

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

"THE MISSING PIECE OF FAITH"

HEBREWS 11:1-6

This Week's Core Competency

Hope – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:19, 20, *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

According to this week's Core Competency, having hope is the secret to coping with all the junk that life throws at us—the greater our hope, the greater our ability to cope. Conversely, hopelessness leads to a sense of helplessness, a loss of control, and the inability to cope. What's more, according to Hebrews 11:1, faith gives hope legs. It guarantees what we hope for and proves to us that God has better things in store in the future. Without hope, faith has nothing to go on; without faith, hope has little practical effect. Warren Wiersbe's description of how faith works is helpful in this regard.

"True Bible faith is not blind optimism or a manufactured 'hope-so' feeling. Neither is it an intellectual assent to a doctrine. It is certainly not believing in spite of evidence! That would be superstition.

"True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. Read

True Bible faith is confident obedience to God's Word in spite of circumstances and consequences.

–Warren W. Wiersbe

that last sentence again and let it soak into your mind and heart.

"This faith operates quite simply. God speaks and we hear His Word. We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be. The circumstances may be impossible, and the consequences frightening and unknown; but we obey God's Word just the same and believe Him to do what is right and what is best.

"The unsaved world does not understand true Bible faith, probably because it sees so little faith in action in the church today. The cynical editor H. L. Mencken defined faith as 'illogical belief in the occurrence of the impossible.' The world fails to realize that faith is only as good as its object, and the object of our faith is God. Faith is not some 'feeling' that we manufacture. It is our total response to what God has revealed in His Word.

"Three words in Hebrews 11:1-3 summarize what true Bible faith is: *substance, evidence, and witness*. The word translated 'substance' means literally 'to stand under, to support.' Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house: it gives confidence and assurance that he will stand. So you might say, 'Faith is the confidence of things hoped for.' When a believer has faith, it is God's way of giving him confidence and assurance that what is promised will be experienced.

"The word *evidence* simply means 'conviction.' This is the inward conviction from God that what He has promised, He will perform. The presence of God-given faith in one's heart is conviction enough that He will keep His Word.

cont. pg. 2

Witness (KJV, 'obtained a good report') is an important word in Hebrews 11. It occurs not only in verse 2, but twice in verse 4, once in verse 5, and once in verse 39. The summary in Hebrews 12:1 calls this list of men and women 'so great a cloud of witnesses.' They are witnesses to us because God witnessed to them. In each example cited, God gave witness to that person's faith. This witness was His divine approval on their lives and ministries.

"The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that faith is a very practical thing (Heb. 11:3), in spite of what unbelievers say. Faith enables us to understand what God does. Faith enables us to see what others cannot see (note Heb. 11:7, 13, 27). As a result, faith enables us to do what others cannot do!" ("Hebrews," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:317, 18).

For Discussion

Your sister's cancer is back after two years in remission. She's a Christian, married, and has two children. One attends college; the other will graduate from high school next year. She's disheartened but not devastated by the tragic news. Her children are fearful, but like their mother, their Christian faith and hope enable them to face her very uncertain future. Your brother-in-law, on the other hand, is not doing well. He, too, is a Christian; nevertheless, he's overwhelmed by worry. He isn't himself around the family, isn't sleeping well, and needless to say, isn't much help to his wife. What do you think he needs from you?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Hebrews 11:1-6

1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

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.

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. 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. (NIV(c)1984)

Cf., another translation

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

4 It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

5 It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying-"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. (NLT)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight v. 1.
- * Underline "being sure" and "certain" in v. 1.
- * Underline "this" with two lines in v. 2.
- * Bracket "commended" in vv. 2, 4, 5.
- * Circle "by faith" in vv. 3, 4, 5.
- * Box "so that" indicating result in vv. 3, 5.

