

Defining faith is like trying to explain the meaning of life. It's so large a concept, so personal in meaning, that it's almost impossible. Sages and philosophers have tried for centuries. For something that's so hard to put into words, it sure does play a huge role in our lives and society, from our daily routine to the way we treat others to the politics we practice. The Blade asked six area residents — all laypersons — representing different world religions to give it a shot and explain what faith means to them personally.

— *Ryan E. Smith*
Blade photos by Andy Morrison

Faith is ...



“... twofold. First, faith is my confidence in what I believe God will do on behalf of his people, based on my biblical understanding of what the Bible says about who Jesus Christ is and what he can do for you. That’s saving faith. The second faith, which I call my living faith, is the faith in which I put into practice my reliance upon Jesus Christ to meet the needs and the desires of my heart on a daily basis.”

— **Leroy Bates**, Baptist, 60, West Toledo



“... my rock and my foundation. When I think more about it, I see my faith as a gift as well. For so many years I think I was blinded to it. Other than my parents, I have never experienced what you’d call unconditional love. Just the whole idea that the Lord died for me, it’s beyond my comprehension. I try to think of myself as a good friend and develop relationships based on being unconditional and on being very caring and such. The Lord is my model upon which I have built those qualities.”

— **Carol Christiansen**, Catholic, 63, West Toledo



“... what tells you that you’re here for a reason; it’s your map or your guide. Without it, you’d be lost. You would have no idea why you’re here or what your purpose or goal is. Faith helps you make sense of this crazy world. For Muslims, we look at our religion as not only being your religion, but your way of life. It’s your whole daily routine. It’s integrated into your everyday actions, so we do everything in accordance with Islamic principles.”

— **Ammar Alo**, Muslim, 26, Sylvania Township



“... a belief that there is something greater than myself. The journey is to try to understand that. ... It’s a personal quest. When one lets go of thought there’s a space that’s created, and that happens in meditation and it also happens in mindfulness, which is in the present, and it happens for me a lot in nature. When you let go of thought and are in that space, for me, that’s the space of God, Creator, Source, whatever you want to call it.”

— **Millicent Marquart**, Tibetan Buddhist, 71, Perrysburg Township



“... something that I would rely on and act on even though I can’t prove it. To me, faith is the antidote for fear. So many things in life are subject to being questioned, and we wonder about things and we have fears: fears of the unknown, fears of the future, fears of death, sometimes fears of taking courageous action, and I think having faith helps you get over your fears. My faith in Judaism, it ties in because it gives me direction in how to act, in how to live my life.”

— **Neil Light**, Reform Jew, 55, Ottawa Hills



“... believing in a higher authority, a higher cosmic power, and just a belief that there is God. In addition to being brought up with religious values and trust in God, it has also been a quest for understanding the scientific basis for things, what can’t be understood by science. ... I continually question various teachings and their contexts, but on a more compelling side, I believe these have been said and passed to us through divine intervention. They may not have been proven or understood or accepted yet, but I want to believe.”

— **Sumitra Srinivasan**, Hindu, 30, West Toledo