

# EMBASSY

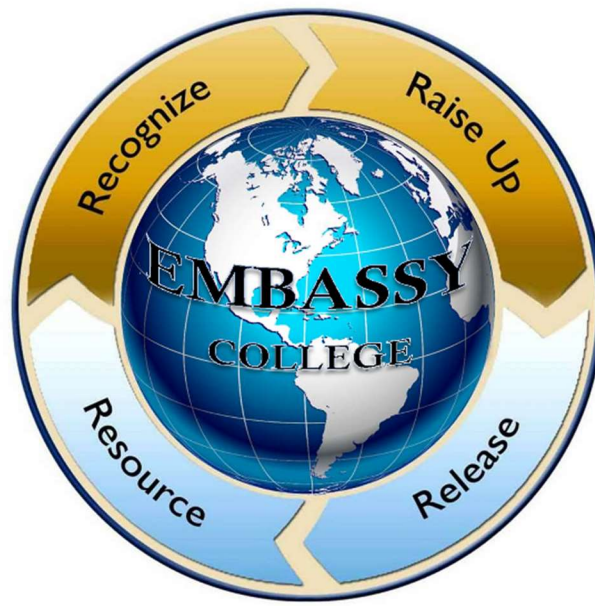
## COLLEGE



## TEXTBOOK (ACADEMIC VERSION) ANONYMOUS WOMEN OF FAITH

COURSE: ANONYMOUS WOMEN OF FAITH (BT710)

**Dr. Alvis Harthern**



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# ANONYMOUS WOMEN OF FAITH

## A THEOLOGY OF FAITH



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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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To my sister and dearest friend, Bonnie Jane Trimble

While not known worldwide as a woman of faith,  
those of us who know her well, know of her  
consistent, persistent faith.

# PREFACE

So very often as I listen to a speaker or minister in a church service, one word or phrase used by them will send my mind whirling. So it was when Carolyn Moore was speaking to the women of our church at our Tuesday morning meeting. She said, "I'm going to talk this morning about one of the unnamed women in the Bible." That phrase "unnamed women in the Bible" immediately caught my attention. I wondered how many of these women there were.

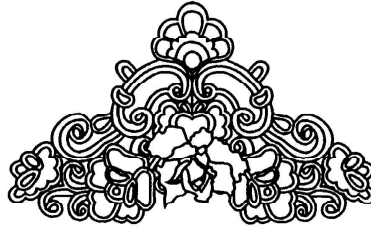
Later in the week, during my devotional time, I began to look for these women and to read the biblical accounts of their lives. As I meditated on them, one thing stood out for so many. At some time in their lives they demonstrated faith. While rereading their stories, I recalled others who also exhibited the same kinds of faith as these unnamed women. While they lived in different times, in different communities, and under different circumstances, they each demonstrated faith.

Many of these women of faith lived in Old Testament times. Yet in my further study, I discovered that the word "faith" is found only twice in the Old Testament. It is more a New Testament word. This caused me to dig even more concerning the meaning of the word "faith." It also caused me to consider further how faith becomes evident in the lives of people.

While I have not, in this study, considered every unnamed woman in the Bible, the ones I have selected can certainly teach us about living faith-filled lives. I trust that these women and the others who have bits of their lives included within the pages of this book will inspire you to exercise your faith.

This book, like most books, is not the outcome of only my thinking. It comes from the number of years that I have been studying the Bible, listening to sermons, and reading books written by others. To all of these I owe a debt of gratitude. I am also indebted to my husband for his patience and kind advice while I was in the writing process. To my friend and brother-in-law, Dr. Roy Harthorn, and my friend, Lamar Hunt, Chaplain (Colonel, Retired) U.S. Army, I express thanks for their comments on the manuscript. To my friend, Kay Atchison, and to my niece, Beth Trimble O'Brien, I say thank you for your time in making editorial suggestions. I am also indebted to Kim O'Donnell and Sheena Dabney for assuming some of my church responsibilities to give me more time for writing.

