

By An Act of Faith

A study of the People of Faith listed in Hebrews 11

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These study guides have been designed to assist you in the "Three R's" of your own Bible study – reading, receiving, and responding. You are welcome to print out the whole series. If you wish to print out only one lesson at a time, choose that option from your printer.

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Lesson 1

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What is Faith?

“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.” Heb. 11:1 (Message)

In the first 10 chapters of the Book of Hebrews the author has carefully explained the superiority and sufficiency of the work of Christ. Jesus alone is the One who gives access to reality and to God. Having finished this discourse, the rest of Hebrews gives believers clear and practical instructions about how life is to be lived in response to Jesus and to eternity. It’s a book that is as practical today as when it was written! Are you ready to ask God to open your heart and mind to His desires for you as you study it?

READ – The Introduction and Conclusion to the “Faith Heroes” of Chapter 11.
Hebrews 10: 19 – 11:3 and 12: 1 – 3

REVIEW

1. What do you think the author is saying in Hebrews 10: 19 – 21?
2. Make a list of all the specific mandates that are given in the rest of chapter 10. If there is some motivation for obedience, be sure to include it in your list.
3. There are some serious warnings in these verses. Do these have implications for believers today?
4. So what is faith? Try to put this famous verse – Hebrews 11:1 – into your own words. How does faith affect our view of “reality”, or what is most important in life? What difference does “faith” make in life?
4. The temptation to “grow weary and lose heart” can still be a subtle, but serious issue for all of us. We can so easily rationalize the attitudes that demonstrate this problem. What is the antidote found in Hebrews 12: 1 – 3?

REFLECT

1. “By the blood of Jesus” (10: 19 – 22) - What does this mean to you? It’s the central issue or foundation for a relationship with the living God. Take time to write down what you believe about the death of Jesus.
2. Did you experience initial enthusiasm and strong commitment to the “Good News” of forgiveness and the gift of eternal life? How’s your confidence now?
3. Take another look at Hebrews 12: 2 – 3. How do these verses encourage you in your journey of faith?

RESPOND – God is waiting to answer your prayer, to encourage you in your walk of faith. Will you receive and believe His promises to you?

“Our highest form of worship is trusting God against all odds.”

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Lesson 3

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ENOCH – A Man Who Pleased God

“Enoch walked steadily with God.” Genesis 5:24

At the age of 65 Enoch became a father and something else changed in his life at that time. As the little Sunday School girl tells it, “Enoch was a man who learned to walk with God, and they used to take long walks together. One day they walked so far that God said, ‘Look, Enoch, it’s too far for you to go back; just come on home with me.’ So he walked on home with God.” It’s a pretty amazing story, isn’t it? No one can escape the reality of decay, disease and death; but for the one who knows and walks with God by faith the transition is with hope and anticipation.

READ – Remembering Enoch – Hebrews 11: 5 - 6
The Rest of the Story - Genesis 5: 18 - 24

REVIEW

WHO was Enoch?

WHEN and WHERE did his story take place?

HOW does Enoch provide for us an example of “faith”?

WHY is Enoch’s story a significant one?

REFLECT

1. What impresses you about Enoch’s relationship to God?
2. There is a helpful explanation of what faith that pleases God means in Hebrews 11:6. Try to write this verse in your own words and to explain its implications.
3. Why is it not enough to simply believe that God exists?
4. What do you think it means to “seek God”? What are some of the promises given in Scripture to those who do seek Him?
Deuteronomy 4: 29
Psalm 34: 10
Psalm 105: 3-4
Psalm 119: 2 – 3
Proverbs 8: 17
Isaiah 55: 6-8
Matthew 6: 33
Matthew 7: 7-8
4. What are the “rewards” that God gives to those who seek Him? Are they in this life or for eternity or both? Try to base your answers from Bible verses and promises that you know.

RESPOND - What are the promises that God wants you to claim for yourself today?
Where does he want you to believe Him and to trust Him?
It pleases Him when you take Him at His Word. It’s totally reliable.

“I sought the Lord and afterward I knew, it was not me, but Jesus seeking me.”

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Lesson 4

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NOAH – He Walked With God

**“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time,
and he walked with God.”** Genesis 6: 9

You have heard the story many times – the ark, the animals, and the rainbow. Children around the world play with the toys that represent it. What is really in the Bible and what is not? Read it again for the first time and experience the decisions that Noah made because of His convictions.

READ – Remembering Noah - Hebrews 11:7
The Rest of the Story – Genesis 5: 28 – 9:17

REVIEW

WHO was Noah?

WHEN and WHERE does this story take place?

HOW does Noah provide for us an example of “faith”?

WHY is Noah’s story a significant one?

