

Message 116  
Hebrews 11:3-5  
Faith Lived Out  
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## **Introduction**

### **Faith, Easier Taught Than Lived**

Chapter 11 of Hebrews takes about one verse to define faith. The majority of the remaining verses are a recounting of individuals in the Bible who acted out their faith.

Does it strike you odd that only one verse really digs into the meaning of faith, and the rest just recount stories of faith? The phrase “easier said than done” carries a lot of weight when it comes to faith.

### ***Faith Without Works is Dead***

James 2:26 reads “Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.” We can define faith. We can analyze faith. We can talk about it to death; however, but until faith is put into motion it is useless.

Of course works alone don’t save you. That is not the point of this verse. The point is that faith without any actions to back it up is simply dead, or nonexistent. I think that is why so much time is devoted to stories of those who have lived faith out, rather than on the study of faith itself.

### ***It is Not Enough to Know Faith, We Must Live Faith***

For this reason, knowing what faith is simply not enough. It is not enough to be able to define faith. Faith is not something you learn by picking up a dictionary and memorizing. Because faith requires work to exist, faith cannot be taught by simply by saying “faith is...”

### ***Example: You First . . .***

My brother and I loved marking forts in our back yard. We started with a simple fort. We laid a sheet of wood against the house and called it a fort. Any time my dad came across some wood, he would put it in his truck and add it to our collection. It was great; it was like playing with Lego’s only the pieces were bigger.

Over time, our forts got bigger and bigger. We started out with our single room lean-to. Then after a few other variations, we had enough material to make a two room fort. We got tired of that, and we made a three room fort. Still my dad kept finding more wood for us, so we decided that we needed to build something even better. We decided to build a two story fort. We were just convinced that in the entire history of kids building forts, none have ever dared to build a two story fort.

After hours of work and master craftsmanship, the fort was complete. Now I don’t know about other kids, but we had our own way of christening a fort. We would always paint a “no girls allowed” sign on it before going in. So with that sign, the fort was now officially complete.

Again, we were sure we were the first kids in history to make a two story fort. So we both looked at it, shook it a little to make sure it was solid. We both had the same

thought, and we both knew it without even saying it. Neither of us wanted to be the first kid in history to try out the second story of a fort and have it crash beneath us.

One of us was going to have to try out the second story. And of course one of us was going to have to stand outside, because we didn't want to be the first kid in history to be crushed underneath the first kid in history to try out the second story. So we both looked at each other, and knew one of us was going to be first. And neither one of us wanted to be the first one to try it.

So me, being the man that I am, had to do the dirty work. That is, I called my brother a chicken. "What you chicken? Bock bock! Chicken! Bock bock! Are too a chicken! Bock bock!" So that is the story of how my brother became the first kid ever in the history of kids to stand on the second story of a fort.

Now he was the first to test it out. He kind of tested it slowly at first; he crawled onto it, then stood up carefully, then walked around. Eventually, he even started jumping up and down on it. Finally, we knew we had done the impossible; we had built the first two story fort in history.

### ***Faith by Example***

Faith is the same way. My brother and I could stand there and tell each other how strong it was, and pat each other on the back and claim victory. But the work was not complete until it was proven by his taking the first steps. Neither can we learn faith simply by picking up a dictionary; we need to see the result of other people testing that faith.

I sat there and watched my brother crawl onto the second floor, then stand, then walk, then jump. It was through seeing my brother's faith in being able to jump in it, that I knew I could stand on it too. It wasn't the 2X4 wood, or the nails, or our expert engineering, it was by seeing my brother simply walk on it.

We can talk and learn about faith being a foundation, but until we step onto faith, it's all just talk and hype. For this reason, we have the remainder of Hebrews 11 going through person after person showing us the fruit of their faith. And seeing them test their faith, should allow us to have the confidence and trust to exercise faith as well.

### **Study Review**

In the last study, we looked at Hebrews 11:1-2, and we are going to pick the study back up in Hebrews 11:3. The third continues the thoughts of the first verse, which helps us understand the role of faith.

Faith, as we looked at in the last study, is the "foundation" of Christianity. It is the very beginning of Christianity, as well as being part of whatever else is built on top of that foundation.

### **Verse Three Reading**

"By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen."

## **By Faith We Understand**

The verse starts out with “By faith we understand.” The opposite is true as well. The opposite being “without faith there is no understanding.”

