

Hebrews Study

Models of Faith Hebrews 11:1-40

Imagine you are climbing a snowed over rocky mountain. You have some gear, clothing and a map, but you have never done this before. You climb the beginning section of the mountain and it's a challenge already. Once you get to the first plateau you are greeted by a group of 30 plus people with all sorts of sorts of equipment, tents, medical supplies, bright red jackets, and they are in good spirits and enjoying some food. You might feel a little relief that this expert party of mountain climbers has gone ahead of you and led the way for you to follow them the remainder of the trip. That's what Hebrews 11 is all about. This great chapter, the Hall of Faith, Old Testament people of Faith that have marked out the path for the believers in the first century and now for us today! Hebrews 11 defines faith and gives us models of it.

Understanding Faith vv. 1-6

How do people often define faith? Is there a wrong way to define faith?

Faith in 2 parts: The object of the faith and the person's sincerity. Trust, Trust in something you can't see or fully know
A biblical faith is not a "blind leap" without evidence.

How does Hebrews 11:1 define faith?

Hebrews 11:1 uses assurance and conviction in the definition.

How does mentioning creation in verse 3 connect to faith?

You have to have faith to believe it was created by God, none of us were here when God created it all.

The first people mentioned are Abel and Enoch. What do we know about these two people? How does Abel still speak even though he is dead?

Abel—Offered a better sacrifice to God.

Enoch—"He walked with God and was no more" (Gen. 5:24)

Abel's example of faith still speaks to us today. We know of it.

What can we not do if we do not have faith? What does God do those who earnestly seek Him?

Without faith it is impossible to please God.

God rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

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

— Hebrews 11:1, 6

"Hebrews 11 thus offers two things which go together: on the one hand, a description of 'faith' itself, the key asset which the readers will need (as the letter has said several times already by now); on the other hand, a brief history of God's people, particularly the key figures in the early period, and especially Abraham and Moses."

— N. T. Wright

"The author employs anaphora—the repetition of "by faith" (πίστει)—eighteen times across verses 3–31, each instance introducing another example of how faith enabled ancient heroes to maintain conviction in God's promises despite difficult circumstances"

— Michael Crosby

"Enoch became a popular figure in Jewish writing of the last few centuries before Jesus, and for some while after. His strange apparent escaping of death seemed to lend him a special aura and mystique. Books were written as though by him, 'prophesying' events many centuries hence (in other words, in the time of the actual writers)." — N.T. Wright

"Perseverance is the demonstration of faith."

— R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Models of Faith vv. 7-40

Verses 7-12 talk about Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, How was their faith similar? How were they different?

They all had to wait for a future event or promise that God spoke of. Abraham never God to see the promise fulfilled (land and nation) by Noah did.

Verses 13-22 speak of the faith of the patriarchs that longed for a future country. Which example stands out most to you?

The test of Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice for me personally

In what sense did Isaac die in the land of Moriah? How do Isaac's role in Genesis 22 and the author's commentary in the second part of verse 19 anticipate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

For the NT believers the greatest "ask" of faith is to believe in Jesus and his power over death in resurrection. It also near the same location.

Verses 23-31 discuss faith from Moses and the exodus through the conquest of Jericho, How do these examples show case faith?

Moses parents - Moses' survival, Moses to leave power, money and status for knowing the true God as a greater value (v. 26),

From what you understand about the plague of the first born and the exodus, how does that require faith of the Israelites?

Imagine, following the detailed instructions of cooking, eating a lamb, and putting some of the blood on your doorposts.

What does including Rahab teach us about faith in verse 31?

Rahab was not an Israelite and her past "occupation" doesn't hinder her from expressing her faith in God.

Verses 32-40 list a random group of names quickly, what stands out to you about the faith of some of this group?

Some were foreigners, they had some major flaws, some were not well liked, or had the easiest lives.

What episode of "faith" stands out to you about David?

Some Christians believe that faith always leads to material and physical blessing. What do these verses tell you about the role of both blessing and suffering for the faithful?

"Abraham died before seeing the children of Israel march into the promised land. But he died in faith. It's one thing to live in faith, but it's an entirely different thing to be facing your own death and still trust God to fulfill his promises."

— R. Albert Mohler Jr.

More than just the Jews

"When dealing with Psalm 95, Psalm 110 and Jeremiah 31, the point being made was that the Old Testament points beyond itself. If you go back to the scriptures of Judaism, Hebrews argues, you will find them pointing forwards to something in the future, something which Judaism, at the turn of the eras, knew it did not contain in itself."

— N.T. Wright

A Pattern in the Names?

"Scholar Eisenbaum identified a sophisticated symmetrical pattern in the author's grouping: Abel, Enoch, and Noah; then Abraham; followed by Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph; then Moses; and finally three more figures (those who crossed the Red Sea, Jericho's walls, and Rahab)—creating a 3-1-3-1-3 pattern"

— David Allen

Faithful or Faithless

"Our author is concerned to distinguish between the faithless and the faithful of all generations, past and present, rather than to distinguish between two communities of faith, the one "Jewish" and "faithless," the other "Christian" and "faithful" (see Introduction). As far as he is concerned, both the faithful and the faithless can be found among the people of God in the past and the present."

— Marie E. Isaacs

Biblical Faith in Hebrews

"Faith is not blind, but directed towards eschatological promises that are presently hidden."

— Nathan MacDonald

Hebrews Study

For the Road

Preparation for Next Week:

Read: *Hebrews 12:1-29*

Be Ready to Discuss:

What comes with being a child of God, Disciple, Enduring hardships, Living a godly life, Rejecting God, Worshiping God as a consuming fire.

Further Study...

There are so many names (17 total) mentioned in Hebrews 11 from the Old Testament. Pick someone named and do a character study on them this week. What examples of faith do you find? How do their imperfections and mistakes encourage and teach you now?

Like Abraham as a alien and stranger in a foreign land, In what concrete ways can we demonstrate faith that we are “aliens and strangers” in our culture today?

Who are some of your role models of faith that have influenced your life? Take some time and pray thanking God for those people in your life.

What unseen certainties have guided you in making fundamental, life-changing decisions?

What has God enabled you to do through faith that might encourage someone else?

Why might God leave us in the dark when it comes to His will? What does the Bible say?

Which characters in this chapter would you most likely and least likely want to trade places?