

Faith Dissected: Devotional Guide

Study Introduction

As you begin this study of Hebrews 11, I suggest that you identify some personal goals that you have for the study. We generally get more out of experiences when they carry us toward a goal than when we lack a sense of direction. In this study, you will go deeper with Old Testament figures such as Noah, Enoch, Abraham and other figures. You will follow the role that faith played in the grand narrative of Scripture.

I'm excited for you - for the possibilities of growth before you as you apply this study to your life. What are some goals that you could identify for your spiritual walk with the Lord and your life in general that this study could help you pursue? What do you hope this study of Hebrews 11 does for you? As you work through the Week One devotionals, pray and ask God to put a goal or two, or three on your heart for this study. You may want to come back and write them here.

My Goals for This Study:

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Author's Salvation Testimony:

It is important to me that you know my salvation testimony. I trusted Christ as my Savior at age 8. My parents led me to the Lord by my beside after church one Sunday evening. I had heard the Gospel many times, but that particular night, I understood that I had sinned and needed to trust what Jesus had done on the cross to save me. I prayed to receive Christ that evening and received the free gift of eternal life.

Week One

Hebrews 11:1-2

Authorship of Hebrews

Bible scholars do not agree on the human author of the book of Hebrews. One strong viewpoint is that the Apostle Paul wrote it without giving his name for various speculative reasons. Several other possibilities have been set forth. What conservative scholars do affirm is this: whomever the human author is, the person wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Book of Hebrews belongs in our canon of Scripture. It is believed that the human author was either an apostle or some close associate of an apostle.

Purpose of Hebrews

The purpose of the Book of Hebrews is rather clear. Life had taken some unexpected turns for the recipients of the book. The temptation to leave the Christian faith and return to Judaism with all of its animal sacrifices and law-keeping requirements was strong. Hebrews sets forth argument after argument and example after example to urge the readers not to lapse. It is an encouraging book, a warning book, a prophetic book, and a theological book.

Immediate Context

The verses right before Chapter 11 set the tone and context.

Hebrews 10:35-39, “(35) Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. (36) For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: (37) “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. (38) Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” (39) But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

Day One: What is Faith?

Key Verse

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

In the box below, describe how you would explain the concept of faith to someone.

Have you ever heard someone demand proof of Christianity, of God’s existence, of spiritual things? Maybe even you have demanded such proof at one point. The way God has set things up, it is impossible to please Him, to come to Him, and to know Him without faith. The field of Christian apologetics has contributed wonderful insight to bring some skeptics closer to the faith. But no one has ever been redeemed simply by having it all spelled out empirically without any faith at all. The way God has ordained things, faith itself is the substance and the evidence.

In the Christian life, there are things that are “hoped for” - eternal life, seeing the Lord, receiving promises. A good way to understand how a word is used in one passage is to look at how that word is used elsewhere in the same book. Here are other occurrences of the word “hope” in Hebrews:

- Hebrews 3:6, “but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

- Hebrews 6:11, “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end.”
- Hebrews 6:18-19, “that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,”
- Hebrews 7:19, “for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.”

Right here, right now, based on the promises of God’s Word, write in this box some things that you hope for, things that are unseen.

What physical proof do you have of any of these things? Do you have a few ounces of gold from one of heaven’s streets? Do you have a selfie that you have taken with the risen Lord? To be absurd for another moment, you probably have very little physical evidence of any of these things that are “hoped for.” What you do have is faith. And that’s all the substance you need. If you are not convinced of that fact yet, see if your mind changes as we go through this study together.

The word “substance” here is the word for support that leads to confidence and assurance. Have you ever stepped onto a floorboard that sagged or driven across a rickety bridge that needed a fresh inspection? Back in 2010, I had the privilege of going on a mission trip with a group to Juana Dias, PR.

The house our team was working on had a roof that would sag. Our main contractor weighed about 230 lbs, and the roof would sag 2-3 inches when he walked on it. Its promise of support was unconvincing. Since I was heavier than the contractor, there was no way in the world that I was going to walk on that roof. I would gladly hand up supplies and work on the interior. But that roof just did not have sufficient support to lead me to any kind of confidence at all. Faith, though, is the kind of support and underpinning that does lead us to confidence and assurance in the Lord.

Although these two words “substance” and “evidence” are used in other places in the Bible, this is the only place they are used together like this. The word “evidence” is the concept of proof - that which leads you to be convinced of the reality of something - in this case “things not seen.”

The natural man relies solely on his five senses. In general, if he cannot see it, touch it, taste it, smell it, or hear it - it isn't real. However, the Bible says, “while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). As John Phillips said, in *Exploring Hebrews*, “Faith is a kind of spiritual ‘sixth sense’ that enables the believer to take a firm hold upon the unseen world and bring it into the realm of experience.”

