

How Would You Describe Faith?

Hebrews 11

How would you describe faith?

The first three verses gives us a description of faith.

What Does The Bible Say?

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. (Hebrews 11:1 NLT)

This is faith's character - certitude. It is the dynamic certainty of what God has promised, it is not a feeling.

A person with faith lets the unseen realities from God provide a living, effective power for daily life.

What are things we hope for:

We hope for Christ's return. 13 while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. (Titus 2:13 NLT)

We hope for the resurrection. 3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, (1 Peter 1:3 NLT)

We hope for glorification. 2 Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. 3 And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:2, 3 NLT).

We hope to reign with him. 12 If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. (2 Timothy 2:12)

2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation. (Hebrews 11:2 NLT)

By pure faith, we will endure in sacred activism. And by pure faith, we will receive God's commendation.

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. (Hebrews 11:3 NLT)

Faith makes the future promises present, unveils the unseen, and enlightens our understanding of the cosmos.

By observing creation we may learn of God's power. We learn the manner of God's creation only by responding in faith to the statements of Scripture.

The The rest of the chapter gives us a demonstration of faith.

What Does The Bible Say?

23 It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command. (Hebrews 11:23 NLT)

22 Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live." (Exodus 1:22 NLT)

20 "At that time Moses was born—a beautiful child in God's eyes. His parents cared for him at home for three months. (Acts 7:20 NLT)

Moses' parents were not afraid of the king's edict. They trusted God to save Moses, and God rewarded their faith.

24 It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to share the

oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. (Hebrews 11:24-25 NLT)

Sin is pleasurable for a short period. Then sin takes you down a destructive path.

26 He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. 27 It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. 28 It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons. (Hebrews 11:26-28 NLT)

The substitution pictured in the Passover foreshadowed the final perfect Lamb, Jesus Christ, who would be slain for the

forgiveness of those who put his blood on the doorpost of their hearts by faith.

How Can We Obey

But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. 36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. 38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground. (Hebrews 11:35–38 NLT)

Many unknown men and women of faith were not delivered from difficult circumstances, yet God honored them.

It takes more faith to endure difficult circumstances than it does to escape them.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

- 1. Faith Is Being Confident That What God Says Will Come to Pass (Hebrews 11:1-3)**
- 2. True Faith Results in Action (Hebrews 11:4-40)**

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: The writer's declaration of the supremacy of Christ was written around AD 64-68.

Explore:

Remember, the book of Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish Christians who were tempted to revert back to Judaism due to the cultural pressures and persecutions they were experiencing. They considered abandoning the gospel of Jesus in an attempt to alleviate those pressures. The writer, however, had spent the majority of his letter explaining why Jesus was superior to all the traditions, rituals, systems, and laws that Judaism was founded upon. He shifted in chapter 11 to the heritage of faith that God's people had demonstrated throughout their history. He provided example after example of how their actions demonstrated their faith in God.

Faith Is Being Confident That What God Says Will

Come to Pass (Hebrews 11:1-3)

Hebrews 11:1 describes what faith is. Unfortunately, the word faith in today's world has been poorly defined and poorly explained. What is true, biblical faith? Let's begin by establishing what biblical faith is not. Biblical faith is not simply a positive feeling. Our feelings rise and fall, and can often be misaligned with truth. Biblical faith is not blind optimism; it is not wishful thinking, as our culture tends to assume. Biblical faith is not believing in spite of evidence. It is more than these things.

The author began his description of faith by writing that faith is the assurance of things hoped for (some translations use the word substance or the phrase being sure of instead of assurance).

The words, assurance and hoped, are important and need more explanation.

Interestingly, the Greek word for assurance, *hypostasis*, was used in legal documents to describe “evidence of ownership,” similar to how we would think of a title deed. The writer of Hebrews was suggesting that faith is like a title deed for what we hope for. It is the confident assurance supporting our hope. Many blessings that we claim as followers of Christ are spiritual blessings, which are invisible. But faith gives us confident assurance that those invisible blessings are real. Faith is being sure that what we hope for will come to pass.

