

God-Pleasing Faith

SCRIPTURE READING: [Hebrews 11:1-6](#)

INTRODUCTION:

Everyone has faith. A Houston Pastor named John Bisagno put it this way: "Faith is the heart of life. You go to a doctor whose name you can't pronounce. He gives you a prescription you cannot read. You take it to a pharmacist you have never seen. He gives you medication you do not understand --- and yet, you take it." Now, that is living by Faith!

The fact is we can't get through a single day without living by Faith. When you flip a light switch you put faith in the electrical wiring. When you turn the ignition switch in your car, you trust the motor. When you mail a letter you have faith in the US Mail Service. Sometimes --- of course ---- your faith might be misplaced, because faith is only as valuable as the OBJECT of that faith.

The same is true with Spiritual Faith. Buddhists have faith in Buddha. Muslims trust in Allah. Hindus believe in various Gods (thousands actually.) Most religious people put faith in their ability to keep the rules ... to be "good enough" to satisfy their god --- or reach their Nirvana --- or build up good Karma.

Even when people claim no religion at all, they still live by faith. Every human puts faith in something. It may be in some notion of human potential. It may be in the supremacy of science or reason or political power. Or they may have faith in some vague concept like "oneness with nature." But everyone lives by faith.

[Hebrews 11](#) is called "The Faith Chapter." It would be easy to build an entire sermon series on this one chapter alone. But don't worry --- today we'll just skim the surface. We'll start by looking at WHAT BIBLICAL FAITH IS.

1. What Biblical Faith Is

Hebrews 11 puts a BIG concept in a few words: **Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.**

A.W. Tozer had an interesting explanation for this verse. He said, "Faith is seeing the invisible, but not the nonexistent." Some people think faith is believing in something that is not actually there. Biblical faith believes God when He tells us there is a reality, which we cannot see. Faith means that we keep our eyes on God who controls circumstances --- not on the circumstances themselves.

2 Corinthians 5:7 puts it this way: **We live by faith, not by sight.** That sounds simple enough. But for some reason, people get all kinds of misconceptions about what Faith is. So in getting started this morning, let's take a few minutes to look at what Biblical Faith is NOT:

* For one thing: Faith is NOT a blind leap in the dark. Some people think you have to ignore logic and reason in order to believe in God. The fact is, believing there is NO God requires an unreasonable kind of faith.

If atheists, agnostics, or secular humanists put their faith into words, it might sound like this: By faith, we believe that the universe evolved from mindless matter, so that order accidentally emerged from chaos.

Of course, they are hard-pressed to find any evidence for this statement of faith. Science consistently shows that order does not grow from chaos and that design points to a designer.

I don't know about you, but I find **Hebrews 11:3** much more plausible: **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.** Both creeds require faith. But Christian

faith is compatible with logic and reason. It is based on historical evidence. It is supported by the Biblical record, by personal testimony, and by our own experiences.

Listen to what D.L Moody said about faith: "I prayed for faith and thought that some day it would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith didn't seem to come. One day I read in Romans that "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." I had, up to this time, closed my Bible and prayed for faith. Now I opened my Bible and began to study ---and faith has been growing ever since."

Another misconception is faith that we can make God do anything we want.

* But Biblical faith is NOT the ability to manipulate God. Some Christians think Faith is a kind of magic medicine potion.

That kind of faith won't outlast the first major disappointment. When a loved one is not healed or a promotion doesn't come through or unforeseen tragedy strikes, false faith will crumble. Biblical faith does not believe that God will do what WE say. Biblical Faith knows that God will do what HE says. By faith, we rest on the promises of God --- no matter what happens.

Another common misconception is that Faith means knowing all the right facts and learning all the right rules.

* But Faith is NOT adherence to a list of doctrines. Biblical Faith is a relationship with a personal God. In the Old Testament, God is often referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

If you think about it, this makes sense. Suppose you wanted to tell someone who Paul McWilliams is. Well, you could give my SS # or my bank acct. number. You could tell someone my address, age, height & weight and Body Mass Index.

But if you really want someone to know WHO I am, you could say, "He's the father of Siara, Paul Jr., Parker, and Savana ... or the husband of Sheri ... or the Minister of Columbine church of Christ." If you want to know what someone is like, look at the people they spend time with and care about. And look at the people who care about them.

That's why [Hebrews 11](#) gives a whole list of people who put their trust in God. These Bible Heroes show us WHAT real FAITH DOES. For one thing, Faith will always result in heart-felt WORSHIP.

