

SRMBC Family Bible Study
Faith – Depending on God
January – February 2020
Reverend Thomas A. Keys, Pastor

Does it matter what we believe, so long as we believe in something? Scripture says yes, it matters a great deal what or who we choose to believe. Biblical faith is not a free-floating positive feeling within me. It is trust in a person outside of, other than and infinitely greater than myself.

The following Bible studies alternate between studies of people and studies of faith's essence as taught by faithful people. We'll meet Abraham, Naaman, and Paul, imperfect people whose faith grew through testing. We'll see Jesus, both the perfect model of faith and the One who invites us to have faith in him. We'll consider faith's "hall of fame," the gift of forgiveness through faith in Christ, faithful action and faith's rightful focus.

Date	Topic	Scripture
1/22/2020	In Praise of Faith	Hebrews 11:1 – 16
1/29/2020	Abraham: Faith Under Construction	Genesis 12:1 – 9
2/5/2020	Naaman: Faith Without Fireworks	II Kings 5:1 – 15
2/12/2020	In Jesus Name: Faith That Asks	John 16:16 – 28
2/19/2020	The Finale of Faith	II Timothy 4:6 – 18

Don't let questions discourage your faith. Our human faith will always be faltering and imperfect. But like a parent teaching a child to take the first steps, God welcomes and encourages the smallest step of trust toward himself. By God's grace we are being made into ever more faithful people. Our prayer is that this Bible study on Faith will be part of that process.

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Lesson 1: In Praise of Faith Hebrews 11:1 – 16

The runner who crosses the finish line first. The winning candidate on election night. The celebrity Oscar winner. All these get applause and congratulations. But who cheers for the fired factory worker, leaving work for the last time, who still believes that God will provide for him and his family? Who throws confetti on the young woman, waking up in a hospital bed paralyzed from a car accident she can't even remember, who cries out to God for help instead of cursing him?

Group Discussion. What do you think it means to live by faith? When have you wished you had more faith?

Apollo 13: "Getting Home"



With the fate of astronaut **Jim Lovell** and his Apollo 13 crew in jeopardy, an old interview airs on television, where he talks about the faith of finding a way home.

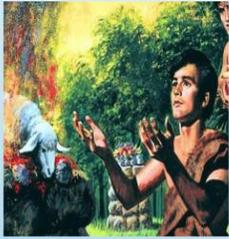
Questions

- What was the dilemma facing Jim Lovell and his attempts to get home.
- What was Jim tempted to do when it seemed he was out of his own options?
- In what ways do people respond when life gets hard and seemingly out of options?
- How does the cockpit malfunction and the darkness correlate to help Jim? Has God ever worked in a similar way?
- What do you think it means to live by faith? When have you wished you had more faith?

The Bible cheers for God's faithful people, and nowhere does the cheer sound more loudly and definitely than in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews. The letter to the Hebrews was written by an unknown Christian to a group of persecuted Jewish Christians, people who needed to have their faith affirmed and strengthened.

Read Hebrews 11:1-16.

1. Consider the actions of each of the people named in this passage. What does their behavior have in common?



Abel (Gen 4:1 – 16)

Made A Better Offering Than Cain.

His faith and offering pleased God.

Although Murdered by His Brother, His faith Still Spoke.



Enoch (Gen. 5:21 – 24)

Walked Faithfully with God for 365 years.

Lived a life that pleased God.

He so pleased God, that God took him to heaven without dying.



Noah (Gen. 6:9 – 22)

Walked blamelessly with God.

Built the Ark – even before the rains came, saving his family

Provided an example for NT believers today

His building testified of God's coming judgement.



Abraham (Gen. 12 – 22)

Left home not knowing where he was going.

Lived in tents waiting for a promised city built by God.

Passed on the faith to his descendants (Isaac & Jacob).



Sarah (Gen. 12 – 22)

Believed God and was rewarded.

Believed that despite her age she will have a child.

Believed that despite Abraham's old age God could produce the promised child.

- When they heard the Word of God, they believed it/Him.
- They took action on the Word and the promises regardless what the present looked like.
- Their actions where seen by others as a witness their faith in God.
- They believed that God has the Character and the Power to do just what He said.
- Because of their faith God imputed righteousness to them and motivated them live Holy lives.

