

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

Faith is...

Hebrews 11:1-3

February 3rd, 2019

Main Point

Faith is essential to the Christian life. In many ways, faith IS the Christian life. But what is faith? This morning, our text will give us a biblical definition for faith.

Getting Started

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How would you define faith? How does the Bible define faith? Understanding biblical faith is foundational to following Christ.

How has your faith grown since you first placed your faith in Christ? What is an experience that helped strengthen your faith?

Do you expect your faith to grow even stronger as you get older? How do you think that will happen?

The antonym of doubt is faith. As we struggle through seasons of doubt, God wants to remove the weight of that burden and strengthen our faith over time. Like Thomas, and scores of other biblical characters, we must learn to believe without seeing. This is where we walk and live in freedom with Christ. Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 teach that the righteous shall live by faith. Faith is both the assurance and conviction that what God says is true, even though we can't see God with our human eyes. Without this divine assurance and conviction, it is impossible to live by faith.

Observation

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 11:1-3.

What are the connections between 10:35-39 and the themes of chapter 11?

Put verse 1 in your own words here:

Read verse 1 again. What is Assurance? What is Conviction? What does the phrase 'things hoped for' mean to you?

Read chapter 11. Who did God commend for their faith according to chapter 11? Who are some of the heroes of the faith described here?

Verse 3 refers to the Genesis account of creation. Read Genesis 1:1. How was the universe created by the word of God? What two things did God create? How do the visible aspects of creation point to our Creator God? What do we learn about God from creation?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 10:17 AND HEBREWS 4:12

The Bible describes God's Word as alive and active. In summary, it is divinely powerful to accomplish His purposes in our lives. How does God's Word generate faith in a believer? What does this one verse suggest about the importance of reading the Bible? About the importance of knowing and believing the promises of God?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is one situation where you need to "feed your faith and starve your fears"? Share this situation with your group.

What promise from God's Word do you need to believe today? Ask God to help your unbelief (Mark 9:24).

Name at least one way you have been blessed by believing without seeing. This comes from God!

Some people have faith in faith. They may not have a good grasp on what to believe; they just believe that having faith in something is a good thing. Biblical faith is different. It is grounded in the word of God and affirmed by His Holy Spirit. The focus of biblical faith is God Himself. Ask God to focus and sharpen your faith!

Who is someone who needs you to show mercy as they right now struggle with doubts? What is challenging about that? What is one way you can do it?

Prayer

Thank God for the gift of faith! Only God through His word and the power of His Holy Spirit can cultivate faith within your soul. Ask God to increase your faith. Ask Him to reveal promises from His word He wants you to believe.

Commentary

11:1. The Greek word for "reality" is hypostasis. It has been used previously to describe the relationship of Christ to God (1:3) and the firm confidence that believers possess (3:14). Faith is not fleeting but substantial enough to generate confidence. The Greek word for "proof" is elegchos, indicating an inner conviction that is not based on visible matters. Divine approval is the primary consequence of faith. Other results of faith are the declaration of righteousness, the ability to look forward to the heavenly city of God,

the ability to understand that faith is possible only because God is faithful, the ability to accomplish great things in the world, and the ability to see that even when believers are persecuted and murdered, beyond this world is a better resurrection.

11:2 The people of old, especially those listed as examples of faith throughout this chapter, received commendation in the form of a good testimony from God. The author does not focus on their failings, since his goal is to positively illustrate what faith looks like and to connect the current people of God with this 'cloud of witnesses'.

11:3 God's creation of the universe was accomplished by his word. This verse is consistent with the doctrine of *ex nihilo* which means 'from nothing'. *Ex nihilo* does not fully represent the reality of a pre-existent God who made everything we see. But it does seem to correct Greco-Roman notions about eternally existing matter. The idea that God created the visible universe out of some other kind of invisible matter is not in the author's mind. Rather, he is saying that God did not make the universe out of any preexisting matter as humans know it, which is close to saying that He made it out of nothing.

Adapted from www.smallgroup.com.