

EXAMPLES WORTH IMITATING

Hebrews 11:1-31

When **Idi Amin ruled Uganda**, God's people were killed or tortured for their faith in Christ. As they faced firing squads, they spoke of God's love to their executioners. Smiles wreathed their faces; songs filled stadiums or fields where they were martyred. Many were attracted to Christ as result of their witness.

Those who died had common hope: they're going to be with Jesus. Some thanked killers for sending them home to Jesus. Their future's secure; they see beyond this life to what God promised. They could see the present through eyes of the future.

That's faith; the appropriate response to Hebrews' message. Heb. 11:1-7

Hebrews provides examples of people who trust God in face of adversity, to encourage us to follow in their footsteps.

They risk their lives, willing to pay a price, because they trust God.

How will we respond to His greatness?

"O may all who come behind us **find us faithful**—may the fire of *our* devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe, and the lives we live inspire them to obey." That's what these people of faith did.

Practical Working Definition of Faith 11:1-3

Mencken: "Faith is illogical belief in occurrence of impossible."

In contrast to the *cynical* view, Hebrews clarifies what *genuine* faith looks like:

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for 11:1

It's confidence that what God has promised is certain to come to pass.

Faith is a conviction about things you can't see—certainty, when we can't see

Circumstances may look grim. What we see may not be encouraging.

Faith believes there's something more significant than what you can touch and see

Faith celebrates *now* the reality of what God promises to give us in the future, even though we can't see it.

By faith, godly people gained approval from ~~God~~ God

Faith counts on the unseen God for approval—not on tangible things; not on man's opinions. Nor does it depend on our efforts—God's approval comes by **faith!**

By faith, we understand the real force behind the universe. 11:3

People without Christ will never come to the same conclusions because it's faith that enables us to understand what life is all about.

Examples of People Who Trusted God 11:4-40

The list is long!

These heroes teach us *many* lessons about living in adversity.

We're going to see a few.

People of faith see what isn't visible.

People of faith focus on their future reward.

Departing from Christ, and returning to Judaism, moves *away from* these godly people!

They modeled the kind of faith he desires *us* to follow.

Key aspect of faith is *endurance*. When they can't see how things will work out, they trust God & wait for Him to work.

They keep their eyes on the goal. They can "see" the reward.

Abel 11:4

Because he trusts God, he offers better sacrifice.

Because he trusts God, God declares him righteous

Abel gave 1st & best of his flock.

He didn't cheat God or say: "Any thing will do."

He gave God the first and the best!

Abel stands out as man of faith; because he trusts God rather than flocks & income, God's pleased with him.

God says Abel's ***"faith's counted for righteousness"***

Enoch 11:5-6

Because he trusts God, Enoch pleases God.

Because he trusts God, he never experiences death.

Gen. 5:22, 24: Enoch walked with God for 300 years.

What was it like to walk with God?

Enoch was God's friend; he enjoyed God's company;

he's going the same way God is.

In a passage where everyone lives and then **dies**,

here's a person who doesn't just live, he walks with God!

After 300 yr, he doesn't die—he walks with God.

God takes him with Him!

Enoch teaches lesson about importance of faith

11:6

*** Without faith, you can't please God.**

He doesn't say that without faith it's *difficult* to please God.

It's *impossible*!

If we're going to live in a godly way—a way that pleases Him—we'll need a different perspective on life: FAITH!!!

*** The only way you'll ever come to God:**

1. Believe He exists

2. Believe He rewards people who seek Him

Common thread through all these examples of faith: they're focused on the ultimate reward! **10:34-36; 11:10, 13-16a, 26**

NOAH 11:7

Do you ever feel all alone—like no one else around you—at work, where you walk each day—is concerned about living for God?

Noah lived in a time when it wasn't popular to walk with God.

All mankind is separated from God. No one cares about pleasing God.

God says everyone else is evil

“Every intent of heart of all people is only evil continually!”

Except for 1! Only 1 person on planet wants to live for God!

God decides to destroy the whole thing and start over.

Flood story provides model of kind of life that finds grace in the sight of God—especially in a pagan culture.

It provides a picture of trust in God and obedience to Him.

HIS FAITH *Talk about faith in the unseen!*

—They had never seen a flood

Def. of faith—*“the conviction of things not seen”*

God said it and Noah believed it.

He spent yrs preparing ark because God told him to.

From perspective of what you can see, it didn't make sense.

Because he trusts God, he delivers his family from judgment.

Because he trusts God, he condemns the world.

Because he trusts God, he becomes an heir of righteousness

—the kind of righteousness that comes by faith.

Two Lessons for Us from Noah's Life:

1. **Those who trust God & are faithful to Him**
—who are willing to take a stand against the crowd,
ultimately triumph!

2. **We should trust God and follow His word**

—even if it means we stand alone as Noah did!

Other Examples Worth Imitating 11:8-31

Abraham 8-10 *He's willing to give up everything for his faith*

**Because he trusts God, he left his home & family,
not knowing where he was going.**

Abraham had a family to care for.

Talk about a hare-brained, lame thing to do!

You don't just take off with your family and go to "who knows where"!!!

That's how people would have seen it! Can you imagine the dialogue?

"Where are you going Abraham?" *"I don't know!"*

"What are you going to do there?"

"How are you going to take care of your family?"

"Right! Sure, Abraham. God told you to go?!!!"

Abraham believed God. He didn't know where he was going, or what he would do there. **All he knew was God said go, and he's on his way!**

He has no contingency plan. He's committed to doing whatever God said, whether anyone understood or not—whether anyone else came along.

That's what a godly life is like. God says "Go." So we pack our bags, say goodbye to old friends, and move on to wherever He sends us. We face an uncertain future.

But we go, because the Boss told us to trust Him & follow Him!

Convincing others that what you're doing is right, is harder. You endure the frowns, the counsel of those who try to tell you why the idea is foolish.

But you move on, *trusting the Lord;*
doing whatever He tells you!

Sarah 11-16 11:11-12

NAS & KJV accurately make Sarah the subject:

"By faith, even sterile Sarah, received the ability to conceive"

"She considers the One who promised to be trustworthy"

Reading Gen., you wonder about N.T.

She had questions about *how* God would do this.

It looked impossible

BUT considers the 1 who promised to be trustworthy!

Every time she thought about it she laughed. At her age?

She got so used to laughing she named her son "laughter."

She could trust God with what seemed impossible to her.

Because she trusts God for what seems impossible, she's enabled to conceive & give birth to a great nation.

She couldn't count on her 90 year old body,
but she knew Whom she could count on.

Because they trust God, they saw things God promised & welcomed them from distance13-16

Abraham (part 2) 17-19

Because He trusts God, he's willing to offer his only son.

Abraham knew God well enough to know he could trust Him, even when His orders don't make sense. If God wants his only son, He can have him.

Abraham believed *God could raise Isaac from the dead*, if necessary, to fulfill His promise. But, he *could* trust God to fulfill His promise!

God had given him, God could take him away.

He wasn't going to cling to the son.

He just believes what God said about him.

He trusts God to raise Isaac rather than believe He would lie or mislead him.

Some people follow an "open door" approach to faith.

If God opens door they'll proceed. If He doesn't, they stop.

Faith isn't like that.

If God says go, walk up to the door and keep going.

Sometimes God uses us to remove a misplaced door.

That's what Abraham's faith was like.

He didn't know what God would do about Isaac,
but He trusts God.

When Isaac asks what they'd do about missing animal,
Abraham responds that God will provide what they need. *That's faith!*

He knew he could trust God. He passes that assurance on. *Is that what our children learn from us when we face a trial and don't know how God will resolve it?*

Examples continue:

* Isaac 20 * Jacob 21 * Joseph 22
* Moses 23-29 * Joshua 30 * Rahab 31

Lessons Learned from Those Who Walk by Faith:

1. People who trust God please Him.

They trust Him, & please Him.

Faith is basis for pleasing Him.

2. People who trust God, desire to walk with Him.

3. People who trust God aren't afraid to be different from those around them!

These people testified to their faith in God & His faithfulness.

Like silent shadows, heroes of faith pass beside us, pointing us toward God, reminding us of His faithfulness.

What will *our* response be?

Will we join them, in faith?

Will we escape, in unbelief?

Which do we prefer?