



Title: Faith Trumps Failure
Hebrews 11:1-12:4

Introduction: If you've ever had the opportunity to walk through the baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY, you know there is nothing quite like it. You walk the halls and see the great names of the past, Ruth, Gehrig, Ryan and so on. They're all in the Hall of Fame, not for a great game, but for spectacular careers. Hebrews 11 is a bit like that. We read the names of the heroes of our faith, not for specific acts in most cases, but for lives of faith. Each in his or her own way gives us hope and encouragement—but not always in ways one might expect. Each of these great saints of the past was just a person, with failures and struggles like all of us.

Opening question: what are the characteristics of a lifestyle of faith?

Read Hebrews 11:1-7

1. The world dismisses faith as “wishful thinking” or as a synonym for any sort of religion. Before detailing the actions the “heroes of the faith”, the author gives a definition of faith that actually pleases God (v.1). What is the link between authentic faith and actions?
2. Look for both assured confidence and calm expectation (v1) in the role models of faith in this chapter. How did Abel, Enoch and Noah express their faith (vv 4-7)?
3. In what ways are our situations similar or different than these listed? Do you feel it is easier or more difficult to live by faith today? Why?

Read Hebrews 11:8-22

4. Now the writer focuses on Abram and his family for an extended period for two reasons: 1) he is an awesome example of faith: 2) his overall purpose in God's redemptive plan. Considering the foolishness of Abraham's choices by human standards, what do you think his emotions were like (vv 8-10)? In what ways would his hope for 'the city without foundations' enable him to endure?

life group study guide

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5. Verses 11-16 detail God's second promise to Abraham, a son even though Abraham and Sarah were both far beyond childbearing years. Do you ever let your current situation keep you from believing God's promises about your future? How can you move past this?
6. Why do you think Abraham's faith triumphed when he was asked to give up Isaac (vv 13-16)?

Read Hebrews 11:23-40

7. On and on the writer keeps giving one fantastic example of faith after another. How would you compare the faith of the named heroes and heroines who achieved greatness (vv. 20-35) with those unnamed persons who suffered grievously (vv.35-38)?
8. Some Christians believe that faith always leads to material and physical blessing. What does this passage tell you about the role of both blessing and suffering for the faithful?

Read Hebrews 12:1-4

9. Therefore...In other words, in light of what you have just heard, do this. The author has given us the reasons; now he expects us to act. He speaks of laying aside weights and sin that cling to us. What sorts of things do you think he may be speaking of? What does that look like in your life?
10. Often we come up with excuses why we cannot live with the great faith of the people in Scripture. We speak of them as if they weren't real people. But without attempting to be disrespectful; Noah got drunk and cursed one of his sons, Abraham was a coward and a liar, Rahab was a prostitute, Jacob was a cheat, and it just keeps going. How does de-mystifying them give you confidence to live a life of faith? Does it?