- * Circle "better" in v. 4.
- * Box "because" indicating reason in vv. 5, 6.
- * Box "for" indicating reason in v. 5.
- * Bracket "pleased God" and "please God" in vv. 5, 6, respectively.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. How can you tell if you're a person of faith?
 2. In verse 2 the subject, "the ancients," receives the action of the verb, "were commended." Who performs the action, i.e., who does the commending, and why?
 3. "By faith" occurs first repeatedly in verses 3-6. What effect does this have on you as a reader?
 4. What has faith got to do with believing that God created the universe?
 5. What do you think made Abel's sacrifice better than Cain's and why do you think so?
 6. What do you think made Abel a righteous man and why do you think so?
 7. Abel is dead; his brother murdered him. How is it that he still speaks today?
 8. How does faith affect God and how do you know?
 9. How do you think God rewards those who earnestly seek him?
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about the relationship of faith and hope to one another.
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day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The recipients of the book of Hebrews were likely Jewish Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. According to one author, their antagonists were zealous Jews. "The persecutions and privations that caused the kind of suffering discussed in the book (10:32-34) came from organized Judaism and from Jewish people devoted to that religious system" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *A Faith that Endures*, 12). As a result, they were tempted to turn from living like Christians in order to avoid persecution; some may even have considered returning to living like Jews. They needed patient endurance. The same is implied at the end of the chapter leading up to this week's passage. In Hebrews 10:35 the author writes, "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised." Then he quotes from two Old Testament texts, Isaiah 26:20-21 and Habakkuk 2:3-4 to make the point that God is going to punish the wicked and reward the righteous who live by faith, noting that he will not be pleased with those who shrink back from living by faith. Then the writer ends on an encouraging word, "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved," which serves as an appropriate introduction to the faith chapter that follows.

In Hebrews 11, the "Hall of Faith" chapter, the author challenges his readers to follow the examples of those who by faith were faithful. He "follows the form of an 'example list,' a rhetorical tool used by ancient authors to challenge hearers to action" (George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, 374). His opening definition of faith indicates that it is "the *confident assurance* that what we hope for is going to happen, the *evidence* of things we cannot yet see" (NLT). It is what God commended the faithful for because it pleases him. The notion that faith makes us certain of what lies beyond our senses is illustrated by our belief in creation. "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that

what is seen was not made out of what was visible." God spoke and it was so. "The discernment of the unseen creative activity of God behind the visible universe exemplifies the capacity of faith to demonstrate the reality of that which cannot be perceived through sense perception, which is celebrated as the essence of faith in v 1b)" (William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47b, *Hebrews 9-13*, 330).

Following his opening definition of faith, the author gives us examples of people who by faith were faithful. One after another they parade past—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. The list goes on—Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Abel and Enoch are antediluvian examples of faith. "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did." It was better because it was accompanied by faith. "By faith Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience death." He was taken because God was pleased by his faith. To these two, the writer adds Noah in verse 7. And "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family." He saved his family because he took God at his word.

One commentator summarizes well the writer of Hebrew's argument. "The writer does not contrast faith with works as Paul sometimes does, nor does he treat it as the means of receiving justification. Instead he treats faith not so much with reference to the past (what God has done in Christ) as to the future. He sees faith as that trust in God that enables the believer to press on steadfastly whatever the future holds for him. He knows that God is to be relied on implicitly. So the writer's method is to select some of the great ones in the history of the people of God and to show briefly how faith motivated all of them and led them forward, no matter how difficult the circumstances" (Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12:112).

The Message of the Passage

The faith-life is the only life that pleases God, so live by faith.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“The Missing Piece of Faith”
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **being sure** Cf., 'the assurance' (ESV). "The word *hypostasis*, translated by the NIV as a participle ('being sure'), is in fact a noun, which was used variously to communicate the idea of substance, firmness, confidence, a collection of documents establishing ownership, a guarantee, or a proof. It probably should be understood in 11:1, as in 3:14, in the sense of a 'firm, solid confidence' or a 'calm courage' with reference to things hoped for" (Guthrie, 374). "There is, however, something to be said for the objective meaning, represented by AV ('faith is the substance of things hoped for'), ARV margin ('the giving substance to things hoped for') and NEB ('Faith give substance to our hopes'). That is to say, things which in themselves have no existence as yet become real and substantial by the exercise of faith" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 278).

v. 1 **certain** Cf., "the conviction" (ESV). "The Gk word [*elenchos*] was used in the papyri of legal proofs of an accusation" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 706).

v. 2 **the ancients** "'The ancients' more strictly means 'the elders' (*hoi presbyteroi*), a term that may be used of age or dignity. Here it refers to the religious leaders of past days and means much the same as 'the forefathers' in 1:1" (Morris, 113).

v. 2 **commended for** Cf., "received their commendation" (ESV). "As a result of their firm faith they 'received attestation' [*marturethesan*] from God himself (see Form/Structure/Setting on 11:1-40; cf. vv 4, 5, 7, 39). The verb [*martureisthai*] occurs seven times in Hebrews (7:8, 17; 10:15; 11:2, 4, 5, 39), and in each instance the reference is to the witness of the biblical record. The exemplars of faith to whom reference is made in the pages of the OT 'enjoy the approving testimony of Scripture, and consequently of God himself, who speaks by his Spirit through the written word' (Trites, *Witness*, 221)" (Lane, 330). "In other words, not only did they bear witness to God, he bore witness to them, affirming their lives of faith" (Guthrie, 375).