Alvis T. Harthorn  
Carrollton, Georgia



## Chapter One

# WHAT IS FAITH?

On one occasion Jesus posed a most provocative question. *“When the Son of man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:8) Was He asking this question only of His listeners because He expected an answer from them? Could it be that He was asking, with sorrow of heart, because He knew the answer? Or, was He suggesting that there would come a time when there would be no evidence of faith among His followers? At His second coming would He have to search diligently **to find** faith on the earth? Do you think His question is appropriate for this present generation? Would He pose this question to any of us, in any of our churches or home fellowship groups if He was here in person today?

Why was Jesus so concerned about finding faith on the earth? One might think that He would be more interested in finding love for we read, *“Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love”* (I Corinthians 13:13). We also read: *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He that does not love does not know God, for God is love”* (I John 4:7-8). These Scriptures seem to put high priority on love.

What about forgiveness? Did He think forgiveness was important? Surely He would be looking for people who could forgive because they would understand that if they were to be forgiven, they must forgive. It is written: “...*if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*” (Matthew 6:14-15).

What about the attribute of holiness? It is recorded that God will be looking for holiness as a trait in His people at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.*

(I Thessalonians 3:12-13)

This says that He will be looking for a holy people when He comes again.

Since love, forgiveness, and holiness seem very important to God, why did Jesus single out faith as the trait He wanted to find on the earth at His coming? The major reason is that Scripture declares: “*without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]*” (Hebrews 11:6).

Why is having faith so essential to pleasing God? Adrian Rogers wrote that faith is the Christian’s moral response to the character of God. Christians give God the honor that is due Him because of who He is when they express their faith in Him and in His Word. Thus, faith is loving, believing, and following God

for who He is and not just for what He has and what He can do. By giving honor to God through expressions of faith in Him and in His Word, Christians are pleasing Him. Paul challenged the Christians at Colosse to “*walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him*” (Colossians 1:10). Therefore, it is expected that the Christian walk must be a faith walk (the walk that makes one worthy of the Lord) if Christians are going to please God. Elsewhere in the Scripture, Christians are admonished to “*walk by faith*” (II Corinthians 5:7). By doing so, they can please God and walk worthy of their calling. What a tragedy that Jesus will have to search for faith among His followers at His coming.

If Jesus will be searching, Christians must have an understanding of faith. If they must have it to please God, how do they get it? More importantly, how do they demonstrate that they have it? How will He, and they, know that they have faith?

This study of faith was initiated by looking in Webster’s *Dictionary* and Tyndale’s *New Bible Dictionary*. Webster gives several meanings for faith: “be convinced, complete trust, confidence, reliance, unquestioning belief that does not require proof, and an unquestioning belief in God.” In Tyndale’s excellent discussion, faith is described as “an attitude of complete trust in God.” It is not to be just a *passing fancy* but a continuous attitude of trust and belief.

Webster’s and Tyndale’s definitions reinforce the idea that there is “natural” faith (faith that is based on the senses and experiences) and “supernatural” faith (faith that depends on the faithfulness of God, His Word, and His Son). Everyone has natural faith. This kind of faith is demonstrated everyday in the lives of all people, from the youngest of children to the oldest of adults. However, not everyone demonstrates supernatural faith every



day. Supernatural faith is demonstrated in the lives of followers of God who have an unquestioning belief in Him and His Word.

## **Natural Faith**

Natural faith is the “belief, trust, confidence, persuasion or conviction” that people have developed because of their experiences. This kind of faith is based on their expectations because of what they have learned through their senses and their experiences, by reading, and from teachings.

Not long ago, my friend Carolyn and I went on a trip. We were flying to Pittsburg for a church conference. As we boarded the airplane, I really believed that the airplane I was boarding was going to Pittsburg. What was the basis of my trust? I had read the sign behind the Delta desk at the gate. It read: “Gate 30, Flight 740, Pittsburg, leaving 10:25 A.M.” Also, I heard a Delta attendant call boarding instructions for a flight to Pittsburg. That confirmed the information on the sign behind the desk at the gate. From previous flying experiences, I had confidence that we were at the right spot to get on a plane to Pittsburg and I could believe the Delta agent’s boarding instructions.

When Carolyn and I boarded the airplane at Gate 30, I was sure that we would land in Pittsburg in about ninety minutes. This was in spite of that fact that I knew that some people, once they board the plane, must sit at the gate or on the runway many minutes before the plane actually leaves. I was aware, also, that not all airplanes arrive at their destinations. Television programs are occasionally interrupted with reports of an airliner crash. But my previous experiences assured me that these were

rare exceptions. So I boarded the plane fully believing I would arrive in Pittsburg around 11:55 A.M.

Not only do I have faith in the airline industry, but I also have faith in the cruise line industry. On a recent cruise in the North Sea, I had to have great confidence in the captain of the ship because there were times when no one could see anything because of the fog. And at night there were no streetlights to guide the ship's passage through those majestic fjords. I had to have faith that the ship's pilot and captain knew how to use the ship's instruments to guide us safely to our different destinations. And this faith existed even after seeing the movie, *Titanic*.

Some people, because of a lack of faith based on their's or other's experiences, will never take a flight or a cruise. They have read of ship fires and airplane crashes. They will travel only if they can go by car. Believe me, it sometimes takes greater faith on my part to drive in the Atlanta traffic than it does to get on an airplane or a cruise ship.

Have any of you had the delightful experience of watching a small child standing on the edge of a swimming pool looking at his father standing in the water encouraging the child to "jump and daddy will catch you?" Such courage it takes that first time for the child to finally leap out into space and into his daddy's arms! After a few times of successfully doing this, the child has great trust that his daddy will catch him. In fact, you can often hear him pleading, "Daddy, catch me," long after his daddy has tired of the activity and just wants to sit in his deck chair and snooze.

I know that many of you, like me, have had the experience of walking into a darkened room and hitting a light switch fully expecting the lights to come on (even when we know that the

electrical power is temporarily off). We do it without thinking because previous experiences assure us that if we hit the light switch in a room, the lights will come on. Likewise, most of us each day put a key into the ignition switch of our car, certain the engine will crank. We open a can of food with a picture of corn on the outside believing that there is corn inside the can. We open an envelope with trembling fingers because of the return address found on the outside of the envelope. All of these incidents demonstrate the existence of natural faith.

Everyone has natural faith. Some have greater faith in themselves than they do in others. They prefer to drive the car rather than ride with another driver because they trust their own driving skills more than those of others. They prefer to eat food that they have cooked than that which has been prepared by someone else. My father was that way at church picnics. He would always whisper to mother if he couldn't recognize her bowl, "Where is your potato salad?" "Is that your apple pie?" My husband goes to Mrs. Sims and asks, "Where is your banana pudding?" Natural faith in Mrs. Sims as a cook, confidence in her ability to make banana pudding, and a conviction that her banana pudding will be the best there makes him and most others seek out her banana pudding. They never consider it possible that Mrs. Sims' banana pudding on that day may be a failure.

Unfortunately, things can happen which cause us to lose faith. Many become distrusting because of experiences. People who they thought they could trust have let them down or hurt them. Institutions in which they had placed their faith have failed. Objects, that have been dependable in the past, break down. They become fearful, uncertain, and lack confidence.

This, unfortunately, can occur in the church world as well. People in the church in whom Christians had great confidence disappoint them. Ministers fail in their personal lives. Churches retreat from long-held doctrines and church disciplines. Some wonder if they ever again can have faith in anyone or anything.

In spite of this, Christians are so blessed. They have been given a kind of faith that goes beyond natural faith. They can have faith that does not depend on people, circumstances, experiences or things. This kind of faith is rooted and grounded in God Himself and in His Word.

## Supernatural Faith

Supernatural faith is faith that goes beyond natural faith. This kind of faith is possible for those who are followers of God and His son, Jesus. The Greek word for Biblical faith is *pistis* (the noun) and *pisteuo* (the verb). It means to have “a firm persuasion.” It is a firm persuasion or a strong conviction to believe in God and what He says. This unquestioning belief is based in God Himself and in His Word. It is a firm persuasion and conviction that God will do all that He has promised.

The author of the Book of Hebrews defined this kind of faith as “*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1). Supernatural faith is more than positive thinking or wishful claiming. It is my positive response to a revelation of God’s will that comes by His Word and His Spirit. It is the evidence in my heart that God has spoken and I accept what He has said.