REFLECT

1. What words are used to describe Noah in both Genesis and Hebrews?
2. As you read the story of Noah note all of the references to his obedience to God. What caused Noah to believe God and to take His commands seriously?
3. Where do we get the idea that the people in Noah’s community made fun of him or mocked him?
4. When you talk a walk with a friend, you have to go in the same direction, don’t you? One of you must decide which path to take and the other one must agree. So, what does this mean when you think about the phrase “he walked with God”. See what these verses add to your understanding of this idea.

Deuteronomy 10: 12-13	I John 1: 5 - 7
Joshua 22: 5	I John 2: 5 - 6
Micah 6: 8	II John 1: 4 – 6
	III John 1: 3 – 4
5. It has been said that if only we could hear God talk to us audibly, as he talked to Noah, obedience would be easier. What is your response to that idea?
6. Hebrews tells us that Noah was warned about “things not yet seen” and that he built the ark because he was moved with “godly fear”. How do these two phrases impact you and your faith in God?

RESPOND - Won’t you reach up and take the Heavenly Father’s hand and walk with Him for a while? Listen to Him for He has some stories to tell you, some words of encouragement for you, perhaps even an explanation that will help dispel some confusion that you have. He wants you to feel the grip of His hand on yours, holding you up whenever there is a bump in the road or a steep decline on the path.

“Faith sees the invisible, hears the inaudible & believes the unthinkable.” Bruce McDonald

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Lesson 5

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ABRAHAM – A Friend of God

**“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”
and he was called God’s friend. James 2: 23**

Do you believe that your God is “the God of the impossible”? Can He really do anything? Our children sing the song “My God is so great, so strong and so mighty. There’s nothing my God can not do.” Children have a wonderful way of believing that truth and so they trust in God with faith that is often difficult for adults. What would change in your life and your attitudes if today you came in childlike faith to God, with a willingness to wait for Him?

READ - Remembering Abraham – Hebrews 11: 8 – 19

The Rest of the Story - Genesis 12: 1 – 9 15: 1 – 21 17: 1 – 22
18: 1 – 15 21: 1-7 22: 1-19

REVIEW

WHO was Abraham? WHO was Sarah?

WHEN and WHERE do these events take place?

HOW does Abraham provide us an example of faith?

WHY is Abraham’s story significant?

REFLECT

Event # 1 - Willing to Go

Event # 2 – Becoming Parents

Event #3 - Waiting for a Better Country

Event #4 - Believing the Impossible

1. Romans 4 is a great chapter on Abraham’s faith. What insights does it give you which add to your understanding of both Abraham and his faith.
2. James 2: 14 – 24 explains the relationship of faith and works. What do you think James wanted his readers to understand more clearly. Why was Abraham a good example of what he wanted them to know and do?
3. Abraham could have had very good excuses for not obeying and believing just as easily as we do! What would some of them have been? Why did Abraham not yield to that temptation?
4. Do you think Sarah was a help or a hindrance to Abraham’s faith? Look carefully for some Biblical clues both in Genesis and in Hebrews. (Use some different versions of the Bible, if possible – they add interesting possibilities).
5. What are some of the descriptive phrases about Abraham that are used that are especially helpful to you?

RESPOND – What do you think God wants you to receive from Him today? Is he your friend?

“Faith is believing more in what we do not see than what we do see.”

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Lesson 6

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ISAAC, JACOB, and JOSEPH – Three Generations Who Finished Well

“May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that . . .”

Gen. 28: 3

Why would the final blessings and end of life instructions of these three patriarchs be included as examples of faith centuries later? Why not one of the life experiences of each of them as they believed in the God of Abraham and His covenant to them and to future generations? Perhaps there are some important lessons for us as we look back and think about what it means to pass on to our children and grandchildren the blessings that have been promised to them. Final words before death are often carefully remembered and treasured. There's an impact still to be made at life's end IF there is still credibility and strong relationships. It's worth considering carefully.

READ - Remembering

ISAAC – Hebrews 11: 20
JACOB – Hebrews 11: 21
JOSEPH – Hebrews 11: 22

The Rest of The Story

Genesis 27 – 28: 5
Genesis 48: 1 – 22 (Genesis 49)
Genesis 50: 18 – 26 (Exodus 13: 19)

REVIEW

ISAAC - Who was he? When and where did he live?
How & why is his story of faith significant?

