subjective. So your thought process is that men's requirements can be quantified down to a decimal point in their bank account but women's responsibilities are whatever they say they are. God forbid. So love/charity is used like a mathematician uses the variable "x", with its meaning completely up to the person themselves, and because of that they will only list things that they themselves are doing. A sidenote that is kind of funny, this will start a flame war in every Relief Society that I have asked this question, because one woman will answer and define love as a series of things that she does and another woman in the class will recognize that she does not do any of those things and will counter with her list and the war begins. It is completely subjective. You will find with the wicked who take the truth to be hard that they won't even be able to define charity OR love and it will break down into contention.

Lord's View/the Truth:

Basic:

Love or Brotherly Kindness is when you do things for others that benefits them and has no clear, immediate benefit to yourself. Charity is when one does (or is willing to do) something that benefits a person at sacrifice to one's self. It is the crowning attribute of the Godhead, the Father giving his Son and the Son giving his life.

Intermediate:

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that one cannot or does not obtain a "fulness of charity" until after one's calling and election (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p.9, "Perfect Love"). Moroni echoes this in Moroni 7:44-48, "wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all...charity is the pure love of Christ and it endureth forever...wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure." Charity is the mind or will of the Father. So to "love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, might, mind and strength" is charity, Joseph Smith taught that a religion that does not teach the sacrifice of **all** worldly things for the Savior will never generate the faith necessary unto salvation or as the Lord puts it so plainly, "if you love me, keep my commandments." One shows one's love by "doing whatsoever the Lord commands us" and once the Lord has proved that individual he will appear to him and seal him his, giving that person a fulness of charity, which makes you in completion a son of Christ.

Advanced:

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In conclusion, the simplest way to explain faith, hope and charity, is with that of the relationship between a parent and child. The parent tells the child to do something- if the child has hope or trusts in the parent he will listen to the parent. The act of doing what the parent said is an act of faith which confirms and validates his hope or trust and if the parent is a good parent, once the action plays out, the child will gain a knowledge that he can trust or have hope in the parent because the parent did lead them down a path which ultimately was for their benefit. The way that the Father gives his will to us is through the Holy Ghost- if we have hope in God when he speaks we stop and we listen. The act of doing what the Lord says is faith and that faith validates or confirms our hope or trust in the Lord. The more we do this process the stronger our hope or trust in the Lord becomes. If we love the Lord we will do all that He says, we will align our will with that of the Holy Ghost. Our own will is sacrificed and given to the Lord. Once the "Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith p.149-151) At which point in time the individual is given a fulness of charity. His mind, his will, is so in line with the Savior's that they become one, as the will of the Son is with the Father. As I said, at the conclusion of each faith, hope, and charity, I would highly recommend to take the time to prayerfully study the Lectures on Faith for an advanced understanding. If you say "all we need is love" and by that you mean "all we need to do is sacrifice our entire will and be completely obedient to the Savior" then you are correct. However, if, when you say "all we need is love" what you mean is "a warm fuzzy, unexplainable feeling in our belly- ie. a chemical response of our bodies" then you are a sectarian and you are wrong. God bless, God speed.