As this verse states, faith allows us to know where the universe came from. If you ask the ordinary scientist, they really don't have a solid answer. They will probably talk about the big bang, but they will acknowledge that is just the best theory they have come up with so far.

For Christians, the question of where the universe comes from is laid out in the first verse of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 reads “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

## **Faith, It's both Intelligent and Simple**

That's why I love, faith, it makes things so simple. Faith In preparing for this study, I poked around a little bit on the Internet about a non-Christians view of where the universe came from. I read some of the a little bit about the big bang, and then something called “string theory” where scientist think two universes collided to create the big bang. And it just got so deep so fast that I just made me laugh and realize how thankful I was for the simplicity of faith.

## **From the Unseen**

The second part of this verse goes on to say that faith allows us to understand that what we see was created by something that is unseen.

## **Hebrews 11:4 Forward, the MVPs of Faith**

Now, like I said last week. The remaining of chapter 11 deals the MVPs of faith. They are the faithful of the faithful, and represent the highest of all those that have lived out their faith. So let's learn about those that belong on this hall of fame of faith.

## **Hebrews 11:4: Enoch**

Hebrews 11:4 “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

We find the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. There we read that Abel became a rancher, and Cain became a farmer. When we get to verse three through five we find Cain getting a sacrifice of fruit, and Abel providing an animal sacrifice. God accepts Abel's animal sacrifice, and then rejects Cain's sacrifice.

## **God, Aren't You Being a Little Too Harsh?**

Now, at first appearance, it seems a little harsh that God does not accept Cain's fruit. After all, he is a farmer, and that is what a farmer would probably bring to God.

## **Theological Explanation**

Theologians have a common way of handling this. The first is to say that Abel's sacrifice had no blood in it, and as such was not an acceptable sacrifice. As Roman's 6:23 says “the wages of sin is death.” So for sin to be taken care of somebody has to die.

For Christians, our sin is taken care of in the death of Jesus Christ. So, theologians can correctly point out that Abel brought a sacrifice that had no blood in it, and therefore was not an acceptable gift.

The main issue I can see in this is that this sacrifice occurred long before the Old Testament was available. They didn't yet have instructions that sacrifices had to have blood in them.

### **My Thought: Look at the Giver, Not the Gift**

I'm going to offer a simpler explanation. First of all, you need to stop looking at the gifts, and at the giver. Genesis 4:4 ends with "the Lord respected Abel and his offering." It doesn't say, "the Lord respected the offering," it says at God respected Abel, therefore he accepted the offering.

The same is true with Cain and his offering; it says that he "did not respect Cain and his offering." He first does not respect Cain, and therefore does not respect the offering.

### **Example: An Ugly But Loved Crayola Explosion**

Let me illustrate. Parents, don't you know this to be true. You come home from work and your child jumps in your arms and says "daddy I made you a present." They then put in your hands the ugliest explosion of crayons and markers. But you love it, and would not trade it for anything you would find in an art museum. Why? Because they made it for you!

### **An Opposing Example: A Coca Cola for a Headache**

Now let's go the opposite direction. Now the gift is great, but there is something wrong with the giver.

Let's say you have a less than favorite co worker. This coworker starts working over my head with a cordless drill. Now this cordless drill is notorious for having battery that slips loose. Now the battery comes loose, knocking you in the head, gashing you, and blood is squirting everywhere.

Think this is a weird story. Well, it happens to be a true one. I ended up in the ER with a doctor attacking me with a staple gun.

The coworker, not wanting to get in trouble hopes to appease your anger by offering to buy me a Coke.

Moral of this story, don't use a cordless drill over somebody, and don't try to buy them off with a Coke. I don't turn down a Coke very often, but I turned this one down. Why? Not because of the Coke, but because of the giver.

### **In the Light of Two Passages**

I think we have to read Genesis 4 in light of what is said in Hebrews 11. That is simply "By faith Abel made a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." There is my explanation, which is that Abel had more faith than Cain did.

### **The Gifts Themselves: A Second Look**

Now let's go back to the gifts for just a second. Let's say for a moment that Abel wasn't really thinking about using a blood sacrifice, he was just giving a gift. Now to most of us, we know that a cow is more valuable than a basket of fruit. So Abel's gift was more than likely more valuable to him than Cain's gift of fruit was to him.

