

Hebrews

Lesson 7 Chapter 11

Leader Guide

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Lesson 7

Hebrews 11

Faith

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Hebrews 11:1-3

Prayers

Introduction

Hebrews chapter 11 gives examples of men and women who heard God's promises and knew for certain that they would come true. Their faith shaped their lives. Faith determined how they dealt with their problems, obeyed God's commands, and faced death.

Read Hebrews 11:1–7

Heb 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Heb 11:2 This is what the ancients were commended for. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Discuss

1. What is the writer's definition of faith? Can you see how the writer's definition fits with the context of this book?

Faith is being sure of things we do not see. Christians pursue the hope held out to them in the gospel. Our hope is an assurance, not a chance.

2. What are Christians sure of that they do not see? How is this like the message in Hebrews 11?

Christians do not see most aspects of their faith, God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit. We have faith in Christ and the hope of redemption, salvation, adoption as God's children, the forgiveness of sins, guidance by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and eternal life. We live with surety of the promise of eternal life. Even though we are living a mortal life, we live with hope (assurance) of eternal life. The writer will now offer examples of others who were sure of what they did not see and let their unseen hope dictate how they lived.

3. The account of Cain and Abel is found in Genesis 4. Cain, the oldest son, brought a first fruits offering from his crops to the LORD, while Able brought an offering from his flocks. In Hebrews, we learn that Cain's offering was not acceptable to God because of his lack of faith, not because of the type of sacrifice. Discuss some examples of how our actions toward God be like Cain's rather than Abel's.

His faith made him show his love for God and make a sacrifice. God commended Abel's gift because it was given to honor God. Shedding innocent blood still cries out to God for vengeance. In that sense, Abel's voice still speaks on behalf of those persecuted for their faith in God.

4. How does the writer describe Enoch's faith? (Hint: See the end of verse 6.)

Enoch did not see God but believed in God and earnestly sought him. Note how the writer calls attention to the reward Enoch received, by which he meant to encourage our faith.

5. What was the unseen thing Noah saw by faith?

Noah's faith and actions are remarkable. God told Noah to do the impossible because the impossible would soon happen. Noah believed in the impossible. By faith, he saw that God would destroy the world. He built a large boat, even though he did not see water around him.

- a. How did God use Noah's faith and actions?

Noah's faith and actions saved his family, and God used him to save life on earth.

6. Read 2 Corinthians 2:15–16 and discuss the two things that can happen when we, like Noah, demonstrate our faith.

^{2Co 2:15} For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

^{2Co 2:16} To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

Some will believe, which is what we pray will happen. But some will be condemned by our faith and witness. They will reject the gospel message to their eternal condemnation.

Read Hebrews 11:8–19

Heb 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

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Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Heb 11:9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

Heb 11:10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Heb 11:11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

Heb 11:12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Heb 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

Heb 11:14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.

Heb 11:15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.

Heb 11:16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,

Heb 11:18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

Heb 11:19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

7. What did Abraham's faith enable him to do (verses 8-12)?

Abraham left his home and moved to a land God promised, but he lived as a stranger. He believed God would give him an heir and make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old, 25 years after God promised to bless him with an heir. Abraham lived without seeing the fulfillment of God's promises but continued to live in faith.

8. God asked Abraham to do the unthinkable and sacrifice his only son. Hebrews 11:19 is the only place in scripture that tells us what Abraham thought. What did Abraham believe?

Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead since God had told him his descendants would come through Isaac.

9. God promised Abraham extraordinary blessings. Which promises did Abraham see answered?

- a. Genesis 12:3 All nations blessed through him
- b. Genesis 15:18-21 Possession of the promised land
- c. Genesis 17:4 – The father of many nations
- d. Genesis 17:6 Kings from his descendants
- e. Genesis 17:7 to be his God and establish an everlasting covenant with his descendants
- f. Genesis 17:17 A son through Sarah

Abraham saw the natural birth of Ishmael and Isaac's miraculous birth. Isaac was the lineage of God's covenant and God's blessing to all nations through Jesus Christ.

10. Even though Abraham did not see God's eternal promises, how would you describe God's provision for Abraham?

God blessed him and abundantly met his needs.

Read Hebrews 11:17–28

Heb 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

Heb 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

Heb 11:22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

Heb 11:23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

Heb 11:24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

11. How are God's promises to Moses the same as God makes with us?

God's promise is salvation through Christ's blood, received by faith.

Read Hebrews 11:29–40

Heb 11:29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

Heb 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

Heb 11:31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. Heb 11:32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

Heb 11:35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again [widow of Zarephath (1 Ki 17 4:8-37), Shunamite woman (2Ki 4:8-37)]. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.

Heb 11:37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— ³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

Heb 11:39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

12. As time allows, discuss how the believers mentioned in verses 32 to 38 persevered in the face of brutal persecution. Why isn't the world worthy of such people?

All these people had specific promises that enabled them to do great things. Some were successful, even from a human standpoint. Some died because of their faith. In either case, they saw God's promises fulfilled. The world is not worthy of these people because they lived by faith, not by sight. These people staked everything on God's promises.

13. What does the suffering of the saints teach you about God's promises?

Our suffering and the suffering of others for the sake of their faith show that faith is more precious than life. This is a profound view of life. We learn that God is faithful to sustain us through all manner of suffering, strengthening our faith.

14. What invisible things have God promised for you? Pick one of those things, and tell how it has shaped your life and guided your decisions.

Baptism, Spiritual rebirth

Communion

Prayer

Sanctification

Forgiveness

Guilt

Perseverance

Guidance

Provision

Answers will vary. The main thing God has given us is the hope of eternal life. God has also promised us that everything will work for our good. Ask the class members to tell of times or examples when these basic promises guided their lives.

Closing Prayer and Blessing