



Faith and devotion are *emotional* energies strong enough to carry us along the path even when our understanding and wisdom are not sufficient to overcome confusion and reactive patterns. *Faith and wisdom* are not in conflict -- they complement and support each other. Faith is not blind belief; it begins as admiration and aspiration, but true faith is the confidence and trust that arises after deep investigation leads to understanding, direct knowing, and wisdom.

THREE KINDS OF FAITH

Bright or admiring faith: arises when we are inspired by the qualities of mentors and practitioners. The heart begins to open as we draw near.

Longing faith is the wish to attain those qualities. Sensing the possibility of freedom, longing and aspiration become purpose and energy -- we are willing to actually engage the path of awakening.

Trusting faith arises from confidence born of personal knowledge and understanding. With patience and openness, one eventually has clear, open, unshakeable trust not in anything external, but in one's own deepest experience.

FOUR RELIANCES

Rely on the teaching -- not on the teacher's personality or charisma.

Rely on the meaning -- not on mere words or on lofty or fancy talk.

Rely on the real, definitive meaning -- not on the provisional, interpretable meaning.

Rely on direct perception (wisdom) -- not on ordinary conceptual understanding or appearances.

WORKING WITH DOUBT

Are there teachings that you feel uncomfortable with or doubtful toward? Have you heard a teaching or story that left you feeling confused, disturbed, or irritated? Recognizing that stories are from other cultures and other times, does it make sense to set aside the details of the story and ask: *What is the real point of the story?* How might the overall point relate to your own practice?

Bring awareness to whatever seems to undermine faith in your Dharma practice. Include physical, emotional, or mental resistance to faith and devotion; they are an integral part of the practice.

REFLECTIONS

We all place faith and take refuge in various things. Am I aware of what I put faith in?

What do I take refuge in when things are going well?

What about when things are challenging?

What do I take refuge in in my fantasies and dreams?

Does my faith jump from hope to hope?

Is my faith wise, or blind? Is my faith aligned with the facts of life?

Does the object of my faith provide genuine and lasting security?

In my experience, how do faith and devotion relate to confidence and hope? To respect?
To reliance and independence? To intelligence and critical thinking? To other people?

CULTIVATING FAITH AND DEVOTION

Cultivate devotion by unifying your attention and intention as you recite one or more of the traditional texts provided on the class webpage:

- * [Refuge, Awakening Mind, and Dedication verses.](#)
- * [Seven Branch Prayer.](#)
- * [Invoking the Blessings of the Lineage \(Vajradhara Prayer\).](#)
- * [King of Aspirations Prayer.](#)
- * [Shantideva's dedication verses.](#)
- * [Supplication of Great Women Teachers.](#)

Consider how all practices, including calm abiding and clear seeing, are acts of faith and devotion.

FURTHER STUDY

Sharon Salzberg, *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience.*

Elizabeth Mattis Namgyal, *The Logic of Faith: A Buddhist Approach to Finding Certainty Beyond Belief and Doubt.*