Fill in the table on the next page with examples of things you can see in the lefthand column and things that are eternal in the righthand column. Consider the temporary nature of the things you can see and the unseen nature of the things that are eternal.

I have prayed for all who will do this study. I pray that, as you stick with it, that God will use His Word to grow our faith.

Takeaways:

- Faith is the support and proof of all we know about God, the Bible, salvation, and future things.
- Things that are not observable with our five physical senses are at least as real as things that are physically observable.

Prayer Points:

- Ask God to lay a personal goal or two or three on your heart for this study.
- Ask God to use this study of His Word to increase your faith.
- Hebrews 10:38 says, “the just shall live by faith.” Ask God to expose areas of your life where you have been walking by sight and not depending on Him.

Day Two: Help My Unbelief

Key Passage: Mark 9:2-30

2 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” — 6 because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” 8 Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

9 Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

11 And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

12 Then He answered and told them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.”

14 And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. 15 Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and

running to Him, greeted Him. 16 And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

17 Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. 18 And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

19 He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” 20 Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

21 So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”

And he said, “From childhood.

22 And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

23 Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

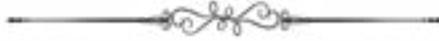
24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” 26 Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29 So He said to them,

“This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”

30 Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it.



In the story that unfolds in Mark 9 (verses 2-30), a father brings his son to Jesus and His disciples in desperate hope of healing and deliverance from the evil spirit that is plaguing the child. When Jesus and His inner circle are up in what we now call the Mount of Transfiguration, the father arrives with his son, and the remaining disciples are simply powerless and unable to do anything about the situation. When Jesus, Peter, James, and John descend the Mount of Transfiguration and return to the crowd, Jesus expresses His disappointment in the disciples for being unable to cast out the demon. He calls them a “faithless generation.”

In verse 22, the father says to Jesus, “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus recast the issue - not as a question as to whether or not Jesus Himself had the power, but as to whether or not the father had the faith. Verse 23, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” In verse 24, the father pours out his heart in raw honesty before the Lord, saying, “with tears ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’”

Along our journey with the Lord, we often find ourselves in this mixture of belief and unbelief. As Christian people, we have believed the Gospel - namely, that Jesus Christ is the virgin-born Son of God, sent by God to die on the cross for our sins. We have believed that the price He paid with His life on the cross has redeemed us from the curse of sin and has secured our eternity

forever in heaven from the instant we believed in Him. We have believed that He was buried and that He rose again on the third day, and that all who identify with Him by faith will one day rise again also. We have believed all of that.

And yet, we face a dilemma, a situation, a challenge, and it shakes our faith. It could be a difficult diagnosis, a loss of a job, a tragedy of some kind. It could be something as simple as needing to trust God to show us His will for our next steps. And we live with this tension between belief and unbelief - like the father in Mark 9.

Can you think of an example from your life after trusting Christ when your faith was challenged and shaken? What were some of the reasons this particular challenge affected you so strongly? How did you work through it? Did it deepen your faith?

Let it encourage you that Jesus saw the man's struggle, knew the faith that was in his heart, and acted in response to that faith. Indeed, Jesus bore with the man in his weakness and came to his aid. In compassion, Jesus will do the very same for you and me. He sees what faith we do have, however strong or weak it may be, and bears with our infirmity.

Unbelief is costly. When that which we do not believe is the Gospel, unbelief costs us salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternity in heaven - it costs us everything. Matthew 13:58 tells us that people's

unbelief cost them the joy of seeing mighty works done among them. There is a cause and effect relationship between unbelief and not seeing mighty works: “Now, He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

What are some ways that unbelief has cost you in your personal journey?

Thankfully, if we struggle with faith in our Christian journey, there is hope for us. We can pray, as the well-known hymn says, “O for grace to trust [You] more.”

Takeaways:

- Unbelief is always costly
- The Lord understands our frame, our weaknesses, and bears with us mercifully.
- We can praise God for responding to our imperfect faith.

Prayer Points:

- O for grace to trust Him more
- Lord, I do believe; help my unbelief. (a good goal for page 1)

Day Three: Degrees of Faith

Throughout the four Gospels, we find instances where the Lord Jesus described the level of faith of a person or group as “faithless,” “little faith,” “so great faith.” This shows that there can be varying degrees of faith.

This week, we are looking at how faith is the support structure - the substance of things hoped for - the evidence or proof of things not seen. This support structure can be weak or strong; our proof of things not seen can be thin or solid. As we mature along our journey with Christ, God’s desire for us is that our faith would strengthen and that we would grow toward an unshakable faith.