### **Gifts, it's Not the Price of the Gift, but the Sacrifice Made by the Giver**

When it comes to gifts, we always use the old cliché that it's the thought that counts. But in God's economy, it is not the size of the gift, but the cost to giver.

### **Example: Valentines A – Mr. Sacrifice**

For example, the week before Valentines Day I get paid, my wife and I sit down and pay all the bills and we only have about ten dollars left over to spend on each other. We agree to spend five dollars a piece on each other. Unknown to her I spend the last ten dollars for a pathetic looking roses at a grocery store.

Before I give them to her, I look at them and wish that I could do more. I give them to Robyn. She knows I sacrificed my own money as well, and looks affectionately at the one rose as much as she would at a dozen fresh cut roses.

### **Example: Valentines B – Mr. Tightwad**

Now its payday, we pay all the bills, and we are still loaded. So loaded in fact the bank doesn't offer me FDIC insurance anymore. Too many zeros they tell me. Now I go to the same grocery store and buy her the same pathetic looking rose.

I look at the rose, and wonder if I should take it back because it put me out five bucks. But I decide against that, and give them to Robyn. Do you think my wife is going to be thinking to herself, "Well it's the thought that counts?" Probably not! You see, it's not about the cost of the gift; it's about the sacrifice made by the giver.

Know we don't know how much each of these brothers had in the bank. But all else being equal, we can probably assume that Abel made more of a sacrifice.

### **Faith allows Sacrifice, Your Heavenly "Credit Rating"**

But let's take our conversation back to faith. Isn't it faith that makes us willing to make sacrifice? If you have faith in God to provide for the necessities, and you take God at His Word, You don't have a problem sacrificing a little of yourself.

So the smaller gift was not the problem. The smaller gift was merely a symptom that underscores a much bigger problem, a lack of faith and trust in God. On the flip side, we see that Abel's gift was a demonstration of his faith and trust in God.

[Possible Illustration of Credit Rating]

### **Faith, Not Always Good on Earth**

Now, before we move on from the story of Cain and Abel, does anybody remember what happened to Abel? Does the verse end with "God accepted Abel's sacrifice and lived happily ever after?" No! His brother ends up killing him. On that positive note, let's flip back to Hebrews 11.

### **God's Accepting the Giver, Not the Gift**

So Abel is dead, but he lives on. The rest of Hebrews 11:4 reads

“through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts”

So we see here that God did not approve Abel as righteous because of his gifts, but accepted Abel's gifts because he was righteous. Just like we talked about earlier, God doesn't accept Abel because of the gifts he gave Him, but rather accepted the gift, because he had accepted Abel.

### **Faith Outlives Your Time on Earth**

Now we left off in Genesis with Cain having killed Abel. So in a way, he was the first person killed for his faith. However, the very end of Hebrews 11:4 reads

“and through it he being dead still speaks”

So Abel is dead physically. But because God accepted Abel, he is still very much alive today spiritually. Cain may have killed his physical body, but his eternal body is alive and well. So although in a sense he died, his example of faith is still with us as well, and we are studying it right now.

Do you want to leave something behind after your time here on Earth is up? The example we have to learn from Abel is that your faith that you demonstrate here on Earth will outlive you. Are you investing faith into those around you? When your time here is up on Earth, when you kids and spent your inheritance, what is left behind. It is important to live in a way that your faith can be an example to those who we beat to Heaven.

### **From Abel to Enoch**

So we now we move from verse four to verse five. In that we move from Abel to Enoch. We can find his account in Genesis chapter 4. Besides being listed in the hall of faith, he is also on an even more exclusive list. He is only one of two people in Heaven right now that did not experience death on Earth. Do you know the other one? Elijah was also taken up into Heaven without having to die.

### **One of Two Witnesses to Return? A Possibility**

For this reason, some believe they are the two witnesses found in Revelation 11 who are killed and God raises back up on the third day. The reason for this being that God sends the two people back to earth who didn't experience death to experience it. Of course this is purely speculation. It is an interesting theory, but let's not plan on being around on Earth to find out for sure.

### **So Why is Enoch Among the Most Faithful?**

So Enoch is the first of two to be taken back up to be with God without dying first. There are only about three verses about Enoch in Genesis chapter 5, so let's look at them.

