

FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, AND THE

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It seems like every school has them—small groups of friends who are always seen together.

And when you see one, you are pretty sure the others are close by. That's how faith, hope, and charity seem to be in the scriptures.

They are mentioned together so often that there must be a strong connection. But what is it? And more importantly, what does it mean for you?

I got so curious about it that I once read the Book of Mormon through just so I could mark every place where I found the words *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*—or those concepts. I was amazed at how many times they appeared and how often they were seen together.

But what really hit me was another time when I was reading Lehi's famous dream of the iron rod in 1 Nephi 8. Suddenly I realized that even though the words *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* are not mentioned together specifically in the story, Lehi's vision contains a great example of what they are and how they relate to each other.

The Dream

In the first part of his dream, Lehi sees a tree “whose fruit was desirable to make one happy” (1 Nephi 8:10). And when he tastes the fruit it fills his soul with “exceedingly great joy” (verse 12). He sees a rod of iron that leads to the tree. And he sees numberless people seeking the tree, many of them becoming lost in a mist of darkness.

But, Lehi tells us, “he saw other multitudes *pressing forward*; and they came and *caught hold* of the end of the rod of iron; and they did *press their way forward*, continually *holding fast* to

the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and *partook of the fruit of the tree*” (1 Nephi 8:30; emphasis added).


Now look at those emphasized parts of that verse. People *caught hold* of the rod of iron and *pressed forward*. They *held fast* to the rod of iron. And eventually they *partook* of the fruit. Those are all actions.

Faith Moves Forward

We can't completely define faith in one short article. But one thing the Bible Dictionary tells us is that faith is “a principle of action.” As James says, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead” (James 2:17).

In his dream, Lehi saw people *taking hold* of the iron rod and *moving forward* despite the mists of darkness. When we exercise faith through acting on it, we not only *show* our faith but we *grow* our faith. It's one of the things Alma teaches us in Alma 32.

The Bible Dictionary also says, “To have faith is to have confidence in something or someone.” And for our faith to be effective, our trust “must be centered in Jesus Christ.” In this life we all travel through “mists of darkness.” Satan whispers doubts. The world—which lives in the “great and spacious building”—shouts all kinds of philosophies and theories that contradict the gospel. When we have faith in Christ, we ignore those things and move forward.

A man in a light blue shirt and dark pants stands on a mossy rock, looking up at a large tree with glowing white fruit. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky. A circular callout highlights one of the glowing fruits.

PRESSING
FORWARD IN FAITH
AND HOLDING FAST WITH
HOPE LEAD US TO TASTE
THE SWEETNESS
OF GOD'S LOVE.

IRON ROD

Hope Holds Fast

The hope we are talking about is not simply wishful thinking. It's not like saying, "I hope I pass that chemistry test." The scriptures make clear that hope is something firm and reliable. It is based on the reality that God is our loving Father and that through Christ and His Atonement, we can return to our Father. Moroni tells us: "Whoso believeth in God might with *surety* hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh *an anchor* to the souls of men, which would make them *sure and steadfast*, always abounding in good works" (Ether 12:4; emphasis added).

Just as faith keeps us moving forward, we keep holding fast to the iron rod because we have hope, which anchors us. Hope is also a form of confidence or trust. It is a reassurance the Spirit gives us that the Lord's promises are true and that they apply to us personally. And our grip on the iron rod tightens even more.

Faith, Hope, and the Iron Rod

Before we move on to charity, let's look at the iron rod itself. Nephi tells us that the iron rod represents the word of God (see 1 Nephi 11:25). Most would agree

that the word of God includes everything that God reveals through His prophets. Certainly it includes the commandments we must follow. But as important as the commandments are, there is more to the word of God—it is what we feast on and what nourishes us (see 2 Nephi 32:3; Moroni 6:4).

Remember, both faith and hope require that we have confidence and trust in God. And our Father in Heaven has revealed the reasons why we can have faith and hope. For one thing, He has said that we really are His children, and He is focused on helping us succeed. Remember, He said that His work and glory is to bring about our "immortality and eternal life" (Moses 1:39).

God has revealed the plan of salvation, which centers on our loving Savior and His Atonement and Resurrection. Knowing that our Father in Heaven and Savior have perfect love and infinite power and that their promises are sure, we truly *can* have faith and hope.

The Sweet Fruit of Charity

By holding fast to the iron rod and pressing forward, we come to the tree of life, with its incredibly desirable fruit. Nephi tells us that the tree represents "the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22). As we partake of the fruit of the tree, we become filled with that love and a desire to share it with others (see 1 Nephi 8:12).

Another word for that love is *charity*. Moroni tells us that "charity is the pure love of Christ" and that "whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him" (Moroni 7:47).

I confess that I used to think we reached the tree and partook of the fruit at the end of life, when we had finally fought our way through the mists of darkness. Now I understand that by exercising faith and hope, we begin in this life to taste the sweetness of the Lord's love for us—to become filled with charity. That gives us strength to continue forward confidently and successfully, pressing forward in faith and holding fast with hope. **NE**



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