Sadly, there were times in Jesus’ ministry when He found those without faith at all. As we briefly saw yesterday, Matthew 13:58 tells us, “He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Interestingly, an absence of God’s work among these people is tied to an absence of their faith. If we are honest with ourselves, we may be able to recall times throughout our own journey when we simply had no faith. Those times are probably also times when we saw precious little activity of God in our lives. Maybe this is you right now. Hang in here in this study, and you may be surprised how God uncovers the truth about faith for you. Do not lose heart and give up.

Other times, Jesus found “little faith” in those to whom He was ministering. Little faith worries about having the essentials for this life - food and clothing (Matthew 6:30, Luke 12:28). Little faith forgets even the most recent evidences of God’s power (Matthew

16:8). Not long after Jesus had fed thousands of people with enough food for one person, the disciples think that He is frustrated with them for forgetting to bring bread. He is teaching them a lesson about the leaven of the Pharisees, and they think He is talking about not having bread. Their little faith caused them to imagine a crisis, when Jesus, as they should've readily understood, could make bread appear out of nothing. You and I, also, can forget God's recent works when we operate with "little faith."

In a sense, "little faith" is better than no faith at all. The reason that "little faith" meets with chastisement from the Lord so often is that those with "little faith" should have been demonstrating much greater faith. They had seen more, witnessed more, learned more. Their faith should have been stronger. Something similar happens in Hebrews 5:12, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God."

Then, there were examples of "great faith." You might think that the greatest faith Christ ever saw in a person would have come from someone steeped in the Scriptures and with a strong pedigree in the faith. Instead, though, Jesus marveled at the faith of a Gentile - a Roman centurion. We read about it in Matthew 8:5-10:

5 Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, 6 saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."

7 And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

8 The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my

servant will be healed.

9 For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

10 When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!

Believing that Jesus could simply utter a command and the servant would be healed constituted the greatest degree of faith Jesus had found at that point anywhere in Israel. Where are you right now with faith? Are you faithless? Do you have little faith? Do you have great faith? In Faith’s Checkbook, Charles H. Spurgeon prayed, “Raise my faith to full assurance.”

You may want to look up these verses that use that phrase, “full assurance.” Interestingly two of them are in the book of Hebrews. In the box below each verse, write what that verse tells us about “full assurance.”

Colossians 2:2

Hebrews 6:11

Hebrews 10:22

In what way or through what experience is God currently calling you to a deeper level of faith?

Let us pray together that God will raise our faith from whatever degree it is today to full assurance.

Takeaways:

- When it comes to matters other than salvation, there are varying degrees of faith a person can have.
- God wants us all to be moving toward deeper, greater levels of faith.
- God will use experiences to deepen and strengthen our faith.

Prayer Points:

- God, deepen my faith upon You and in Your Word to “full assurance.”
- Help me to respond to the challenges You allow in my life in a way that grows my faith and draws me closer to You.
- Help me influence others around me to deeper, stronger levels of faith.

Day Four: The Faith of Ealier Generations

Key Verse: Hebrews 11:2

“By it [faith], the elders obtained a good testimony.”

The elders received commendation from the LORD for their faith. You may wonder what elders the text is talking about, and as the rest of the chapter shows, this refers to one Old Testament saint after another who influenced the world by faith. We have examples of the Lord Jesus commending people’s faith (Matthew 8:10). There is no reason to believe that you and I cannot receive commendation from the Lord for our faith also. As we have seen and will continue to see, great reward for our faith is coming - the inheritance laid up for us in Glory.

Who are some people in your life, past and present, whom God blessed and commended for their faith?

In **Exploring Hebrews**, John Phillips notes, “[They] all put their faith to the test, reached out, grasped the unseen world, and found it real.” There’s that word “unseen” again. As God grows you and shapes you into the image of Christ, you will find that He gives you a capacity for vision, to see the unseen. Leaders with vision see things that are yet unseen. All believers have a measure of vision. “No man has seen God at any time” (John 1:18). Still, we believe.

Jesus said to Thomas, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” When Jesus speaks of “those who have not seen,” that is you and I.

What is something on your mind or heart that is yet unseen, but still you have faith regarding that unseen reality? It may be that you will see a loved one again. It may be your heavenly home. It may be seeing Jesus face to face. It may be something God has challenged you to believe Him for in this life.

As we will see in this chapter through the examples of these elders who obtained a good report, God performed many mighty works in their lives in response to their faith and for His glory. As Andrew Murray is quoted in *Andrew Murray on Prayer*, “Faith is the power that determines how much of God’s will is done in us.” In Matthew 9:29, Jesus ties the level of miracle working power people will witness in their lives to the level of faith they demonstrate. He says, “According to your faith, let it be unto you.” What if Jesus said that to you? What if the reason we don’t experience more of God’s power in our lives is anemic faith?

