

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

How Can I Please God?

Hebrews 11:4-7

February 10th, 2019

Main Point

From the very beginning of human history, one thing has always been necessary in order to please God: faith. Abel reminds us that God is pleased with sacrificial giving when it comes from faith. Enoch reminds us that God is pleased when we seek to walk with Him by faith.

Getting Started

Read the stories of Abel and Enoch in the Old Testament. You will find them in Genesis 4:1-16 and in Genesis 5:18-24.

How did faith play a role in Abel's sacrifice to God?

How did faith play a role in Enoch walking with God?

How did faith play a role in Noah's obedience to God?

Faith is necessary to please God and to follow Him. Only by faith can we offer sacrifices that pleases God. Only by faith in His Word can we walk with God. And only by faith can we obey God. As we explore these brief passages that focus on Abel, Enoch and Noah, think about how your own faith propels you to make sacrifices you would not ordinarily make for God. Consider how your own faith makes it possible to walk with God, though you cannot see Him. How does faith make it possible for you to actually obey God? Take time to thank God for the gift of faith that makes it possible for us to know Him and to please Him. Abel, Enoch and Noah lived by faith, and we do as well. Discuss ways in your group that you can encourage each other to nurture and cultivate faith in God.

Observation

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 11:4-7.

What did Abel do by faith that pleased God? Who killed Abel and why? What does the author of Hebrews mean by stating that Abel still speaks?

Abel's faith in God led him to give a better sacrifice than his brother, Cain. Abel was not trying to outdo his brother. He simply believed God was worth a better sacrifice. He perceived God's worth and worshipped God accordingly.

What did Enoch do by faith that pleased God? What does it mean that God had taken Enoch? What did that allow Enoch to avoid?

The Bible addresses the practice of walking with God in many passages and in many ways. The word 'walk' refers to the way in which a person lives. Check out a few passages about walking with God here: Deuteronomy 5:33, Micah 6:8, Colossians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 5:7, 1 John 2:6. We can only walk with God by faith in his promises. What promises has he given you to walk in recently?

What must people who draw near to God believe about Him? In your own words, describe what it means to seek God. How does seeking God require faith? What does God do for those who seek Him?

What did Noah do by faith that pleased God? How does verse 7 contrast Noah's faith with the disobedience of the rest of humanity? What does it mean that Noah became an 'heir of the righteousness that comes by faith'?

Noah took seriously God's warning about events he had not yet seen. He obeyed God though he could not see him. Noah followed God's designs to build an ark that would hold his entire family and many animals. All that Noah did to obey God sprang from his faith in God's warning. That's why the writer of Hebrews celebrated Noah's faith in God in this passage.

Application

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

Our faith in Christ will sometimes lead us to give up something for God's glory and our good. What sacrifices has your faith in Christ led you to make? What did He lead you to give up?

Enoch walked with God, and God wants us to walk with Him by faith. Describe your walk with Christ at this point in your life. Is your walk flourishing? Dry? Distant? How can members of your group encourage one another in your walks with Christ? Commit to carve out time to walk with God each day, if you have not already. You may want to download the You Version Bible app or one like it to begin a daily reading plan of God's Word. Pressing into God's Word will increase your faith and your walk with God.

Noah demonstrated his faith in God by building the ark to God's specifications. What is God asking you to do? Determine to obey him faithfully first and fast when He asks you to follow Him. Don't delay!

Prayer

Dear God, strengthen my faith in you! Cause me to willingly give up the comforts of earth for your glory and my good. Lead me to walk with you by faith in what I cannot see. And fill me with your power to obey your word.

Commentary

11:4 Abel's sacrifice was acceptable to God while Cain's was not. The acceptance of the offering was evidence of God's acceptance of the person. The story of Abel's faith, as recorded in the Bible, still speaks to generation after generation. This mention of Abel's faith indicates that, from the very outset of human history, some OT figures were saved by means of faith.

11:5 Enoch was taken up by God. This indicates that Enoch did not die but that God took him. Genesis also states twice that Enoch walked with God and this phrase is interpreted in the Septuagint as Enoch having 'pleased God'.

11:6 The Septuagint of Genesis states that certain patriarchs pleased God such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Isaac. Each is discussed in Hebrews 11. Faith included belief in God's existence and especially in God's trustworthiness to keep his promise to reward his followers.

11:7 A visible example of God's salvation is seen in the life of Noah. The phrase 'condemned the world' means that Noah's righteous obedience to God showed by contrast how sinful the world was to reject Noah's message and God's moral standards. The word 'World' in Hebrew usually signifies all of creation, though here it particularly pictures sinful humanity. Noah is called righteous after he faithfully builds the ark to God's specifications.

Adapted from www.smallgroup.com.