

## Hebrews 11:1-16 (ESV & NLT) – Faith

**Main point:** Faith leads to reward from God, now and eternally.



**Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.**

**Background:** Chapter 11 of Hebrews is one of the great chapters of faith in the Bible. We'll be looking only at the beginning of it, but in the rest of the chapter the writer tells about many more biblical figures who had faith in God through thick and thin.

### Focus of the study:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by faith the people of old received their commendation. <sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the entire universe was created by the word of God, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen. ...<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that God exists and that God rewards those who seek him.

<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this Noah ... became an heir of righteousness that comes by faith.

<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And Abraham went, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith Abraham went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land ... <sup>10</sup> For Abraham was looking forward to the city that has eternal foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

<sup>11</sup> By faith [Abraham's wife] Sarah herself received power to conceive a child, even when she was past the age, since she considered God faithful to God's promise. <sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven ...

<sup>13</sup> All these people died still believing what God had promised them, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For people who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland ... they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

### Questions:

1. *v. 1: I wonder what the definition of faith is? What is assurance? What is conviction?*
  - a. You feel sure, no doubt, convinced deep in your heart
2. *Read v. 2 again: What does "commendation" mean? When someone "commends" you for an action you did, what is that person saying? For example, what is a military commendation?*
  - a. Approval, praise, "good job;" your boss is pleased. A military commendation means honorable notice, attention from your superior that you did something well.
3. *How does it feel when someone says "good job," when someone commends you?*
4. *In verse 3, the writer gives an example of faith by pointing to creation. Can we see where all of creation came from? No ... so how do we have faith in something we can't see?*
  - a. Evidence – such as with wind, love, stars, the voice of someone on the phone or in another room. We can't see the "thing," but we know it exists by its evidence.
  - b. Repetition – the morning dawn, the moon, the seasons.

5. *When something happens over and over and you can see its effects, how does this make you feel about the existence of that thing in the future?*
    - a. Leads to conviction and surety (assurance) – you’ve seen it all your life, repeatedly, so all signs give you expectation for what *will* come.
  6. *In verse. 6: How does the writer say that we please God? What is required to please God?*
    - a. *faith*: in what?
      - i. that God exists (though unseen)
      - ii. that God rewards those who seek him
  7. *v. 6a: In your own life, what sorts of things encourage you to believe that God exists?*
  8. *v. 6b: What kind of rewards are we talking about here? What kind of rewards have you encountered in your life, that you think have come from God?*
    - a. family, friends, work, health, education, food, patience to bear trials, community, church ...
  9. *So what does faith do for us?*
    - a. helps us “keep on keeping on”—we don’t give up
    - b. helps us obey God’s word—act in this world according to God’s direction
    - c. helps us listen and believe that God is good, no matter where we go or what happens.
- [if time, proceed with questions 10-11; otherwise skip to 12]

10. *v.7-16: [read this aloud] By faith, what did Noah, Abraham, and Sarah do?*
  - a. Noah: in reverent fear, constructed an ark, became “an heir of righteousness”
    - i. *What does it mean when you’re an heir to something?*
      1. You inherit it from your father/mother; it becomes your own, part of who you are
  - b. Abraham: obeyed, went to a foreign land promised as an inheritance (there’s that “heir” idea again!), “not knowing where he was going”!
    - i. *How do you think that felt? How/why did Abraham go, even though he didn’t know where he was going?*
      1. Abraham looked to God for future reward: verse 10: “For/Because Abraham was looking forward to the city that has eternal foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”
  - c. Sarah: received power to conceive—giving birth to the descendants of Israel—*how?*
    - i. “She considered God faithful to his promise” —she looked to God, not to her circumstances (she and Abraham were very old!)
11. *Did Noah, Abraham, and Sarah see the fulfillment of everything God promised?*
  - a. v. 13a: No; they “died in faith.”
  - b. v. 13 b: Saw themselves as “strangers and exiles” in this world, looked to the heavenly kingdom.
12. *How can we encourage one another to look in faith to our reward from God, now and eternally?*

- Ask for prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

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