People often use the word hope to express what they would like to see happen, but without the absolute confidence that it will happen. “I hope it doesn’t rain.” “I hope my team wins.” “I hope she says yes.” But those usages really have no correlation to the biblical idea of hope. The world likely sees our hope in the same way that they may express hope for the weather to be nice.

However, the thing that makes our hope different is God—the assurance that comes from knowing God. That is why our hope

is different from the wishful thinking of the world—our hope is based in a faithful God who cannot lie, and not in a wish.

Hebrews 11:1 ends with the conviction (also translated as evidence) of things not seen. This is in reference to that inward conviction possessed by the believer that God is going to bring to pass what He has promised. One may ask: “How do you know?” Because we have faith. “Faith is just wishful thinking.” No, faith is confident expectation based on the Person of God, His unchanging and unwavering faithfulness. Therefore, it is the understanding that He will bring these things to pass. When we have this conviction, we simply know that God is going to do what He said He will do.

In verses 2-3, the writer made two statements about faith. First, the people of old were commended for their faith; their faith was pleasing to God. This was not to say that God did not commend them for their obedience from time to time, but ultimately they

were commended because of their faith. The second statement the author made was that it was by faith that we understand that God created the universe from nothing. Both general revelation (what we see around us) and special revelation (God's inspired Word) teach us that God created everything. We confidently believe that is true by faith.

Explore:

What are some things we are confidently assured of in Christ, but cannot yet see?

- Our sins have been washed away
- God is sovereignly overseeing the affairs of mankind
- Jesus will return for His Church
- Physical death ushers us into His presence
- We have an inheritance waiting for us in Heaven

- We will receive a new physical body
- Death, disease, and decay will be vanquished
- We will be transformed into His likeness
- We will be reunited with those who have died
in Christ

Explore:

True Faith Results in Action (Hebrews 11:4-40)

In chapter 11, the author demonstrated that faith has always been the means of living in a way that is pleasing to God, even during the Old Testament. Furthermore, it has always been by faith that God's people have endured the challenges that go along with living in this world.

This is true for the people of God today. The world is never going to like, accept, or embrace God's people. We are going to have to endure. How do we endure? By faith. God is not asking anything of us that He did not expect of other believers throughout his- tory.

In verses 4-40, the author presented several examples or witnesses who illustrated faith and endurance. He referred to them as the cloud of witnesses (12:1). This chapter is often referred to as "the hall of faith."

The first of these examples is Abel, who offered God a more acceptable sacrifice than his brother Cain. He was commended for his faithful sacrifices, and his testimony of righteousness continues to echo through history (verse 4). The faith of Enoch led to him being taken into glory without experiencing physical death—his faith was commended for having pleased God (verse 5). One can make the argument that the theme of the entire

chapter is summarized in verse 6. The author reemphasized the importance of faith. Notice the strength of the statement. He did not say that without faith it is difficult or challenging to please God, but that it is impossible to please God without faith. Verse 7 revealed that Noah became the heir of righteousness because he built an ark, believing God would do what He said He would do.

In verses 8-12, the author focused on the father of Israel—Abraham—and his wife, Sarah. The Lord asked Abraham to leave what was familiar to him and trust God for what came next. Whenever we are called to do something that is unfamiliar or difficult, it takes a special dose of faith. Abraham, by faith, obeyed—he did so because he trusted God. Abraham was a man of faith, but his faith was not perfect. In fact, he made several poor choices out of fear instead of faith. However, he is listed here as a hallmark display of faith. This tells us that God does not focus on our failures but on our faith.