2. What Biblical Faith Does:

WORSHIP: Abel

The first Biblical example of a Worshipper is Abel --- the younger brother of Cain, who was the first man born to the first parents. The text reminds us that: **4By 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 ([Hebrews 11:4](#)).**

Able worshipped in obedience and with a sincere heart. His faith pleased God. Unfortunately Cain's offering was not pleasing to God. And out of envy, Cain killed his brother. But Abel's honest worship stands as a testimony. Faith that pleases God will always lead to WORSHIP.

Are you drawn to WORSHIP God with all your heart, mind, and soul? When we come together, we worship in songs and scripture reading and sermons. But the part of our worship that follows the example of Able is our time of OFFERING. Do you give your offerings as an act of Worship? Do you give with a sincere heart of gratitude? Is your offering a sacrifice of praise and obedience? If so, then your faith pleases God.

The next example in our list of Faith Heroes is a rather obscure character named Enoch. We don't know much about him, but what we know is impressive. [Genesis 5:24](#) tells us, *Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.*

WALK: Enoch

[Hebrews 11:5](#) elaborates: *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.*

Evidently Enoch walked so closely with God that God took him home without Enoch having to experience physical death. From Enoch we learn that to walk with God is to please God.

Does your faith cause you to Walk with God? I remember when I first started learning what this means. During my first summer break from college, I worked at Dan Dipert Coaches as a bus cleaner. I spent long hours in the middle of the night cleaning out the messes of every drunken citizen of Arlington. Now this was not exactly mentally challenging --- so my mind was free to wander. I decided that it was no big stretch to simply direct my thoughts toward God. I realized I could use those lonely nights to carry on a continuing Conversation with God. I decided that might be what it means to pray without ceasing. I also believe that's what it means to walk with God.

Do you walk with God each day? Do you communicate with Him while you are doing your chores ... while you are mowing the yard ... while you are brushing your teeth ... while you are driving your car? This is the kind of faith that pleases God.

The next Bible Hero --- Noah --- is much better known than Enoch. Noah is a man whose faith led to some long hard work!

WORK: Noah

Maybe you never thought about it, but building an Ark is no small task. It took Noah and his 3 boys over 100 years! Now that's a project! **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. Hebrews 11:7**

A story has been told about a little who prayed at the dinner table. (Evidently he had recently learned the story of Noah at church.) After thanking God for the food, he said, "And Lord, if you need someone to build an Ark ... I'll do it!"

Most of us won't be asked to build an Ark, but God has given every one of us work assignments. Do you have the kind of faith that leads you to work hard for the Kingdom of God? That is a faith that pleases God.

I like what **Warren Wiersbe** said in one of his commentaries: **"Faith enables us to understand what God does. Faith enables us to see what others cannot see. As a result, faith enables us to do what others cannot do."**

The last Bible Hero we'll talk about today is the best known of all. In fact, Abraham is called the Father of Faith. His life teaches us hundreds of things about faith. But perhaps the biggest challenge Abraham faced was that his faith required him to WAIT.

WAIT: Abraham

* Abraham waited for a home in the Promised Land. In fact, he spent his entire life living in tents. (I've camped out in tents on a few occasions. I certainly wouldn't want a lifetime of it!)

* He waited until he was 100 years old for the son God promised.

* And all along, he waited and waited ... and waited ... for the promised Messiah and

the Eternal City of God.

⁹By 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. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. [Hebrews 11:9-10](#)

Does your Faith require you to WAIT? Do you sometimes feel like you are stuck in an eternal Waiting room?

- waiting for an answer to prayer;
- waiting for a job offer;
- waiting for the results of a medical test;
- waiting for... (you fill in the blank)

When you have prayed all you can pray, and done all you can do --- sometimes the greatest proof of your faith is that you simply Wait. A faith that pleases God will enable you to wait with confidence. By faith, you believe ... in fact, you KNOW ... that God will come through in the end.

CONCLUSION:

All the Heroes of the Old Testament waited with Faith. Look at [Hebrews 11:13](#)
¹³All 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.

With faith, they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. With faith, we look back to His coming. And all of us continue to look ahead to the time when all the promises of scripture will be fulfilled.

We look forward to the time when we will be reunited with loved ones who have gone on before us. We wait for the time when those who suffer will be comforted.

We wait with confidence because we know the DAY is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And while we WAIT in faith, we continue to WORSHIP God, and to WALK with God, and to WORK for God. This is faith that pleases God.

As we come to our time of invitation, let's read [Hebrews 11 verse 6](#).

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.