

Write Your Faith Down helper pdf  
[By Jacob Pannell](#)

Fill out the questions. If you need some help there is an article at the end along with some examples of what I did to fill it out. I like using a blank sheet of white paper, but you can just print this out too. Pro Tip: just print the first two pages.

Belief + Action = Faith

What do you value?

Action Questions:

What are you passionate about?

What do you love?

Where do you spend money?

What do you talk about?

What do you spend your time on?

Where are you throughout your day (like physical location)?

Where are you really present?

My example

## What is Faith?

After writing about a [father of the faith](#) and introducing this Substack, I thought it was time to take a step back and describe the faith part of [Faithful Fatherhood](#).

From my faith, Christianity comes this quote:

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

And while it certainly carries a more philosophical ring, I don't know that it has ever helped me much. A much simpler definition is below:



**Belief + Action =  
Faith**

Many of us claim religions as faith, but what do our actions show? Better yet, what is our actual beliefs? These two pieces define faith. Let me give you two examples. The first will be more formally religious, while the second more broadly practiced among the Americans I have met.

## Two examples of faith

1. I believe in Jesus and that He is Lord. I act on that belief by following his principles, even to my detriment. Like Jesus, I actively place myself in disadvantageous situations in the service of others. For example, I have been on mission trips, particularly in college, when I could've or, depending on your beliefs, should've been doing something else. My other options were working in internships, holding a position that offers pay, or studying for tests like the MCAT. Instead, I spent money to work 10 hour days interpreting between doctors and patients.
  - So the belief in the example is in the person of Jesus. The action is the disadvantaging of myself to serve. I describe the faith through the recognition that Jesus is the Son of

God, which leads me to act with my best understanding of Jesus's character. That is to serve rather than be served.

2. Many believe in [Bootstrapping](#). For the uninitiated, bootstrapping is the belief that your hard work and your hard work alone earned you superior outcomes and places in society. The action taken from this belief is a strong work ethic: more work, stronger belief, better result. The flip side of this faith is a bourgeois sense that those who have not as much success as you did not work as hard as you did. So the belief is that hard work is the most vital determinant of success or put colloquially. **You will be successful if you just pull yourself up by your bootstraps**. The action primarily focuses on your hard work while potentially demeaning those with less success because they didn't work as hard.
  - This faith recognizes that hard work, above all else, determines outcomes. So you work hard and experience success.

## Analyze the examples

You could read a lot in or out of those examples, but here are the three main things I want you to pick up on.

First, I want you to feel like I am not elevating one faith over another. While critiques of any faith may come up, I do not demean any belief system over the others. They all come with flaws and good reasons for existing or being acted out.

Second, I want you to see that all faiths come with tradeoffs. We cannot pursue all actions because we have limited time and energy. Thus, not all beliefs can be expressed. All faiths have downsides. All faiths exist to get certain things done in our lives. Part of my goal is to expose these so that you can make informed decisions on what to believe and thus how to act. Putting beliefs and actions together leads to a faith that will shape your fatherhood.

Finally, I have heard both faith statements in action from the same church leader. It demonstrates that our beliefs and, therefore, faiths are often jumbled up. We are often not intentional or clear on why we act the way we are behaving, which leads us to the next part of this article.

## What do I believe?

Now that you have a couple of examples of faith through the lens of belief + action = faith, you should have two points of reflection.

- 1) What do I believe?
- 2) How am I acting?

I have found that these two questions are linked, but usually, it is a belief that precedes action. So let's dive into how to discern what you believe.

## Your Beliefs - an Exercise

In my experience, very few people actually take the time to discern what they believe. Instead, they go through life failing to examine their beliefs until it gets them in trouble. If you remember the story of [Abraham](#), his fear drove many of his actions. Yet, as far as we can tell, it remained unexamined. Abraham's story stands in contrast to his grandson, Jacob, who we will later examine as a Bad Dad of the Bible. So here is the most straightforward way to discern what you believe.

### You write it down.

Pen and paper because you don't want to erase; you want to strike through. There is just something about writing it out. If you need no more guidance, go and do.