2. Why do “the ancients” (the Old Testament faithful) deserve honor (vv. 1-2)?

Honoring the OT Saints

- The ancients set the foundation of Faith that we follow today.
- They laid the groundwork (the runaway) for the coming of Jesus – the Savior and Messiah.
- Although they had less information than we have today, the ancients demonstrated great faith in God.
- They show that you can have faith in God regardless of what it looks like or even if the promise doesn't come to pass in this life.
- They should be honored for their examples of faithfulness and perseverance – even in the midst persecution and uncertainty.

3. How would you describe the faith for which they are honored?

“To the writer to the Hebrews, faith is a hope that is absolutely certain that what it believes is true, and that what it expects will come.

It is not the hope which looks forward with wistful longing; it is the hope which looks forward with utter certainty. It is not the hope which takes refuge in a perhaps; it is the hope which is founded on a conviction...” (William Barclay, The Letter to the Hebrews)

4. Often, we associate faith with feeling a certain way (for example: confident, bold, certain, doubt-free). What indicates that these people’s behavior was based on something beyond emotional feeling (vv. 4-5, 7-9, 11)?

God’s Servants	Behavior Description
Abel (Expensive Sacrifice)	Because of Abel’s love and acknowledgement of the Holiness and Awesomeness of the Lord, he made the most expensive/costly sacrifice of worship.
Enoch (Exclusive Sanctification)	Appreciation of God’s blessings and His authority moved Enoch to live in a way that pleased His Lord.
Noah (Exceptional Steadfastness)	Noah moved by fear and reverence – built the Ark as instructed, not stopping until completed (55 to 75 years).
Abraham (Extreme Submission)	Abram’s Faith and trust in God caused him to uproot his family and go where God told him (with knowing the destination).
Sarah (Expressive Surety)	Sarah despite logic and nature – believed God was able to do just what He said.

NOTE: Throughout the Bible, faith is different from optimism or wishful thinking. It is trust in Something **or rather in Someone**.

5. In what ways did the faith of these people remain unfulfilled (vv. 13-16)?

- They did not see the fulfillment of the promises of God (descendants, land, etc.) in their lifetime.
- They did not physically see the promise of God, but their faith and trust laid the foundation for future believers.
- While they did not see God’s Promised Messiah – His Son and our Savior Jesus Christ, they Looked forward to His coming.

6. How did they see themselves in relation to this world? How does your faith in God affect your attitude toward this world?

The OT Saints Attitude Toward the World

- They saw God’s priorities as higher and of greater value than their own or the world’s.
- They saw themselves as visitors in the present world – living a different lifestyle/language than those around them.
- Reborn in Heaven – claiming God Kingdom as home – not the earth/world.

The Believer’s Attitude Toward the World (System)

- God’s Word and Ways are greater than the World.
- The things of this world are temporary and ultimately unsatisfying.

- This World is not my home – I am going to a better place that God has prepared.
 - God has an assignment/mission for me (and His Church) to accomplish in the earth.
7. How would you define faith? (If your answer is only to repeat verse 1, rephrase it in your own words!)
- Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
New King James Version (NKJV)
 - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
English Standard Version (ESV)
 - The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see.
The Message (MSG)
 - Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see.
Contemporary English Version (CEV)
 - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
New International Version (NIV)
8. How does Hebrews 11 encourage your own faith in God?
- Despite the way things look in the now – God can be trusted to keep His Promises for the future.
 - God rewards our faith as we make His Word and Will the priority in our lives.
 - The struggles and trials that we face today have been faced by the faithful who have gone on before.
 - I am encouraged to not give up – even when things are at their very worst.
 - My eternal rewards far outweigh the trouble and opposition in this world.

Thank God for the examples of faithful people. Pray that you will put into action the faith that you have, whether it is great or small.

Keys for Living



Faith is not simply believing that God exists, but trust in His power and character that obeys His commands and trusts in His promises.



The Old Testaments saints are examples to how God deals with those put their trust in Him. Since God doesn't change, we can also trust Him to do what is for our good and His glory.



Every believer has the responsibility to follow and be examples of faithfulness to Jesus Christ so that others may see lifestyle and give glory to God.