JACOB - (use questions above)

JOSEPH – (use questions above)

REFLECT

1. Do you remember Isaac's life story? – a miracle birth, almost sacrificed, provision by God for a wife and then a child, nomadic life until God provided land, tricked by his wife, Rebekah, and his son, Jacob, in his old age. What impresses you?
How is his final blessing for the future given to his two sons an act of faith?
2. Do you remember Jacob's story? – listens to his mother, tricks his dad and and receives his brother's blessing, meets God in a dream, flees to his uncle's house and works for him for 14 years and 2 wives, has 12 children, makes many poor choices, loses his beloved Joseph and goes to Egypt miraculously. What impresses you? How is his final blessing on his 2 grandsons and his worship an act of faith?
3. Do you remember Joseph's story – favored child of his father and hated by his brothers, sold in to slavery in Egypt, tempted by the ruler's wife, interpreter of dreams, in jail and finally governor of Egypt under Pharaoh and restoration with his brothers & father. What impresses you? How are his final instructions and words about the exodus of the Israelites an act of faith?

What kind of a blessing would you like to give to your children and grandchildren? If you knew that the days of your life were limited, what would you like them to know, to believe, to do? Perhaps it is not too early to prayerfully consider what you should be putting in writing, on tape, or in a letter to them.

RESPOND - What comfort does God want to give you as you consider the reality of life and death?
Perhaps you need to receive His blessing for your life in a new way?

“Faith is believing in the unseen future that God has promised.”

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Lesson 7

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MOSES – He Did What God Commanded

“Do not be afraid.

Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.

The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Exodus 14: 13 – 14

It had been a long time for the people of Israel. For 400 years they had been exiles in Egypt. For 400 years they had been under the bondage of cruel Egyptian kings. For 400 years God had multiplied their numbers and made them fruitful. For 400 years they remembered the promise that God had made to their forefathers – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Joseph had told them that one day God would come and deliver them. It's what kept them going. What keeps you going when life gets hard?

READ – Remembering Moses – Hebrews 11: 23 – 29
The Rest of the Story – Exodus 1 – 2: 10 – Moses Is Born
Exodus 2: 11 – 25 – Moses Returns to His People
Exodus 11: 1 – 12: 30 – The Passover Instituted
Exodus 12: 31 – 42 and 13: 17 – 14: 31 – Crossing the Red Sea

REVIEW

WHO was Moses? WHO were his parents?
WHEN & WHERE did these events occur?
HOW does Moses life give us an example of faith?
WHY is the story of Moses' parents and then Moses significant?

REFLECT

1. What do you think gave the midwives and Moses' parents their courage?
2. Moses could have stayed and enjoyed a very privileged life, but he chose not to do that. What were the reasons that he made this choice? What would have been the obstacles or excuses he could have made for staying with the Egyptians?
3. Can you even begin to imagine what it was like the night that the LORD carried out the final plague – the death of the first born in every house. Then, think about the Israelites who experienced the protection of the Lord. This was a night to be remembered and celebrated by all future generations – the Passover. Why?
4. Why is it that we so often do exactly what the Israelites did? We experience a great miracle from the Lord and then when the next obstacle comes, we forget His goodness and power and start right in complaining and worrying? What can you learn from Moses and his leadership/counsel/attitude?

RESPOND

1. Read Exodus 15. It is Moses' response to the LORD GOD. Worship the Lord together with Moses as you read his song.
2. Perhaps you could write your own song/poem/prayer of praise, reflecting on some of the events in your life where you have seen God provide in wonderful ways for you and then look forward to what He has promised to do for you in the days ahead. Use some of Moses' words to express your praise to God.

**“Faith apprehends as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.
Faith is a real seeing of what is invisible.”**

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Lesson 8

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RAHAB – She Trusted God

“For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”

Joshua 2: 11

The question is asked in the New Testament letter from James, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” These are thought provoking questions placed in Scripture not so much for us to question other people, but to take a look at ourselves. It’s very true, isn’t it, that our “actions speak louder than our words”. Are you ready to take a look at how your faith is clearly seen through what you do and how you behave or respond?

READ – Remembering Rahab & the Walls of Jericho – Hebrews 11: 30 - 31
The Rest of the Story - Joshua 2: 1 – 24
Joshua 5: 10 – 6: 27

REVIEW

- WHO was Rahab? WHO were the spies that came to her house?
- WHEN and WHERE did she live?
- WHAT made Rahab willing to house the spies? What was the risk for each of them?
- HOW do these events provide examples of faith for us?
- WHY are the stories of Rahab and the victory over Jericho significant as examples of faith?