v. 3 **By faith** Throughout the passage the repeated phrase "by faith" appears first in the sentence for emphasis. "Two literary devices give form to the writer's challenge in Hebrews 11. (1) He uses the phrase 'by faith' (*pistei*) repeatedly, reiterating the phrase over and over again, driving it into the hearers' consciences like a poignant, monotonous melody. Through this literary tool the author focuses attention on the centrality of a life of faith for the people of God. (2) The author follows the form of an 'example list,' a rhetorical tool used by ancient authors to challenge hearers to action. This device worked by impressing the audience with the extensive evidence that the desired course of action is indeed the best one to take" (374; cf., 1Macc 2:51-60). On the exemplars one author writes, "Their faith consisted simply in taking God at His word and directing their lives accordingly; things yet future so far as their experience went were thus present to faith, and things outwardly unseen were visible to the inward eye" (Bruce, 277).

v. 3 **command** "The universe came into being because God uttered his performative word" (Lane, 332). "There [1:1] God is said to have made the universe by the agency of the Son; here He is said to have fashioned it by His word. It is unlikely that 'the word of God' here is hypostatized as in John 1:1-3, so as to be practically synonymous with 'the Son of God'; for one thing, the Greek substantive translated 'word' here is not *logos* (as in John 1:1ff.) but *rhema*, referring to the utterance by which God summoned into existence what had no existence before. He is thinking of the creative command 'Let there be light' (Gen. 1:3), interpreting it and the following command after the fashion of the psalmist: 'By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth . . . For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast'" (Bruce, 280, 81).

v. 4 **Abel** Abel's sacrifice was "better" not because it was *inherently* superior and not because Cain's was *ritually* inferior. "The general tenor of Scripture indicates that the superior quality of Abel's offering derived from the integrity of his heart rather than from the nature of the offering itself. This is the clear implication of Gen 4:7, where the Lord says to Cain, 'If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?' For the writer of Hebrews, the fact that Abel offered his sacrifice [*pistei*], 'by faith,' is sufficient explanation for the acceptance of his offering by God" (Lane, 334). "Sacrifice is acceptable to God not for its material content, but in so far as it is the outward expression of a devoted and obedient heart" (Bruce, 283).

v. 5 **Enoch** See Ge 5:21-24. "This faithful believer, according to Hebrews' interpretation of the Old Testament text, was taken out of this world by God without experiencing death (Gen. 5:24). Why? Because in his life he was 'commended as one who pleased God'; that is, he brought God pleasure. This observation reflects a conviction inherent to the Genesis text, which tells us that Enoch 'walked with God.' Most significantly, however, the author still has in mind the quotation of Habakkuk 2:3-4 (Heb. 10:37-38), which speaks of God's lack of pleasure toward one who shrinks back from commitment. By contrast, Enoch was resolute in his commitment, thus bringing God pleasure" (376).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. These are beautiful words to focus on as we begin our holiday season. In the busyness of Christmas, how appropriate it is to stop and reflect on our Great Hope. Take an opportunity this week to teach your kids about faith through this fun activity. Gather some blindfolds and put them on your kids. Get everyone in the car and don't tell them where you are going, just that they should trust you and have faith that it will be good. Drive to your family's favorite restaurant or for ice cream. When you arrive take off the blindfolds and tell them that their faith is being rewarded. Use this activity to begin a discussion of how our faith sometimes requires us to step out into the unknown. Hebrews 11 gives us many examples of Biblical heroes who chose to trust God even when they couldn't see the outcome. These men and women were sure of the Hope they had and certain of what they couldn't see. They also were looking forward in faith to the day when God would send the Savior to the world. For us, we look back in faith to that beautiful night in Bethlehem when the Savior was born. May He fill us with hope as we seek Him in faith this season!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Hebrews 11:1-6

1. Fill in blanks: Now _____ is being _____ of what we _____ for and certain of what we do not _____. Heb 11:1
2. Why was Enoch taken from this life without experiencing death?
3. According to verse 6, what does it take to please God?

What Do You Think

1. Reread Hebrews 11:1 and then define faith in your own words.
2. Look up the word certain in the dictionary and write down the definition or words that mean the same thing. Did the people listed in Hebrews 11 fully trust God in their situations? Do you trust God in your circumstances?

What R U Going To Do

As a family record your faith history. Did your parents or grandparents grow up in church? Is your family attending church for the first time? Interview older members of the family regarding their spiritual journey. Ask God to make your spiritual legacy one filled with faith and hope.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Hope- Coping with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus

Memory Verse

Isa 9:6 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC _____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.