The message of verses 13-16 should resonate in our hearts. This does not mean that our lives here should mean nothing to us, but it is a reminder that our eyes should be lifted up to a greater reality, an eternal reality—the goodness of God and what He has prepared for us. We need to acknowledge that we are strangers here; we are exiles, just like the individuals the author said were strangers and exiles. An exile is someone who is living where he or she does not really belong. That is us. We are now citizens of the kingdom of God by our faith in Jesus Christ, and we are no longer at home in this world. The kingdom that we now belong to is diametrically opposed to the worldly kingdom that is going on all around us. We must stand for righteousness and encourage re- form where it is necessary. We must reflect the kind- ness and grace and wisdom of Jesus in a world that is desperate for it. However, this kingdom is never going to be our home. The apostle Paul told us that because of people’s sin, things will become more and more difficult as we get closer to the end (2

Timothy 3:1-9). Therefore, Hebrews 11:13-16 lift our eyes to that greater reality waiting for us in Heaven.

In verses 17-35a, the author continued to show us examples of great things done by people who lived by faith. By faith Abraham; by faith Isaac; by faith Jacob; by faith Joseph; by faith Moses; by faith the Israelites; by faith Rahab; and by faith, many others lived for God. Their faith resulted in action. All these people mentioned in this hall of faith struggled with faith at times. They were sometimes carnal and selfish, and many did foolish things. They were imperfect people who made imperfect choices. But they still had great faith and put that faith into action by obeying God's Word. Again, God does not focus on the failures but on faith.

In verses 35b-38, the author introduced his readers to others who had great faith but did not experience what the world would consider to be victory or blessing. They remained true to God,

trusting Him by faith, and suffered for it. Their experience does not seem to be what we would expect from people of great faith. Yet, these were heroes of faith nonetheless. This is the part of the letter that should have been most encouraging to the recipients because they, too, were going through really hard times. Like those mentioned in verses 35b-38, they were suffering for their faith. The writer wanted them to know that great faith does not always result in great victory, but they should stay strong in faith anyway. In the midst of great difficulties and horrific persecution, they should lay hold of faith and refuse to let go. The author highlighted that tenacity of faith that says: “I do not care what is happening around me, I am going to have faith in God anyway.”

Those examples from verses 35b-38 endured with faith and did not receive what they were hoping for, but they died with their faith intact. Often we only associate great faith with experiencing great miracles, or moving metaphorical mountains, or having great victory over this or that challenge. However, it

seems we may miss out on understanding what faith *ought* to produce in our lives. We end up missing what real faith is because our definition of faith is too narrow. That is what the writer of Hebrews was doing for his readers in this passage—he was enlarging their understanding of what faith is. When people hold on to faith, even when it looks like disaster has hit, that is victory. When people have not yet seen God answer but hold on to faith and keep praying anyway—that is victory. That is conquering unbelief.

This is seeing something that looks like a major defeat, and realizing that God has been working in the midst of it. That changes how we view faith, how we recognize it, and it strengthens our trust in God. Even if we are walking through a difficult season, we can have faith that God is doing good things—that He is actually working for good in the midst of it. The life of faith can sometimes appear very much like defeat, but Jesus provided a greater faith. God's people have always lived by that faith—*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen.*

Explore:

Faith gives us the confident assurance that God exists, and He created the universe and everything in it.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not

mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 4

Give examples of simple ways all people demonstrate faith in daily living. Examples might include believing the chair will hold us when we sit down, going to bed expecting the sun to come up in the morning, etc. Why do we have faith in those things?

Question 2 of 4

Why can we be confident that what God has said will come to pass?

Question 3 of 4

What does it say of Moses's parents that they hid him despite the possibility of retribution from the government? In what ways might we be forced to practice similar acts of faith in our cultural context? Is your life marked by the same lack of fear of man that Moses's parents displayed? If not, why?

Question 4 of 4

Does having great faith keep us from suffering and difficulty? Explain your answer.

Question 5 of 5

Why is it important to confess your sins daily and ask for forgiveness when praying?