

MARCH 2006—*Feelings or Faith for Foundations?*

In this postmodern era, human feelings and intuition are increasingly prized over rational thought. However, our feelings are an unreliable foundation for either daily life or personal faith because they fluctuate so much. Sound faith, while including feelings, is ultimately grounded upon Spirit-illuminated truth apprehended by the heart and mind.

C.S. Lewis offers helpful insight in dealing with the interplay of faith, reason, and feeling.

Now Faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. For moods will change, whatever view your reason takes. I know that by experience. Now that I am a Christian I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable: but when I was an atheist I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable. This rebellion of your moods against your real self is going to come anyway. That is why Faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods 'where they get off', you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro, with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and the state of its digestion. Consequently one must train the habit of Faith.

The first step is to recognise the fact that your moods change. The next is to make sure that, if you have once accepted Christianity, then some of its main doctrines shall be deliberately held before your mind for some time every day. That is why daily prayers and religious readings and churchgoing are necessary parts of the Christian life. We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. Neither this belief nor any other will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed. And as a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?¹

If Lewis is correct, we need to be feeding our minds and hearts through the regular reading and study of Holy Scripture, along with study and prayerful reflection on the key doctrines of Christian faith. As we do so, the Holy Spirit will teach us Truth and establish in us foundations that will sustain us in good times and bad. What about you? Is your faith resting on shifting feelings or solidly grounded on eternal Truth?

*I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice.
He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock.
When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.
But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who
built a house on the ground without a foundation.
The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.*

LUKE 6:47-49 NIV

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 125.