



NG Study Guide: Hebrews 11:23-40 :: “Jesus Inspires Greater Faith” [1.7.24]

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: Life with God is a life of faith. Jesus inspires greater faith. Your commitment to God will be tested, and as you choose to follow Jesus your faith will inspire others too.

Subject: Faith among God’s people

Object: Commit to Christ

Context: In the 11th chapter we are reminded of the faith of some old testament icons to encourage committed faith.

1. Faith in God’s reward (23-29)

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command. ²⁴ By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

a. Faith in God’s reward gives perspective on worldly wealth (23-26)

Moses is revered in Judaism as deliverer and lawgiver. At the time of his birth, the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt. The Pharaoh feared the growing population of Jews and commanded that all male children be killed. Moses’ parents understood that God had a destiny for their child and preserved him. When the Pharaoh’s childless daughter found the three month old baby Moses in a basket upon the river she adopted him as a son. Moses was raised in the palace as a grandson of Pharaoh (23-24). When Moses was an adult he chose to identify with God and His people (24-25, Exodus 2). Moses walked away from unimaginable power, position, pleasure and treasure available as a prince of an empire. He *chose to suffer affliction* with the *people of God* (25). Moses reckoned the scorn he would endure was of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because *he looked to the reward* (26). Without faith it is impossible to please God, for He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

b. Faith in God’s reward motivates enduring commitment (27-29)

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.

After 40 years in the wilderness, God called Moses from the burning bush to confront Pharaoh (Exodus 3). God would deliver His people from their bondage so they could freely worship Him; and Pharaoh’s refusal would result in a series of ten plagues where God demonstrated His sovereignty over the objects of Egypt’s worship. Moses trusted God and did not fear the Pharaoh and endured (27). In faith Moses applied the blood of the Passover lamb to his doorpost, and God passed over all the homes where the blood of the lamb was applied sparing the

firstborns (28, 1Corinthians 5:7). In faith Moses continued to trust God and led the Jews out of Egypt through the parted waters of the Red Sea (29).

2. Faith in God's ways (30)

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

a. Faith trusts God to accomplish His will in His ways

Moses would lead Israel for forty years but Joshua would lead the Jews through the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. Across the Jordan was the fortified city of Jericho. God instructed Joshua that the army would silently march around the city accompanied by seven priests blowing rams' horns and carrying with them the ark of the covenant. They would march around the city one time a day for six days. On the seventh day, the army would silently march around the city seven times, and at the long blast of the ram's horn then all the people were to shout with a great shout. Then the wall of the city would fall down flat (Joshua 6:1-5).

Joshua was a brilliant military strategist, and his campaign and the conquest of the land are renowned. Joshua had sent scouts to view the land especially Jericho (Joshua 2:1). It is not difficult to imagine Joshua preparing a strategy to attack the city. And presumably his strategy for how to take the city would not have looked anything like God's way. Yet, Joshua and the army of Israel in obedient faith did God's work, His way, and God was faithful to accomplish His will and the walls fell just as foretold. Joshua, and the army of Israel inspire faith to trust God to accomplish His will in His ways.

3. Faith in God's grace (31)

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

Rahab inspires faith in the grace of God. When Joshua had sent two spies to examine Jericho, they were hidden by Rahab from the authorities of Jericho. Rahab believed that the God of Israel was truly God in heaven above and on the earth beneath. She trusted that God would spare her and her family when Jericho was given over to Israel. The author of Hebrews emphasizes Rahab's faith, by contrasting those who *perished as those who did not believe*. Rahab was not spared because of her actions in hiding the spies. Her action of hiding the spies was evidence of her faith in God, but her acceptance and deliverance are a gift.

Rahab was a harlot (prostitute), and she had committed treason in hiding the spies. Yet, God accepted her despite her moral failures. Rahab inspires faith in God's grace, acceptance, and salvation to those who put their faith in Christ. The grace or unmerited favor of God is further highlighted in the New Testament. Matthew's gospel begins with an account of Jesus' genealogy, and there is Rahab, the great-grandmother of king David. (Matthew 1:4-6). We don't get to pick our ancestors, but presumably God does; and the choice of Rahab in the lineage of Jesus is inspiring. Rahab inspires us that regardless of our past, we are accepted by God by His grace through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9).

4. Faith in God's promise (32-40)

a. Those who experienced triumph while they waited (32-35)

³² And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³ who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again.

As the author notes, *the time would fail me to tell of* all the exploits of these faithful examples who triumphed.

b. Those who experienced tragedy while they waited (35-38)

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute,

afflicted, tormented³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

Other faithful examples endured tragedy and remained faithful, and their lives are perhaps especially inspiring.

c. The promise they waited for (39)

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

The author of Hebrews summarizes more than a thousand years of Israel's history from the judges after Joshua, to the kings beginning with David, and the prophets who faithfully delivered God's message to call His people to repent and return to Him (32-40). All of these faithful examples *obtained a good testimony* from God, *because of their faith* (39). This is inspiring, because as you examine their lives, there are some pretty significant lapses of faith or obedience. Yet, here in this "Hall of Faith" God only records their faithful good testimony.

Yet, they *did not receive the promise*. What is the promise? I believe the promise referred to here goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when God foretold a prototype of the gospel: that the Messiah would come and although bruised by Satan, He would ultimately crush Satan (Genesis 3:15). This promise presumably is communicated to the sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and echoed among the faithful (Hebrews 11:4, et. seq). None of these examples of the faith got to see the Messiah's coming. We stand on their shoulders, as inspiring examples of trust in God.

d. The promised One inspires greater faith (40)

God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

God provided something better for us is the message to these scorned 1st century Jewish Christians, and to us in the 21st century. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies regarding the Messiah (Christ). Some of them point to a suffering Messiah, while others highlight the triumphant Messiah who completely vanquishes evil, oppression and injustice to establish an eternal kingdom characterized by beauty: righteousness, goodness, and justice. The Old Testament faithful wondered whether there were two Messiahs, and some thought that if they were faithful God would send the triumphant Messiah and purge the Romans and establish His perfect Kingdom then and there.

Jesus inspires greater faith, because He clarifies the prophecies through His teaching clarifying the 1st and 2nd Coming of the Messiah. In Jesus' first Coming He defeats Satan's power and the plague of sin at the cross, and in His 2nd Coming the eternal Kingdom will be fully established. Thus, in the promised One both Old and New covenant faithful will be made *perfect* or complete together. The reason Jesus inspires greater faith is His life, death, and resurrection were all fulfilled as foretold by the prophecies related to His 1st Coming. Thus, we can rest assured in His 2nd Coming, and endure triumphs and tragedies in faith. So, be inspired, and be inspiring as you commit to Christ!

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How does faith in God's reward inspire commitment to Christ?

Q2. How does faith in God's grace inspire commitment to Christ?

Q3. How does faith in God's promise inspire commitment to Christ?

Q4. How were you inspired by the faith of someone in your group?

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

1. Here is a link to a good commentary by Pastor David Guzik on Hebrews 11: https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/hebrews/hebrews-11.cfm.

2. Consider how your faith has been inspired. Pray for your faith to be inspired and inspiring.

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:
Chat with a neighbor about their resolutions for the new year. Share with them your resolutions related to growing in faith.

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.