

The Building Blocks of Faith Toolkit

The Need to Know and Understand

For our faith to grow, each of us must grow in our knowledge and understanding of who God is, how God’s salvation story is unfolding over time, and what our own part is in that story.



Knowing God

Faith is based on a relationship of trust in God, and that trust comes from knowing God. God’s story tells us about God’s character, God’s actions, God’s promises, and God’s plans for us and our world. But to truly know God, we need to spend time with God.

Support

For our faith to grow and deepen, we need to respond to God’s deep desire to be in relationship with us. We do that by making time for God and by opening ourselves to the work of the Spirit so that we can grow to be more like Jesus. Faith practices, such as prayer and Scripture engagement help us do that regularly and with intentionality. They help our relationship with God flourish.

Faith practices aren’t “the next step” for older, seasoned Christians. They’re habits we can learn at an early age or at any other point along our life’s journey. To explore faith practices, check out the free resources available at crcna.org/FaithPracticesProject.

Knowing God’s Story

The Bible is a rich and wonderful story of how God created the universe, how sin warped that creation, and how God is making everything new. It’s a story of exile and restoration, of how God brought his people back from Egypt, back from Babylon, and back from their exile from the Garden of Eden through his Son, Jesus.

As we encounter the richness of God’s story, we begin to get a glimpse of the fullness of God’s grace. Whether we are children, teens, or adults, we need a robust knowledge and understanding of Scripture, not primarily so that we will know how to behave, but so that we will **come to know God and know who we are in relationship to God**.

To develop that understanding, we need to hear the stories of the Old and New Testaments. We need the poetry of Psalms and the wisdom of Job. We need the guidance and theological instruction of the letters to churches, and we need the rich, multifaceted history of God’s people from the books of Acts as well as 1 and 2 Kings.

We also need to know the stories of people like us who have failed and been forgiven, who have succeeded and rejoiced, and who have walked faithfully with God. Faith is built on a solid rock, and we, as God’s people, need to be able to recognize that rock. If we don’t know the story of God’s people found in God’s Word, then we will be like the people in the book of Judges who “knew neither the Lord nor what he done” for them (Judges 2:10).

Finding Our Place in God’s Story

Hearing the stories of faith from the Bible, as well as stories about how God is working in the lives of people today, assures us that God is at work in our own lives too.

Without the context of the stories of God and God’s people, we end up with a weak and incomplete picture of our faith. Christian Smith and Melinda Denton introduced the idea of “moralistic therapeutic deism” to describe the faith that many teens (and adults) express. Those who operate by moralistic therapeutic deism think like this:

- A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other.
- The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life, except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- Good people go to heaven when they die.

These five statements result in part from an inadequate knowledge of Scripture and of our own part in God’s story. They’re more of a general awareness of God that is then fleshed out with what we think God *ought* to be like, rather than who God *is*. They focus on our behavior and our feelings. But God is not primarily interested in our feeling good, and our faith is not just about learning to be good. Faith and behavior are both important, but they are not the same. God is interested in our becoming more and more like Jesus, in order to better serve God and our neighbor as we partner with God in bringing in the fullness of God’s kingdom here on earth.