DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In our text, <u>Hebrews 11:8-16</u>, the writer pivots from the earliest period of human history (Abel, Enoch, Noah) to the period of the patriarchs. The writer's fourth example is Abraham.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

- 1. It comes as no surprise that the Genesis account gives so much space to Abraham, the one "who believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6).
 - Abraham's story spans fourteen chapters (12-25). If you go back to review the high points in that saga, what episodes speak to Abraham's bedrock trust in the promises of God?
 - In our text, which of those episodes of Abraham's faith does the writer of Hebrews feature?
 - In Dr. McKay's sermon introducing this chapter, he pointed out that none of the figures in Hebrews 11 can be regarded as perfect exemplars of faith; they all failed in significant ways along the way. What were some of the times when Abraham faltered in his confidence in the promises of God?
- 2. The writer of Hebrews pauses in his review of the paragons of faith to point out that "these all died in faith, not having received the things promised" (v. 13). What promises of God did Abraham *not* see fulfilled in his own lifetime?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

Abraham is not the only biblical hero whose example is a mixture of *often* trusting and obeying God but *sometimes* distrusting and disobeying God. We can see that pattern most clearly displayed in David, the "man after God's own heart" who was guilty of adultery (which might have been rape) and conspiracy to murder. Yet he is remembered not for his colossal failures but for his heart for God. How can this be? Do the stories of biblical heroes like Abraham and David tell us that God is indifferent to our behavior? Or do they tell us that God is interested in something deeper than our behavior?



SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

- One of the definitions of faith we've used is "taking risks on the basis of the unverifiable word of a reliable witness." That definition is vividly illustrated in the life of Abraham.
 - Over his lifetime, what are some of the risks Abraham had to take in his obedience to God and His promises?
 - What are some of the risks you have taken (or are taking now) because of your trust in the promises of God?
- 2. Because some of God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled after he died, his life can be viewed as an example of *a settled life posture* of trust in God. His life is also an illustration of Jesus' exhortation to persevere in trusting prayer (see Luke 18:1-8).
 - Have you ever seen someone's prayers answered after they had died? What is that story?
 - Have you been persevering in prayer for something for a long time? What is that story?
- 3. We sometimes imagine that what God wants most from us is good behavior, when He has made it abundantly clear that our behavior is not His greatest concern.
 - What did Jesus call "the first and greatest commandment" (Matt 22:34-40)?
 - If all of this is true, God's "well done" is reserved not for the best-behaved but for the ones who loved and trusted Him most deeply and most consistently; what is there in your life that is the greatest hindrance to your love for God and trust in His promises?