

## **BUILDING YOUR FAITH: EXPLORING SCRIPTURE WITH THE PASTORS**

### ***The Gospel in Abraham's Story: Walking by Faith***

#### **Hebrews 11.8-16 - "Exemplars of Faith"**

**February 19, 2023 - Clay Brown, MDPC Adult Discipleship Pastor**

### **OUTLINE**

**1. Greet one another, begin with prayer, and read Hebrews 11.8-16.**

**2. Remind the class of the insights from Genesis 25.1-18.**

**3. Discuss Abraham's example of faith in Hebrews 11.8-10.**

- Abraham called by God to a place he would receive as an inheritance from God; he goes "not knowing where he was going;" allusion to Genesis 12.1-9
- Lives in this land by faith as a "foreigner" (v. 9) living in tents, transient and temporary, along the lines of Isaac and Jacob; doesn't realize the fulfillment in his lifetime
- This deep faith is described in v. 10 as "looking forward to the city that has foundations" (ESV), meant as contrast to living in tents with no permanent home
- "To live the Christian life there is necessary a certain reckless willingness to adventure. If faith does not involve risk, it is not faith. If faith can see every step of the way, it is not faith. It is sometimes necessary for the Christian to take the right way, the way to which the voice of God is calling him, without knowing what the consequences will be." (William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews: Daily Study Bible*, 163)

**4. Discuss Sarah's example of faith in Hebrews 11.11-12.**

- Sarah conceives even as she is past the age of child bearing because "she considered Him faithful who had promised" (v. 11)
- So despite appearances, God's promise for a great nation for Abraham and Sarah comes true as together they place their trust in God and His promises
- Scholarly disagreement over translation of v. 11: "Although some translations give Abraham as the subject, it is best to take "Sarah" as the subject here (as the ESV does), because (1) both Sarah's name and "herself" (Gk. *autē*) are in the nominative case (indicating the subject of the sentence), and because (2) making Abraham the subject requires either an unusual grammatical understanding of the words for "Sarah herself" or an assumption that an early copyist made an error in transcribing those two words." (ESV Study Bible, note on Hebrews 11.11)

## 5. Discuss what it means to walk by faith in Hebrews 11.13-16.

- Referent for “these” (ESV) is not just Abraham and Sarah, but also Abel, Enoch, Noah
- “Strangers” (*xenoi* in Greek) and “exiles” (*parapidemoi* in Greek): those not citizens, but just passing through or with temporary residency (see 1 Peter 2.11)
- Yet those living by faith resist temptation to return to where they started (allusion to Israelites complaining after Red Sea; Exodus 16.3), but instead step forward in faith
- Maintain their trust in the “better place’ (NLT) ahead in the world yet to come
- “Abraham’s example can be a powerful one in our modern world. Particularly in the West, most of us are affluent enough to enjoy nice homes—ones that are comfortable and safe. As a result, we can easily begin to make this world our home, forgetting that a much better one—a real and glorious one—awaits us... In short, we’ve become enamored with the seen things rather than unseen. The cure to this kind of worldliness is to change what we believe—about God and about ourselves. We need to recover our real identity as ‘strangers and exiles.’” (Michael Kruger, *Hebrews for You*, 176)

## 6. Close in prayer.

### QUESTIONS

- Review Hebrews 11.8-16. Who are the lead characters? What is happening?
- According to v. 8, what is a predominant characteristic describing Abraham’s journey to Canaan? What in Genesis 12 backs up this account?
- William Barclay wrote, “If faith does not involve risk, it is not faith.” (*The Letter to the Hebrews: Daily Study Bible*, 163) How so? Explore the connection of faith and risk.
- Sarah is also an example of faith, according to v. 11. How? What passages in Genesis support the assessment made by the writer of Hebrews?
- How is Abraham’s life in Canaan described in v. 9? How is this same imagery revisited and expanded upon at the end of v. 13? Why and how does this imagery apply today?
- Verses 13-16 are key verses for understanding how faith expresses itself through Abraham and Sarah and through all who trust in Christ. Unpack these four verses, put them into your own words, and talk about their meaning for your walk with Christ.
- Examine yourself: What do you truly and honestly long for? How does this longing reveal itself in your life?