Gen 5:22-24 After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. (23) Enoch lived 365 years, (24) walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

### **Enoch's Only Known Words**

The only other reference we have the entirety of the Bible is in Jude 1:14-16. What is interesting about this quote that we are about to hear, is that it is not recorded in what we know and call the Bible. This is the only words of Enoch that have been recorded in the Bible.

14Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones 15to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." 16These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.

### **What Else Do We Know About Enoch?**

What else do we know about Enoch that shows us his faith? Nothing.

That is all we really know about Enoch. Besides a single quote, we know nothing about this man. If you look at this quote found in Jude, although true, much more profound prophecies have been given.

So besides this verse what makes this guy worthy of being in the hall of fame of faith? One phrase alone. "He lived in close fellowship with God," lands him in the Hebrews 11 hall of fame for faith.

No exciting stories about fighting people with the jawbone of an ass. No stories of killing a nine foot giant with a stone. Nor do we have voluminous accounts of wisdom. No single handedly leading Israel into battle. He is in the hall of fame of faith simply because "he lived in close fellowship with God."

Like I said, no incredible eye popping stories, just a man who loved being with God. For all we know Enoch was just an average guy, with an incredible love for God. So how is your fellowship with God doing?

### **Enoch, I Can't Wait for You**

Then way day God just took him. Isn't that cool? Is that something God can say of you? Do you live in close fellowship with God? I don't know why God took him. But I would like to think that his fellowship with God was so awesome that God couldn't wait one more minute to get him home.

Now, if this is true, it makes perfect sense. Why? Well not only is he in the hall of fame of faith, and one of two in who got snatched into Heaven without dying. But the guy had an amazing set of genes too. He had a son named Methuselah. Anybody know what record Methuselah set? He lived to be 969 years old. So maybe God didn't want to wait around that long.

### **God From Heaven: It was me!**

So God took him. It just says he "disappeared." Imagine being Methuselah, who we can infer is 300 years old when his dad disappears. He starts looking around for his dad and can't find him. What would be going through your mind. Besides wanting to know where my dad is, I want to know the kidnapper who took them. I can imagine Methuselah

asking the question, “who took my dad.” And God looking down from Heaven saying “it was me!”

### **Faith, Found in a Closeness with God**

So from Enoch we learn that our relationship with God is an indicator of faith. So how is your relationship with God? Do you enjoy spending time with God? I’m not just talking about spending time in God’s Word either. Spending time in the Bible is crucial, but it is no substitute for spending time with the author of the Bible. How is your prayer life doing? How much time do you set aside to talk to God as son talks to his father? Also, how much time in prayer do you allow God to speak to you?

How is your relationship?

### **Do you Please God?**

Let’s look at one more piece of information given to us in the book of Hebrews. Verse 5 says he was a person that “pleased God.” Again, keep in mind we have not one single incident of a mighty work which he did. He simply lived in close fellowship with God, and that pleased God.

Do you think it is possible to please God without faith? Can a person who lives a near perfect life apart from God please God? Does a moral person, who does not believe in God, please God. For the sake of argument, I’m not saying will this person go to Heaven, I’m asking if they can please God.

The answer is found in verse “and without faith it is impossible to please God.” The Bible doesn’t leave any wiggle room here; if you want to please God, you need faith.

### **Don't Complicate Faith**

Now I think we can agree that faith is the starting point of pleasing God. But long after your conversion, faith remains the main reason you please God. As a disclaimer, we are not talking about salvation specifically, but rather simply pleasing God.

### **Why Do We Complicate Faith?**

However, why is that I, why is it that we as believers, tend to make pleasing God so much more complicated? Specifically, why do we insist on adding works to it. I’m not advocating that God wants you to be lazy. However, neither should we confuse exhausting ourselves with pleasing God.

I am in a difficult position now. Mainly because I don't want to claim that faith does not result in works. As the book of James says, “faith without works is dead.” But at the same time, I need you to realize how prone we are, with good intentions, of confusing works alone with pleasing God.

There is a fine line here, and it is a tough gig to balance. I rewrote this section a minimum of ten times. Finally, in exasperation, I stopped and prayed for some wisdom.

**Example: Bosley, do What I Say!**

My insight? My dog. I open my eyes and there is my dog. His name is Bosley. I haven't known my dog to work a day in his life. But still, there he was, laying at my feet, and that brought me pleasure.

