

The Title Deed

Faith isn't a leap in the dark; the Bible's own definition makes it the foundation under your hope and the evidence you stand on.

FROM THE BOOK: CHAPTERS 5 AND 8

BEFORE YOU MEET

- Read Chapter 5 (“The Drift”) and Chapter 8 (“Something You Cannot Prove”) of *The Weight of God*. Chapter 8 is written for sceptics, so it’s a good one to read with a doubting friend in mind.
- Read Hebrews 11:1–12 and Romans 4:18–21 so you can introduce each in a sentence.
- Bring one contract of any kind: a phone plan, a lease, a car loan, the papers from buying a house. Black out anything personal. You’ll hold it up at the start of “The idea”.
- Bring Bibles, pens and a printed participant sheet for each person.
- Time plan for 75 minutes: 5 arrive and settle, 10 open, 15 the idea, 10 read together, 25 talk, 5 this week, 5 pray.

OPEN

10 min

What’s the biggest thing you’ve ever signed: a lease, a loan, a job offer, a mobile phone plan you regretted? Did you actually read it first?

THE IDEA

15 min

Quick prop first (1 minute): hold up the contract and ask, “Would anyone here sign this blind?” Leave it there and go on.

Here’s an objection most of us have heard, and some of us have held: isn’t faith just believing something without evidence? Switch your brain off, take a leap in the dark and hope for the best. Critics such as Richard Dawkins put it bluntly: belief without evidence sounds a lot like delusion.

The author of *The Weight of God* surprises people here. He agrees that if faith really meant deciding to believe something without good reason, the critics would be right, and reasonable people should walk away. But that isn’t what the word meant. As he puts it, “His accusation is based on a mistranslation.”

In the first century, *pistis* wasn’t a churchy word. It lived in army camps, courtrooms and markets. A soldier had *pistis* in his commanding officer, enough to follow him into a battle that might kill him. A merchant signing a

contract had *pistis* in the other party: he was staking his livelihood on their reliability. Nobody did that blind. You trusted someone because of their proven character, and there were consequences if that character failed.

Over the centuries, through Latin and then English, the word drifted like a message whispered down a long line, until “faith” became what we say when we don’t have evidence: a polite word for a guess.

Hebrews 11:1 is the closest thing the Bible has to a definition: “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (NIV)

Two Greek words carry that verse. The first, *hypostasis*, is a building word. It literally means “that which stands under”: the foundation. In old Egyptian papyri it turns up in legal papers meaning a title deed, the proof that the land is yours. The second, *elegchos*, is a courtroom word: proof, evidence that holds up under cross-examination.

So faith isn’t the leap you take once the evidence runs out. In the author’s words, “Faith is not what you resort to in the absence of evidence. Faith is the evidence you stand on.”

The rest of Hebrews 11 shows what that looks like. Noah built a boat for years under clear skies. Rahab risked her life. None of them switched their brains off. Abraham looked squarely at his age and Sarah’s, even raised it with God, then put his weight on the one who’d made the promise.

That’s a fair answer to the sceptic, and a fair question for us: what is your faith actually standing on?

READ TOGETHER

10 min

- **Hebrews 11:1–12.** Notice how many of the verbs are actions: offered, built, obeyed, went, lived. These are people building something costly on a foundation they trusted.
- **Romans 4:18–21.** Notice that Abraham doesn’t pretend the facts away. He faces them, then weighs them against the one who made the promise.

TALK ABOUT IT

25 min

- 1 Think back to the contract. Where have you heard faith described as the opposite of evidence: “blind faith”, “a leap of faith”, “you just have to believe”?

LEADER NOTE *Keep it open and honest. Some people will have been told at some point to stop asking questions. Don't argue with anyone's experience; just let the group notice how common that picture is.*

- 2 The soldier and the merchant trusted someone because of a track record. Who in your life has earned that kind of trust, and how did they earn it?

LEADER NOTE *Listen for time, consistency and promises kept. That's the whole point: pistis grows from proven character, not from a decision to stop thinking.*

- 3 Hebrews 11:1 uses a building word and a courtroom word. Which helps you more right now: faith as the foundation under your hope, or faith as evidence? Why?

LEADER NOTE *There's no right answer. Some people find the title deed picture steadying; others like knowing their questions are allowed in the courtroom.*

- 4 The author agrees that faith as “belief without evidence” should be rejected. How does it feel to hear a Christian say that? Does it make faith easier or harder to talk about with a sceptical friend?

LEADER NOTE *Welcome honest doubt here. If someone in the room is the sceptic, thank them. The series is for people who aren't sure, too.*

- 5 What evidence of God's reliability are you actually standing on: something in Scripture, in history, in your own life? And where does your faith still feel more like a guess?

LEADER NOTE *Offer pairs if the group is quiet. Remind people that the book's answer isn't to be more certain, but to look at what's underneath.*

THIS WEEK

5 min

Keep a track record. Each day, write down one piece of evidence that God can hold your weight: a promise in Scripture, a prayer answered, a time something held when you expected it to give way. If you're not sure about God, write down instead what your current view is standing on. At the end of the week, read your list back and ask: is this a guess, or something I can stand on?

PRAY

5 min

Thank God that he doesn't ask us to switch our minds off, and that he has a track record we can examine. Pray for anyone in the room who is carrying honest doubt, and for friends and family who think faith is blind. Ask him to show each person what their weight is really resting on.