

Hebrews 11

Faith

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
The blow ties indicate that these are *he-brooms* = **HEBREWS**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* of brooms = **CHAPTER 11**
3. The THEME:
These he-brooms focus on the cross, a symbol of faith. = **FAITH**

HEBREWS 11: BACKGROUND

The letter to the Hebrews has an urgent message about Christ. The readers had been undergoing persecution. The author, whom we cannot with certainty identify, held up Christ as the central focus of their faith. Christ was far superior to the teachings they had learned in Judaism. If faith was properly centered in Christ, the in was genuine and real. Such faith was totally reliable and trustworthy.

No wonder, then, that the author devoted an entire chapter of his letter to *faith*. He cited examples of people who had strong faith. They were actual people who were known to have lived the faith. They were not only held up as examples but were offered as believers to imitate. They believed in Christ. They lived their faith. We can too.

It wasn't easy to live the committed life in Christ then. It isn't easy now. Christ calls us to take up our cross and follow him. True faith transforms lives. True faith shines through in our daily conversations and actions. (See Key Chapter booklets *Romans 8: Salvation and Romans 6: New Life*).

Hebrews 11 shows how God motivated, empowered, and acted in and through the lives of his people. These people were not born heroes. They were *made!* They *became* heroes of faith. God wishes to do—and does—the same in and through us. God was—and still is—the hero maker. May his name b glorified.

KEY VERSES OF HEBREWS 11

Verse 1

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith goes beyond reason and senses.

Verses 4

By 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. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

Abel was a hero of faith. God uses the faith he gives as the criteria for determining what is acceptable to him.

Verse 5

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.

Enoch was a hero of faith who pleased God because his faith moved him to obedience. He “walked with God” (Genesis 5:22). He was a prophet (Jude 14) who proclaimed God’s will by word and by lifestyle.

Verse 7

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.

Noah was a hero of faith. He was different and didn’t follow the crowd. He defied the corruption and evil surrounding him. He spoke out against it. And he led a life of faith and obedience. God had a plan to rescue him. It seemed ridiculous. But in spite of the mockery, Noah kept hammering away. And the rains came!

Verse 8-12, 17-19

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By 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. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered himself faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore...

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Abraham was another hero of faith. His life is outlined here to show how consistently he trusted and obeyed God. He went where God led (v. 8). He focused on God’s eternal promise of heaven (v. 10). He trusted God to do the impossible (vs. 11-2), (see Genesis 15:6). He was ready to sacrifice Isaac. This incredible test—and victory—of faith is recorded for us in detail in Genesis 22.

A specific covenant was given to Abraham by God (Genesis 12:3).

Verse 20

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

The covenant given to Abraham was passed on to Isaac (Genesis 26:4). Now in the account of Isaac blessing his son (Genesis 27), he passes the promise on to the next generation.

Verses 21

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

Jacob, another hero of faith, trusted that God would fulfill the promise he had made. He passed the blessing to his sons. Jacob, just as Abraham and Isaac before him, received the covenant regarding the Promised Land while he dreamed at Bethel (Genesis 28: 10-15).

Verse 22

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

Joseph knew God's people would be given the Promised Land. He requested that his bones be carried along so he could be buried there when they arrived.

Joseph's life reflected his faith. We get an insight into this hero's faith and obedience on the occasion of his resisting the seduction of his master's wife (Genesis 39: 7-12).

Verses 23-29

By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

Already in infancy, Moses was under God's blessing. He was spared from the murderous Pharaoh (Exodus 1: 22-2:4). Moses trusted God. Though the people he led often strayed from God, his faith kept him close to God (Acts 7:36). Moses knew he had been called by God (Exodus 3:1-8 and Acts 7:30-34) to lead God's people out of slavery to the Promised Land.

We can learn much from the study of this hero of faith. I have reflected on his call while standing at the traditional site of the burning bush and reflected on his meeting with God while perched on Mount Sinai. Even so, I have only begun to learn from this friend of God and his writings.

Verse 30

By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

This is an historical reminder of how God blessed the faith of Joshua and God's people as they faithfully marched around Jericho.

Verses 31-35

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

What an astounding list of heroic works of faith! God was visibly accompanying his people and making his presence known and felt, even over death.

Verse 36-38

Some face jeers and flogging, with still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

Every form of hardship and difficulty confronted them, both physical and spiritual, yet they were faith-full.

Verse 39-40

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

God was pleased with their faithfulness. He has a glorious plan for all those who remain faithful. We too will see him face to face.