Surveying examples of the faithful who have gone before is a tremendously strong builder of faith. It is a primary purpose of this chapter. When we see how God used others, we can reasonably conclude that if He did it through them, He can do it through us. The key is our faith and surrender. I imagine there are some

What greater commendation could there be from the Lord than to see His glory of full display in our lives both here on earth and in eternity future? You and I can receive commendation from the Lord for our faith also. As we will read in coming verses, without faith it is impossible to please God. The greater the faith we attain, the greater the commendation from the Lord. Let that be our goal to grow in our faith in a way that brings pleasure to our Lord.

Takeaways:

- God takes note when we demonstrate faith.
- We stand on the shoulders of the faithful who have gone before us.
- We, today, are leaving a legacy of faith for future generations to follow. What kind of example are we setting?

Prayer Points:

- Heavenly Father, help me please you through the faith that I demonstrate.
- Help my faith go deeper than just an inward sense of assurance toward an outflow of obedience in my thoughts and actions.
- Thank you for the legacy of faith that I have inherited from those who have invested in me.
- Help me to leave a legacy of faith for future generations that brings glory to You!

Day Five: Week 1 Review, Week 2 Prep

In this week's daily devotionals, we have uncovered many truths to strengthen our faith. And though we have already grown in our faith in just this one week, as we continue in this study, we may be surprised how God will use His Word to take us to a level of deep faith that we have never before known. That deepening of your faith would not be a bad goal to put on your list of goals on page 1.

Look back over the devotionals from this week. What are some of the key takeaways that you have gotten from our study thus far?

Today, I want to review some of the high points of this week's journey, and add a few thoughts to encourage you through the weekend as we prepare for Week Two of our study.

We began the week by examining these phrases “things hoped for” and “things unseen.” A good way to understand what a biblical writer is communicating through certain words is to see how he may have used those words elsewhere in the same book. We found the term “hope” in Hebrews 3:6, where we read that great rejoicing comes from our hope of things yet to come. We are encouraged to hold fast, or keep secure, both our confidence and our rejoicing of hope. Even though I don't have an ounce of celestial gold floating in a vial in my office, I have faith, which is the evidence, the proof, and the support that God will make good on His promises to take

me to my eternal home when I leave this life. I trust that you have a confident faith and hope that God will do the same for you.

In Hebrews 6:10-12, we again see this term “hope,” and again it refers to our future reward. Again, there is something for us to do. We are to “show the same diligence,” “not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Interestingly, faith here is both the evidence and support of future inheritance, and it is also the vehicle that takes you there. How are the promises inherited? Through faith and patience.

When your faith grows and deepens, it brings you ever closer to a place of “full assurance,” a place of great “confidence,” and allows you to withstand a time of trouble, hardship, devastation, and even great grief without losing ground.

Hebrews 7:19 showed us that the hope we have in Christ is an infinitely better hope than what we may have had before. There is no greater source of hope than the Lord Jesus; all other forms of hope will disappoint you. It is through our hope in Christ that we draw near to God. As Jesus told His disciples, “No one comes unto the Father but by me.” (John 14:6)

Nineteenth Century preacher Charles H. Spurgeon offered this vivid image: “A dauntless faith in God brushes fear aside like cobwebs in a giant’s path.” Fear is an enemy of your hope; it is the sworn enemy of your faith. It can only be as effective as you allow it to be. You defeat it by investing in your faith through Bible study, through prayer, through fellowship with other believers who are strong in their faith. The Bible says that “faith comes by hearing,

and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). This is true both of the Gospel, when someone hears and responds in faith. It is also true of you and me, after we have come to Christ, and we still need our faith to be strengthened. We go to the Word, and we find an infinite treasure trove of wisdom and encouragement to grow and deepen our faith.

Are there some times in your life that your faith was challenged, and God used a verse or passage in His Word to strengthen and grow your faith? What verse or passage did He use? You may consider sharing this in your group time.

One way the Word of God accomplishes this building up of our faith is through the examples of those who have gone before. To continue citing Spurgeon, in a devotional book bearing the title **Faith's Checkbook**, the entry for February 22 says, “past deliverance begets faith.” As young David told King Saul in 1 Samuel 17:37, “The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Is there some giant standing in your path? Is there some threat to your faith taunting you? Are you tempted to turn loose of your faith? Give that giant, that threat, that temptation to the Lord by faith in prayer. And monitor how God overcomes it in your life as we advance through this study together. You may want to list defeating this foe in your list of goals on page 1.

Thank you for completing week one's devotionals. I look forward to our times of discussion and teaching together and getting into further dissection of Hebrews 11.

Takeaways:

Write here the single biggest takeaway you have gotten from the study this week - whether from the sermon, these devotionals, or your group time.

Prayer Points:

- Thank God for the opportunity to grow in your faith
- Ask Him to use His Word in Hebrews 11 to deepen your faith in Him.
- Pray for the others in your group as they grow through this study also. Know that they will be praying for you.

Additional Notes: