

Those who don't understand what real faith is like sometimes speak of it as a blind leap into the unknown. They could no more perform this "Leap of Faith" than they could drive through rush hour with their head in a bag. But they first need to experience faith before they make this judgment. Faith has to do with trust, and the fact is that everyone has trust in something. Most people just don't see it from that perspective, and won't admit it.

I'm sure you have heard that one of the twelve points of the Scout Law is "Trustworthy." You can just imagine, though, the tricks that are played by Scouts on each other: snipe hunting, spider sniffing, hunting for left-handed smoke shifters, etc. One trick that I remember playing involved blindfolding a trusting young soul and having him step on a board. Other Scouts then lifted the board, telling the victim that he was now at 1 ft, 3 ft, and then 5 ft. The board was so shaky that he really had no way to tell just how high he was. Then he would be told to jump down to the ground. He would prepare his legs like giant springs to accommodate the great impact that he anticipated, and he would jump. Of course, the board was actually only about 6 inches off of the ground. We didn't want to hurt anybody, you know!

The interesting part (which some thought was rather funny) was that the ground was reached much faster than anticipated, and there was no real impact for the boy's legs to accept. The participant would generally just sort of fall over. But they were very relieved that they hadn't actually had to jump from the imagined height.

Well, maybe we weren't really very trustworthy in one sense. But we were trustworthy in terms of the actual welfare of our fellow Scout. We made sure that he was not in a position to hurt himself.

It reminds me, though, of what we referred to earlier as a "Leap of Faith." In our playful experiment, the victim actually could not see his position, and what he was jumping into. But in the spiritual world we have a full view of God's Goodness, even though we may not see it clearly due to the fog in our own mind. So our "Leap" should not be something that we do without real knowledge.

I know what it means to jump without that knowledge. Have you ever been told to go take a flying leap? This is what I did one time at a place called Gray's Cove. It was a great camping place, and I remember running full-tilt through the woods with a tremendous feeling of the freedom of boyhood. Unfortunately, I wasn't familiar as I should have been with the terrain, and suddenly I realized that I had come to a ridge with a significant drop-off to the ground below. I had too much momentum to stop; I passed the point of no return and I had to go on and jump. Fortunately for me it was only about 6 feet down to the ground.

I still remember the instant of panic when I realized that the drop-off was there, that it wasn't really life-threatening (though scary), and that I couldn't stop. I was truly relieved to find that I wasn't hurt after hitting the ground. But that was more of a leap into the dark than I have ever had before or since.

God gives us much more information in His effort to bring us to Him. He gives us a map of the terrain that enables us to navigate and find our way. He also teaches us the basics of good hiking. But He doesn't tell us about each rock or root in the trail, He just cautions us to watch so that we don't trip and hurt ourselves. But we are not traveling blindly in the hopes that we run into civilization! And if we make the right choices, the trip can be exhilarating!

You may have been a participant in a "ropes" course where you were part of a team that had to work together to accomplish various goals. One of the standard activities is for a team member to stand on a pedestal so that they lean backwards and are caught by the other members of the team. Is this a "Fall of Faith"? Yes, but it is not a leap into the darkness because you know that there is someone to catch you.

Falling forward, or going your own way, will be a disastrous experience; there is no one to catch you there. It is not a matter of trust in that case, but of your own folly. God will take care of us if we just trust in Him. As J. I. Packer has written, "Faith in the Bible is not... a leap in the dark, but rather a step in the light." Trust in God is not jumping into the unknown, but a matter of letting go and letting God support you. To me, the feeling is like falling into a pile of fluffy pillows. Faith in God should be a comfort to us, as we trust in His infinite and everlasting Goodness.

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