

# By An Act of Faith

A study of the People of Faith listed in Hebrews 11

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## STUDY TIME SUGGESTIONS

These lessons are designed for you to use in the way that best fits your own schedule and preferences. Whether you schedule a regular and predictable hour each week as your study time or you prefer to have shorter and more spontaneous times to do the lesson is entirely up to you. The important goal is that week by week you find time to focus and concentrate on God's Word and your relationship with The One Who loves you and longs for you to spend time with Him through the study of the Bible. If at all possible, find a quiet and uninterrupted time and place to meet with JESUS.

**READ -** Take your time as you read God's Word. Read the passages through several times and in various translations. The Holy Spirit will begin to teach you as you simply take time to meditate - to absorb - to contemplate the truths that are presented.

**REVIEW -** These questions will give you an opportunity to go back over the passages which you have just read and consider what the story is really all about. Why is it included in Scripture? What is unique about it? What does it teach you about God and His love for mankind? How does it point to Jesus, the Messiah, and our Savior? You can use all of them or some of them. They are simply meant to help you understand the passage and to stimulate your thinking.

**REFLECT -** This study time is meant to be far more than an academic or intellectual exercise so take time to sit quietly before the Lord and let His Spirit point out truths that are meant for you today. It is often challenging to simply ponder, to meditate, to think with an open mind and to “wait on the Lord. Use the questions that are helpful to you and ask yourself other questions as you focus on phrases and ideas that attract your attention.

**RESPOND -** Take time to make this study personal. What do these ideas mean to you? As you finish your study time, ask the Lord what He is calling you to do. In what ways would He invite you to trust Him more? You may want to re-read some of the Scriptures that you found particularly impressive. Good intentions do not accomplish a thing; specific decisions which are prompted by God's Spirit will enable you to move forward in faith, believing that God will always keep His promises to you.

# LIVING By FAITH

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## Lesson 1 - What Does It Mean to Have Faith?

“I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Galatians 2: 20

When there is visible evidence of something, it requires no faith, but does that automatically mean that because something is not visible, that it is not believable? Of course not! Every day all of us make assumptions that certain things are true because we live with evidence that proves the veracity of their existence. We are reminded in Romans 1: 20 that since creation people have been able to see God’s invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature.” The choice has always been whether to worship Him and give Him thanks or to refuse to put one’s faith in Him. What are you basing your faith on? What are your desires?

READ - Hebrews 10: 19 - 11: 3 and 12: 1 - 3

If possible, read these verses in 2 or 3 different translations or paraphrase versions of the Bible.

What ideas, words, thoughts are particularly interesting to you? Take note of them.

### REVIEW

1. What are the 5 ideas listed in Hebrews 10: 22 - 25 that the writer of Hebrews gives to his readers as they look forward to their future?
2. As the author writes to his dear friends, his brothers and sisters in Christ, he gives them a very serious warning in 10: 26 - 31. How would his words of encouragement and caution be important to think about before helping them to understand what faith really means in every day life situations?
3. How would you describe the past and present circumstances of those to whom the letter was first addressed?

### REFLECT

1. Perseverance is a theme in the final chapters of Hebrews. Compare these verses. Why is this counsel important?  
Hebrews 10: 23  
Hebrews 10: 35  
Hebrews 12: 1  
Hebrews 12: 7  
Hebrews 12: 12 - 13
2. Try to put Hebrews 11:1 - 2 into your own words. How does faith affect our view of “reality”, or what is most important in life? It is helpful to compare the different ways that these verses are translated.
3. Read Hebrews 11: 39 - 40. What do you think these verses mean and what implications do these truths have for believers today? Do the final verses in chapter 10 (35 - 39) help you to have a broader understanding of your future?
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?

### RESPOND

“Simply trusting every day - Trusting through a stormy way; Even when my faith is small, trusting Jesus, that is all. Trusting as the moments fly. Trusting as the days go by. Trusting Him, whate’er befall. Trusting Jesus, that is all.”

What are your heart’s desires as you listen to God’s Spirit speak to you? Where do you need His gift of faith?

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



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## Lesson 3 - 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? What are the phrases that different translations use?
2. There is a helpful explanation the kind of faith that pleases God 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”?

Here are some of the promises given in Scripture to those who do seek Him?

Deuteronomy 4: 29

Proverbs 8: 17

Psalms 34: 10

Isaiah 55: 6 - 7

Psalms 105: 1 - 4

Matthew 6: 33

Psalms 119: 2 - 3, 10

Matthew 7: 7 - 8

5. What are the “rewards” that God gives to those who seek Him? Are they in this life or for eternity or both? Do you think that the verses in 10: 35 - 38 could be connected to 11: 6? How?

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 - 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 and because of his faith.

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 take 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”? What do these verses add to your understanding of this idea?

