



Jesus is Greater

What you believe to be true about Jesus is the most important thing about you. It matters more than your name, your career, your achievements, or anything else. Why is that? Because what you believe to be true about Jesus dictates your eternity. But what you believe to be true of Jesus must also dictate every other aspect of your life.

WEEK FOUR

Jesus Gave Us a Better Role

Message Passage: Hebrews 11:1-16 & Hebrews 11: 32-40

Small Group Passage: Hebrews 12:1-3

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

Who has ever read through some of the more dramatic accounts in the Old Testament and thought, "I wish I could have been there for that."

- I wish I could have seen the parting of the Red Sea as Moses did.
- I wish I could have seen the throne room of God like Isaiah did (Isa 6).
- I wish I could have seen the great dreams and visions as Daniel did.

I get all of that. I have had the exact same thought. But there is a subtle danger in that desire if it comes with the assumption that what we have is somehow less.

The author of Hebrews tells us something vastly different.

Heb 11:1-2 *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for."*

The ancients referred to are those in the Old Testament who witnessed so many of those miracles we wish we could have been there for. Yet their faith was based on a confidence in what they had not yet seen.

Heb 11:3-12 *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 brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel 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.*

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 is in keeping with faith.*

8 *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. **9** 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. **10** For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. **11** And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. **12** 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.*

They lived at different times. They had different roles in God's great plan. They came at different times within the grand biblical narrative.

But what did they all have in common?

- They served the same God
- They were sustained by Faith in that God
- They were justified by Faith (Rom 4).

We worship the same God. We are all justified and sustained by Faith. Therefore, we should not view them as distant and detached saints.

Illus: When you read about people in the Bible, do you place them in the same category as George Washington or Alexander the Great, historical figures with a cool story? Or do you see them as family? Do you see them as they are, as forerunners in

the faith? The reality is, we should view them as we would a great-grandfather who left us an inheritance that we are still being blessed by.

What we are going to find out next is that they died still waiting.

Heb 11:13 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.*

They lived by faith, waiting on what God had promised them. They saw great signs and wonders performed by God, yet they died waiting for something greater, the fulfillment of promises. (More on that in a moment).

Heb 11:14-16 *People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. **15** If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

They were waiting for a better heavenly city. A city, one day we will both call home. If we will call the same glorious city home one day, should we not think of them as brothers and sisters?

Should we not like the men and women in chapter eleven live for that eternal home rather than the here and now?

In the next few verses - Heb 11:17-31 (Summary) The author goes on to give example after example of how those who have gone before us lived out their faith through costly obedience and trust in God's promises, even when circumstances seemed impossible. Their faith not only justified them (Rom 4), but it also sanctified them as they actively trusted in God's promises. Even when the outcomes were uncertain.

Heb 11:32-38 *And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, **34** 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. **35** Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. **36** Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37** They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in*

*sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—**38** the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.*

They suffered hardships. They suffered loss just as we have. And yet it was worth it all to glorify and worship the one true God. **I believe we should remind ourselves of this truth when we go through pain and hardship ourselves.** God is just as faithful to us as he has been to a long line of brothers and sisters. We should take comfort in the Truth that the God we serve in hardship is the same God who has been true for countless generations of faithful followers.

There is great comfort in knowing they faced difficulty just as we have, and in most cases, far greater. But the good news for us is not just that we are the same as the heroes of the faith. Quite the opposite....

Heb 11:39-40 *These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, **40** since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*

We have something better. But how could that be? Many of them saw signs and wonders we never had? That is true. But we have something that they never got to enjoy. We have seen the fulfillment of promises they could only have hoped to see fulfilled (Heb 11:13).

- Abraham heard God's voice declare, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing" (Gen 12:2). But he never saw those words fulfilled. He never heard Jesus say "God make disciples of all nations." he received the promise. We get to see it fulfilled day in and day out.
- Aaron, the first Great High Priest, was able to walk into the most holy of holies in the Temple. He was able to enter into God's presence behind the veil as he made sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. But throughout his time in the temple, he never experienced the blessed truth that, through Christ, our bodies are now temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).
- They saw types and shadows that pointed to Jesus. We saw the fulfillment. We are the recipients of the New and better Covenant (Heb 8:6).

Transition to small group: If this is the position and role that we hold within the great redemptive plan that God has for us, how should we respond? How should we go about living our lives if we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. *Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” What are we confidently hoping for and assured of, even though we do not see it?*
2. Why is it so important that we view the men and women listed in Hebrews 11 as family, brothers and sisters in the faith, rather than just distant heroes?

Leader Note: Did the people in the Biblical account live in a vastly different time? Yes. Were their lives different from ours? In some ways. Yet we share so many things in common that are missed. They are placing their hope in the blessed eternity that God has promised rather than this life here and now (Heb 11:16). While their hardships may have looked different from ours, the same God has promised to be faithful to us as he was to them.

3. When you face hardship, how does remembering the faith of those in Hebrews 11 help you respond differently?

Leader Note: It is easy to measure God’s faithfulness by our current circumstances. Things are bad now, therefore God is not being faithful. Such a view of God creates a “what have you done for me lately” kind of faith. Instead, we are to remember that God has been faithful to his people time and time again. God’s faithfulness does not change as he does not change. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8).

READ: Hebrews 12:1-3

4. The author uses the analogy of a race to help us better understand our lives devoted to Christ. How is our faith like that of a race, as the author of Hebrews points out?

Leader Note: The Apostle Paul used the imagery of a race extensively in his teaching ministry.

- We are to “run in such a way as to get the prize” (1 Cor 9:24–25). This passage likely refers to eternal rewards that are eternal rather than fleeting, unlike the Olympic wreaths of his day.
- Much like a runner or boxer trains their body to prepare for competition, we are to be disciplined in our faith as we put to death sin and pursue Christ (1 Cor 9:26-27).
- Like a runner, we are to remain focused as we “press on” towards our goal, the finish line (Phil 3:12-14). As we do this, we will run a good race and refuse to allow others to cut in front of us with falsehood (Gal 5:7).

5. Vs 1: We are told to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” as we run our race. No runner would want anything unnecessarily weighing them down during a race. Few would argue against the truth that sin easily entangles us. But we are also commanded to throw off “everything that hinders”, meaning there are some things that can hinder or slow us down in our faith that are not black and white, sinful actions. What are some of those things?

6. What does it mean to fix your eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of your faith?

Leader Note (“fixing our eyes”): A good runner fixes his or her eyes on the finish line at all times in the race. They do not allow the crowd or anything else to distract them. Likewise, we must fix our eyes on Jesus as we run our race. Notice how active the language is. We are not casually glancing at Jesus or mostly focused on Jesus. No, we fix our eyes on Him and Him alone. As you discuss this question, try to direct the conversation to how we can practically fix our eyes on Jesus. If we are intentionally fixing our eyes on Jesus, they will wander to something else.

PRAYER TIME

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