



NG Study Guide: Hebrews 11:1-7 :: “Jesus Inspires Greater Faith” [12.17.23]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: A life characterized by faith in God experiences peace with God and the peace of God. Nevertheless, the life of faith can seem nebulous. Yet, Jesus inspires greater faith for us to apprehend, appropriate, and experience. Let’s discover how...

Subject: The nature of faith in God

Object: Trust Christ + grow in faith

Context: in chapter ten we are encouraged that we have greater assurance in Christ; and the author concludes quoting from Habakuk 2:4, “The just shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38). In the 11th chapter we learn about the nature of faith in God. So, let’s consider the what, how, who and why Jesus inspires greater faith:

I. What faith is, and how it grows (1-7)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ² For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible ⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

A. What biblical faith is (1)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (1). The Greek *hupostasis* translated *substance* refers to a foundation. Thus faith is the foundation of things hoped for. We need faith for what is *not yet visible*. We are to have faith in the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, Second Coming, and promised restoration. Faith is trust in God’s goodness and Sovereignty.

1. Faith is hearing God speak and responding with acts of obedience and attitudes of dependence upon God.

Faith is not blind optimism, superstition or faith in faith. Faith is only as reliable as it’s object, and here the object of our faith is God. Warren Wiersbe observed, “True faith obeys God regardless of circumstances, consequences or feelings.” J. Oswald Sanders notes, “Faith enable the believing soul to treat the future as present and the invisible as seen.” Faith is more than mere mental assent. It is active and stirs action. We will see that faith is reasoned and reasonable, not a blind faith. Biblical Christianity can withstand internal and external scrutiny of its claims and prevail.

B. How faith grows (2-6)

1. Revelation of God (2-3)

For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

By faith, the *elders*, referring to the oldest old testament examples, *obtained a good testimony* because they believed God's promised restoration. They didn't yet have the Bible, but creation reveals the Creator as the invisible force behind the visible (3), and the intelligent Designer of a highly designed Creation (Psalm 19:1). God's word, or the Bible, also reveal God as Creator (Genesis 1-2). The Bible reveals God's relationship with humanity, man's rebellion, and God's plan of restoration through the Messiah (The Christ). "So then *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). By knowing God's revelation, the Bible, we grow in faith.

2. Relationship with God (6)

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is...

You cannot please God without coming to Him (i.e. to come near in worship). It is *impossible* not difficult. Yet, in order to come to God, it takes a measure of faith to *believe that God is* or exists. One cannot definitively prove or disprove the existence of God, however, when one considers the evidence in support of God's existence it is overwhelmingly in support: complexity of design of the universe, fulfilled biblical prophecy, manuscript evidence, archaeology, anthropology, morality...

3. Response to God (6) *But without faith it is impossible to please Him...*

Purpose of faith is to seek God and live to please Him! It is a reasonable response to what God has done for us (Romans 12:1-2). The old testament prophets reveal several attitudes and actions that appear especially relevant to a life that pleases God: honor God by loving Him more than anyone or anything else thus avoiding idolatry. Honor the Sabbath by ceasing from work, worshiping God and taking time to commune with God. Serve God by serving others. Help those in need such as the poor, widows, and orphans. As you live to please God you'll grow in faith and love for God and others.

4. Rewards of God (6)

For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Trusting that God will reward you as you diligently seek Him motivates. A confident assurance that God will reward you in this life and the life to come as you seek Him grows faith. In this life, Jesus' followers experience struggles, hardship, and difficulties just like those who don't believe. Yet, your relationship with Christ allows you to uniquely navigate those challenges as you confidently look forward to the hope of eternity and God's rewards. That reality has motivated people to follow God and grow in faith since the time of Cain and Abel the first children of Adam and Eve.

C. Who experiences faith (4-7)

The theme of Hebrews 11 reveals how faith was tested in the lives of real people like you and me.