THOUGHTS ON FAITH

Day 1

The letter to the Hebrews demonstrates repeatedly that Christ is superior to anything else. Some today are willing to accept that Christ was a messenger, child of god, prophet, or great leader, but this is not sufficient. He is more. He is true God.

* * *

The Christian lifestyle is more than obeying rules; it is walking with god in a *relationship* of faith.

* * *

One of the earliest evidences of faith is the desire for forgiveness. Repentance is a result of the Holy Spirit working in us.

* * *

Faith lays claim to the glorious promise. C. H. Spurgeon said it well, "It is not thy hold on Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not even thy faith in Christ that saves thee, though that be the instrument. It is Christ's blood and merit."

* * *

Faith is God given. It is a gift. God has *called* us to be his own (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9).

* * *

For some thoughts on the relationship between good works and faith see Key Chapter booklet *James 2: Works*.

* * *

Faith to stay alive must be in a process of growth. God supplies the nourishment for that growth through his Word and the Sacraments.

Day 2

Hebrews 11:6: And 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.

* * *

Faith moves. It is active. Anything alive cannot remain motionless continuously.

* * *

Faith is not a philosophical wish. Faith rests secure and trusts the certainties of God's promises. There is substance. There is evidence (Hebrews 11:1).

* * *

The life-changing discovery of Martin Luther was that man is justified by faith (Romans 3:28).

* * *

When our faith is more apparent in our lives, our witness to the world is more credible.

* * *

God wants to make "heroes of faith" today. It is the same God and the same Word.

* * *

Obedience is a by-product of faith.

* * *

Remember that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had wives and families. If our faith is genuine it will also be seen and felt by those who are closest to us: our families.

* * *

Day 3

Part of faith is waiting on God. Joshua must have wondered why it was necessary to march day after day around Jericho. But he did. And he waited. Then he saw. God acted when he was ready—at the right time.

* * *

Surprise: a harlot, Rahab, is found in this list of heroes of faith. Her sins were more apparent than many in the city. Christ came to save sinners. Even she could be saved. She made confession of her faith (Joshua 2: 9-11). God had transformed a prostitute into a hero of faith.

* * *

God has a habit of using the weak, the nobodies, the unknowns to carry out his purposes. He empowers them, lifts them up, and sends them out to do his will.

* * *

Faith is operative! It works! It is true!

* * *

Among the pieces of armor God gives us, faith is the shield (Ephesians 6:16). (See Key Chapter booklet *Ephesians 6: Armor*).

* * *

The backdrop of Hebrews 11, heroes, must be remembered in order to understand the full impact of Hebrews 12: 1-2: **Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great 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. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning hits shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** These two verses are among my favorite in the New Testament.

* * *

Chapters 4-8 of Hebrews presents Christ as our great high Priest. He offered himself for us. He is the center of our faith.

* * *

Day 4

We have faith in God's faithfulness (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:24).

* * *

It is God's will that everyone be brought to faith.

* * *

How can we cope? The power to overcome the world is our *faith* (1 John 5: 4-5).

* * *

2 Corinthians 5:7: **We live by faith, not by sight.**

* * *

There will be ups and downs in faith—times of weakness and times of strength. The goal, the trend, should be upward (James 1: 2-3).

* * *

The early fathers of the church (Polycarp, Justin, Irenaeus, Terullian, Origen, Eusebius, Augustine) wrote about their faith and their personal relationship with God.

* * *

The end result of faith is **the salvation of your souls** (1 Peter 1:9).

* * *

Heroes of faith are not born, they are “born again.” (See John 3: 1-8.)

* * *

The people named in the Heroes of Faith chapter not only had triumphs, they also had tragedies. Faith does not isolate you from problems. It enables you to get through them and even become stronger in the process. It gives you *endurance*.

* * *

Day 5

Hebrews 11 reviews for us two miracles: The parting of the Red Sea (v. 29); and the destruction of Jericho (v. 30). People of faith today will tell you they also see the miraculous hand of God protecting and blessing them.

* * *

Paul’s life after his conversion exemplifies a life of faith (See Key Chapter booklet *Acts 9: Paul*). Even prison could not dampen his determination to proclaim Christ.

Think of the numerous healings performed by Christ. He often assured those healed, **your faith has made you well**, (Luke 17:19). (See also Matthew 9:22, 29; 15:28; Mark 10:52).

Stephen, the first martyr, was willing to die rather than deny his faith (Acts 7: 54-60).

After receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Key Chapter booklet *Acts 2: Spirit*), the disciples energetically proclaimed their faith.

The New Testament church was an assembly of those who had faith.

* * *

1 John 5:4: **This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.**