Deuteronomy 10: 12 - 13

I John 1: 5 -7

Joshua 22: 4 - 5

I John 2: 5 - 6

Micah 6: 8

II John 1: 4 - 6

III John 1: 3 - 4

### 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. Are you willing to follow His path even though it might feel too steep?

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

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## Lesson 5 - ABRAHAM - A Friend of God

“Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith,”  
He was even called the friend of God. James 2: 23 (NLT)

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. As you begin your study, take some time to quiet your mind and your heart and tell the Lord about your doubts and fears, your hopes and desires. He is waiting for you . . .

READ - Remembering Abraham - Hebrews 11: 8 - 19

The Rest of the Story - Genesis 12:1-9

18: 1 - 15

15: 1 - 21

21: 1 - 7

17: 1 - 22

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

Event #5 - Willing to Obey

1. Romans 4 is a great chapter on Abraham’s faith. What insights does it give you that 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 many good excuses for not obeying and believing God!  
What would some of them have been? Why did Abraham not yield to that temptation?
4. Find as many phrases that are used to describe Abraham as you can? How do they help you understand why God called him “his friend” and why he is used as an example to us in the New Testament so many times?

RESPOND - Could God be asking you to take a new step of faith, of obedience, of surrender at this point in your life?

Let His Spirit speak gentle words of truth, reminding you of God’s promises to you so that your excuses will be shattered and your willingness to surrender will be strengthened.

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

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## Lesson 6 - 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. Think about 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. Think about Jacob's story - listens to his mother, tricks his dad 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. Think about Joseph's story - favored child of his father and hated by his brothers, sold into 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?

### RESPOND

1. 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.

2. 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 - MOSES - He Did What God Commanded

Moses told the people: "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today.  
The LORD Himself will fight for you. Just stay calm." Exodus 14: 13 - 14 (NLT)

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 some day God would come and deliver them. It's what kept them going. What keeps you going?

READ - Remembering Moses - Hebrews 11: 23 - 29

The Rest of the Story - Exodus 1: 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 - 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. How do these 2 examples demonstrate what James is trying to teach about faith?

4. It was about 1/2 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?

### RESPOND

Is your own story more like Rahab or Joshua and the children of Israel? Are you the first one in your family to put your faith in the Lord God or do you have multiple generations of people who have seen that God will always keep His promises to those who trust in Him? What is it that you think the Holy Spirit might want you to learn from two very different people who were willing to step out by faith and believe that God could be trusted in very risky situations.

“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 - Ordinary People Who Lived By Faith

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.” Hebrews 12: 1 (NLV)

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 two or three for your study.

Remembering Them - Hebrews 11: 32 - 40

The Rest of the Stories

Gideon - Judges 6: 11 - 7: 22

Jephthah - Judges 11 - 12: 7

Barak - Judges 4: 6 - 24

David - I Samuel 16 and on

Samson - Judges 13: 24 - 16: 31

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. The writer of Hebrews gives examples of many who experienced victories, miracles, and great answers to prayer, but not everyone's story has a happy ending. Others were tortured, suffered, oppressed and some died. How do explain this?
3. The final sentence in verse 11: 35 makes a very important statement. Try to put it in your own words so that it can become a part of your thinking and your own way of looking at the outcome of some of your prayers.
4. Take a look at verse 39 - 40. To what do you think these verses are referring?

RESPOND - Your story may not be dramatic, but it is YOUR story. In a sentence or 2 what would be said about you if your name would be added to this “parade of faith heroes”? Faith never comes from your own determination or effort. It comes from looking at the object of your faith - the Lord Jesus Christ! On what are your eyes focused?

“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 - 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

What better time of the year than Christmas to “keep your eyes on Jesus”? 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 - Romans 5: 1 - 11 and Philippians 2: 5 - 11

REVIEW - Take some time to consider anew what you believe about Jesus. . .  
WHO do you believe that Jesus really 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?  
Compare the ideas in the following verses:

Isaiah 40: 28 - 31

Galatians 6: 8 - 10

Matthew 11: 28 - 30

Ephesians 6: 10 - 17

3. What is the difference between discipline and punishment? What are the benefits of God’s discipline according to Hebrews 12: 5 -11? How could these ideas be helpful to you when your life seems chaotic or difficult?

4. What are some promises that you count on when your “hands are tired and your knees feel weak”?  
Here are a few, but what are some of your favorite ones?

Philippians 2: 13

Philippians 4: 6 - 7

Philippians 4: 12 - 13 and 19

### RESPOND

“Oh come let us adore Him - JESUS CHRIST THE LORD.”

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.

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Sermons by Ray Stedman - <http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/hebrews/what-faith-is>

## TRANSLATIONS

New International Version

New Living Translation

English Standard Version

New King James

The Amplified New Testament

The Message

The Voice