A few months after my wife and I got married, I decided it was time to teach our middle age dog a trick or two. After about 30 minutes of wresting him, he finally learned how to sit. That pleased me. After a week, he would sit on command. This "pleased" my wife and I.

A few weeks later, we worked on how to shake. After much frustration, my wife finally taught me how to shake. Just kidding, we taught Bosley that. After he mastered shaking paws, we taught him how to stand. After a few days, he was standing on command. All of this pleased my wife and I very much. We enjoyed seeing our dog do what we asked him to do.

**Example: The Confusion Sets In**

Now the next week, we started teaching him how to lay down. This was by far the hardest command to teach him. He was so accustomed to having to "do something" to get his treat, that he didn't understand that all he had to do was lay down and relax to get his treat.

Instead of laying down. Here is what he would do. When we told him to "lay down" he would do every trick we had taught him. He would lay sit, shake, stand, and then do it over and over and over again. Each time he would look at us as if to say "see I am doing stuff, now give me the treat!" I could look at him and see his frustration. Now this didn't really please my wife and I. Why? Well its not what we were trying to get him to do. We just wanted him to lay down.

**Do We Feel Like Bosley Sometimes?**

I feel like Bosley sometimes. God asks me to do something and I do my best, and I feel that by doing what God asks me to do, I am doing something that pleases God. God asks me to do something else, I do it and I feel like that it is in some small way my obedience is pleasing God.

The next thing I know, I forget the obedience, and just start working blindly. Just like Bosley, I just start jumping around, sitting, shaking, trying to somehow earn God's pleasure. And just like Bosley, I get frustrated. And in my frustration, I miss God trying to teach me how to simply "lay down."

**Refocus on Faith**

That is one of the reasons this is my favorite verse in scripture. When I take my eyes off of faith, and onto works alone, this verse comes along and reminds me that my faith alone brings God pleasure.

So is work bad? No. Faith without work is dead. But so is work dead without faith.

## **Believing and Seeking**

“Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.”

Anyone who comes before God has to believe two things.

### **Must Number 1: You Must Believe in His Existence**

First thing they have to believe is in his existence. This seems fairly straight forward. After all, you don't buy an airplane ticket to Hawaii if you don't believe in Hawaii. Neither are you going to attempt to draw near to God if you don't believe in him.

### **So I Believe In God, I'm Okay with God Right?**

So you believe in God, you are then assured a passage into Heaven? The answer is no. And this will come as a shock to many people in the last days. “God, did I not believe in you.” God's reply may be “Perhaps you did believe in me. You went to church; you poked around in your Bible, you prayed before dinner, but never once search for me in a way that you found intimacy with me.

Belief in God is not enough. The bible declares even the demons believe God exists. So what else do we need? Lets read past the all important word “and”

### **Must Number 2: That He is a Rewarder**

“and a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him.”

Secondly, you must believe that God will reward you if you search him out.

Does this strike you as a strange condition? I mean, it is great that God is a rewarder, but why is that a condition to coming before God?

### **Rewarder or Promise Keeper?**

The word translated “rewarder” here literally means “the one who pays wages.” So it's not an image of a God handing out Corvettes and diamond rings when you search for Him. It is referring to His following up on his end of the bargain.

Matthew 7:7 states, “Seek and you will find.”

### **Example: A Boss That Doesn't Pay**

Would you work for a boss that never paid you? Nor will you really seek out God if you don't believe he will respond to your attempt to find him.

## **Conclusion**

**Example: Lost Bosley**

**Example: A Wedding Ring Found**

## **Ending Statement**

If you are here, it is probably because you believe in God. But have you searched him out? Perhaps you are tired of searching. Remember from what we learned last week, just about every single one of these masters of faith spent their whole life pursuing a promise they never received.

In God's economy he is not so concerned about you getting to the promise land, He is more concerned with you pursuing the promise land.

## **Example: Pete's Scissors**

My mom had a small dog. His name was Pete. Pete, unlike Bosley, was a very intelligent dog who took commands very well. My mom could tell him to get just about anything out of her sewing room, and he would go get it. The one thing he never could pickup with his mouth was a pair of scissors, but he would try. And that alone, more than the actual bringing her the scissors, pleased her.

In your search for God, seek him with all you heart. Pursue him with the entirety of your life. It is the pursuit of the promise that please God, not the actual getting there.