REFLECT

1. How do you think Rahab came to faith in the living God? What do you think that her reputation as a prostitute contributes to this story? How do you put together her lying and her commendable faith?
2. Rahab had a great future because she turned to the God of Israel. She married an Israelite named Salmon and Boaz was born. This was in the direct line from Abraham to Jesus. It’s amazing. Ruth 4: 18 – 22 and Matthew 1: 5. What part did faith have in this story?
3. Along with Abraham, Rahab is commended for her actions and her faith. Read James 2: 14 – 26 and give some thought to this discussion. What does God want you to learn from this Scripture?
4. It was about ½ mile around the city of Jericho. It was a silent parade except for the sound of the trumpets until the seventh day. What do you think the people were feeling and talking about the rest of each day? What part does faith play in this for Joshua and for the people?
5. How could this new generation possibly forget the Lord God? They had grown up hearing the stories of their parents and grandparents about life in Egypt, about crossing the Red Sea and the entrance into the Promised Land. They, themselves, had just crossed the Jordan River and experienced the victory over Jericho. To the end of his days, Joshua had to remind the people that they could not serve any other god – Joshua 24: 19 – 28. How do you think they differ or are the same as we are today?

RESPOND – It’s your time to listen to God. What does message does He have for you now?

“Satan hates our faith and wants us to look at circumstances & respond to feelings, but the one who is immersed in the Word, sees through that all the way to the God he/she trusts.”

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Lesson 9

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Ordinary People Who Lived By Faith

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” Hebrews 12: 1

Sometimes we give people a false impression. In fact, there are times that we are tempted to believe the lie, as well. Here it is: Coming to Jesus in faith will protect you from illness, problems, difficulties, and poverty. It simply isn't true. Coming to Jesus will enable you to have the strength you need in all the circumstances of life – BY FAITH! It's in the tough times that we learn to trust God and to rely on His promises and provisions. Take a look at the rest of these heroes, who by their acts of faith found that God really does keep His promises, but it always demands waiting and trusting. Are you willing?

READ – You probably can't read every detail about all of them, so choose one or two for your study.

Remembering Them – Hebrews 11: 32 - 40

The Rest of the Stories

Gideon – Judges 6: 11 – 7: 21

Barak - Judges 4: 6 – 24

Samson – Judges 13: 24 – 16: 31

Jephthah – Judges 11 – 12: 7

David - I Samuel 16 and on

Samuel - I Samuel 3 and on

The Unnamed – The Old Testament & throughout the centuries since then

REVIEW – from Hebrews 11: 32 – 40

WHO - What qualities or descriptions are given about these people in Hebrews?

WHEN & WHERE – What do you observe about their challenges and circumstances?

HOW – Can we really learn from these people who lived so long ago?

WHY are these stories and examples of “acts of faith” significant?

REFLECT

1. We're reading about amazing miracles in these verses, aren't we? Verse 33 tells us that they were accomplished **through faith**. Did they have any thing that is not available to us today? What is different? What is the same?
2. Take a look at verse 39 – 40. To what do you think these verses are referring?
3. What would you say are the greatest obstacles to faith?

RESPOND – It's not up to you alone! It's God's gift to you. Spend some time talking it over with the only One who will never fail you or forsake you.

“It's not a stirring to have faith or to increase our faith but a looking at The Faithful One who seems all we need. A resting in His love entirely.” Hudson Taylor

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Lesson 10

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JESUS – The Son of God

“Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. He never lost sight of where He was headed.” Hebrews 12: 2 – 3 – The Message

Life is not about you – your comfort, your goals, your accomplishments, or even your pain. It’s about GOD – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That concept is totally counter-cultural, isn’t it? And if it’s all about God, then it’s also about His children – worldwide and about those who don’t know Him yet. They don’t have the joy or hope that is in Jesus to energize them in this race because they’re not clear about the goal. Where are your eyes?

READ – Remembering Jesus – Hebrews 12: 1 – 13
The Rest of the Story – Philippians 2: 5 - 11

REVIEW – Take some time to consider anew what you believe about Jesus. . .
WHO do you believe that Jesus is?

WHEN & WHERE - What do you believe about Jesus birth, death, resurrection, future?

HOW does Jesus give us an example for life?

WHAT does Jesus mean to you today? Be honest with your doubts as well as your faith.

REFLECT

1. What does the writer of Hebrews encourage us TO DO because of these examples in Hebrews 11? Make a list in your own words.
2. We have a tendency to “grow weary and lose heart”. What is the antidote for this according to Hebrews and any other Scriptures that you can find?
3. There are many synonyms for the word “discipline” in verses 5 - 11. What would some of them be? How could this help you gain perspective?
4. What do you think verses 12 and 13 encourage us to do? How does it happen?
Philippians 2: 13
Philippians 4: 6 – 7
Philippians 4: 13

RESPOND

“Oh come let us adore Him – **JESUS CHRIST THE LORD.**”
It has been said that a well loved child has many names. Make a list of the names that you love best for the Son of God and worship Him. Your faith will increase.

**“Oh, May the God of hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace,
so that your believing lives,
filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit,
will brim over with hope!”**

Romans 15: 13 – The Message.