1. Abel (worship) (4)

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

Abel's faith was displayed as he sought to worship God with a right heart and right sacrifice. He gave God his best and what God desired (Genesis 4:3-5). Sought to yield to God and worship, unlike his brother Cain who killed him. Yet, Abel's example of faith continues to speak. Those who honor God and respond to His love by worshiping and making Him the master passion of their lives grow in their faith.

2. Enoch (walk) (5)

By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

In Genesis 5:21-24 we are told twice that Enoch "walked with God" referring to unity (Amos 3:3). He pleased God by living in unity, and he was taken to be with God without experiencing death (a foreshadow of the rapture of the Church). The Bible uses the term "walk" in reference to how one lives (Colossians 1:10, Ephesians 2:10, 4:1). Those who seek to live in unity with God and desire to be transformed to be more like Jesus grow in faith.

3. Noah (work) (7)

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Noah had been warned of an epic flood and instructed to build the ark, and he responded with obedient work even though there had never been a flood. Those who serve God by serving others grow in their faith.

4. Sinners who become saints through faith in Christ: throughout this chapter we discover heroes of the faith, and many had notorious sins, yet only their faith is mentioned here. In Christ, the sins have been blotted out and their faith in God praised. The life of faith begins when you respond to Jesus' invitation to come to Him, and choose to yield your life to His will. When you trust Christ, you'll receive forgiveness of your sins, receive a spiritual birth and the Holy Spirit to enable you to grow in faith. Sinners, become saints as soon as they choose to believe (John 1:12).

We have seen: what faith is, how faith grows, who experiences faith, and now let's discover why Jesus inspires greater faith.

D. Why Jesus inspires greater faith

1. Revelation of God (Hebrews 1:1-2): By knowing God's revelation, the Bible, we grow in faith, and Jesus' life, words, works, death and resurrection is the ultimate revelation of God.

2. Relationship (Matthew 11:28-30, John 14:1-9):

Jesus invites us to come and yield to Him, learn of Him, and learn from Him. It is an invitation to a relationship with Him that provides rest for our souls. Contemplating a relationship with the Father can seem nebulous, because God is Spirit, but Jesus became man so that we could better relate to Him (this wonderful truth is celebrated at Christmas). If we know Jesus we know the Father.

3. Response (John 6:29): "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

The gospel message calls us to simply trust in Who Jesus is and what He accomplished at the cross and choose to believe and follow Him (yield). Thus the new covenant focuses on responding to Christ's performance not ours.

4. Resurrection: (1Corinthians 15:1-4)

Jesus' life, death and resurrection all occurred as foretold by the prophets. The Old Testament faithful were looking forward to the Coming Messiah (Christ). We get to look back and see overwhelming evidence of Jesus' resurrection the cornerstone of the Christian's faith, and the gospel. The prophecies, the transformed lives of the disciples, their martyrdom, the eyewitnesses, the empty tomb and missing body are cumulative evidence beyond a reasonable doubt.

Jesus' resurrection inspires greater faith, because there is so much evidence to support, that our steps of faith are not blind, but reasoned and reasonable. Furthermore, the events regarding His First Coming occurred exactly as foretold by the prophets. Thus, similarly the events regarding His Second Coming and restoration of all things shall likewise.

Therefore, since Jesus inspires greater faith, let us trust Him and purpose to grow in our faith in this coming year so that we can experience rest for our souls (peace of God) in all seasons of life.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. Why might people struggle to trust God in difficult situations?

Q2. Think about how you have grown in faith. What were some of the catalysts?

Q3. What are some of the ways Jesus inspires greater faith?

Q4. What advice would you give to someone who wants to grow in their faith?

“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful article about faith and pleasing God: <https://www.gotquestions.org/without-faith-impossible-please-God.html>.
2. Check-out a brief article about the righteous (just) living by faith: <https://www.gotquestions.org/righteous-will-live-by-faith.html>.

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:
[Invite a neighbor where you live, work, study, play or worship to join you for a Christmas gathering.](#)

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. **Preparation and participation:** Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?**
If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.
3. **The “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Disciples Who Dig Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **The “Love your neighbors” section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better.** As a leader, discuss this section frequently.
5. **The “Disciples who make disciples” section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples.** Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.