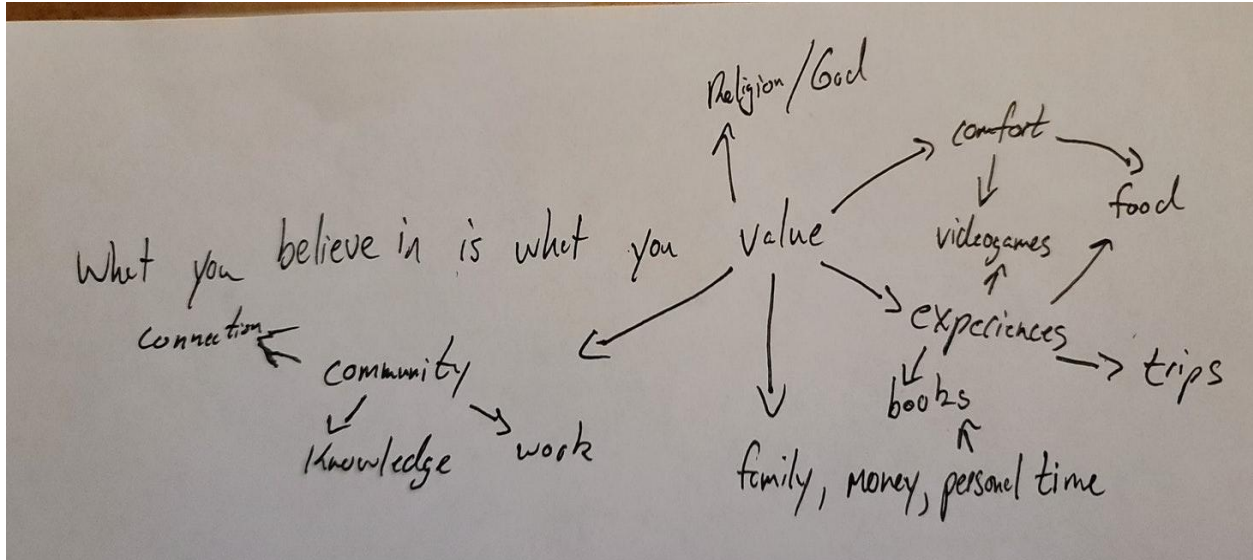
## How to write it out

However, I found it much more difficult when I first completed this task. The first time, I wrote the ideal rather than the truth. Don't get me wrong, I have since grown into some of those ideals, but I needed to know where I was starting. Because in the beginning, my beliefs were every bit as jumbled as my actions.

So, here is your starting prompt. What do you value?

Our beliefs are often based on what we value. As Fathers, we often have family values, but I encourage you to look more internally. Culture comes from collective triumph and trauma. Likewise, values come from personal achievement and trauma. So, when writing out your values, think about your highest highs and your deepest pain. Often our values try to replicate success and avoid pain.

Here is a little map of values I made for myself while working on this article.



I cleaned it up so you could actually read it. Sort of.

Now that we know at least some of our values. Let's check out how they come out in our lives.

## Answer some or all of these questions.

- What are you passionate about?
- What do you love?
- Where do you spend money?
- What do you talk about?
- What do you spend your time on?
- Where are you throughout your day (like physical location)?
- Where are you really present?

You can see some of my answers here.

What are you passionate about?

My family, church life, experiencing more & more of this world

What do you love?

God Reading My kiddos & wife My friends videogames

Where do you spend money?

On my kids and home. On my website & work. Charity. Videogames. Books!

What do you talk about?

Sports, Star Wars, TV & Movies, Hearthstone Battle grounds, Church & God  
Family logistics

What do you spend time on?

TV & Movies, kids, writing & social media, videogames, Reading, studying the Bible  
date night!

Where are you present?

Dinner time. My office. Bed times. My home. The car. The floor. In front of  
my computer.

Now that you can see your values and actions. Let's reach just a little deeper and write down what you believe. What values lead you to take these actions?

## An Example Faith Statement

So if you noticed, I had video games show up a couple of times. Here is a belief I have about video games. Videogames offer new and stimulating experiences that I can use to inform my life. My value is that I want to experience more and more of life and video games are an excellent medium to experience a deep, challenging, and enriching story.

Consider a video game-like [God of War](#), a story of shared pain and growth between a father and son in their search for peace in the grieving process of a lost mother and wife. I hope that my wife outlives me, but I believe it is essential to experience what that kind of pain can do in a father-child relationship. Because should my wife pass (she is fine), I will have at least some knowledge of the potential pitfalls and possible success that can occur.

And right there at the end, did you see it? My fear and perhaps trauma are expectations and, therefore, preparation for abandonment. That pain of abandonment shapes my beliefs, to experience more things for practice, which shapes my actions, playing videogames, which displays my faith. I **believe** I will be abandoned one day.

While it could be perceived as unfavorable, it is true. But, now that I know that I can seek out the positive. My Christian faith offers freedom to act without the fear or threat of abandonment. But writing it down makes other values plain. It shows me why I am doing things, like keeping people at a distance or being a little too clingy. The bedrock of my life shapes my faith and my fatherhood. If I want to be a better father or change, I must be honest with myself first. Then through my faith, I can become a better version of myself. It can help me walk through my fears and pain. Then I can act more healthily toward myself, my family, and even reap dividends at work.

## Next Steps

The next step is to share your faith(s). You don't have to share it here or with me. Please share it with your spouse or best friend. Be prepared to receive some criticism and some "Oh, that's why you do that." Putting your faith out there is a risk, but sometimes that is the only way to have our trauma or flaws exposed. We have to let someone else tell us about them.

Good luck!

This exercise has been the best thing to improve my dad life. I am rooting for you. You can do it.