

Hebrews 11

Heroes of Faith

A Bible Study Course for Adults

by
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Leader's Guide

Abel—A man who revered the Lord.....	3
Enoch and Noah—Men who remained focused on the Lord.....	7
Abraham—A man content to live in a tent.....	11
Abraham—A man who believed the impossible.....	15
Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—Men who by faith were certain of their futures.....	19
Moses and His Parents—People with faith who stood up to a king.....	24
The Israelites—People who relied on God's supernatural power.....	27
Rahab—A woman with repentant faith.....	31
The World Is Not Worthy of These.....	34

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Dedication

This Bible study is dedicated first to the glory of God, without whom we are nothing and to whom we owe everything.

Second, it is dedicated to my wife and child, whose understanding of my desire to serve my Lord I appreciate more than I can ever express.

Finally, I dedicate this to the good people of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Glendale, Arizona, whose hunger and thirst for the Word are evidence of the many heroes of faith among them and which make serving them a joy and a privilege.

David R. Clark

SAMPLE

Hebrews 11—Heroes of Faith

Lesson One

Abel

A man who revered the Lord

Worship

Read responsively Job 37:22-24.

A: Out of the north he comes in golden splendor;

B: God comes in awesome majesty.

A: The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power;

B: In his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress.

A: Therefore, men revere him,

B: For does he not have regard for all the wise in heart?

Prayer: Gracious Lord, we come before you confessing that we have not done all you would have us do but thankfully honoring you for what you have made us. As your dear children, make it possible for us to devote ourselves entirely to you in reverent love and obedience. Amen.

Introduction

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:1-3).

1. What is faith?

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Christians have hope and certainty in many things they do not see. One is that the Savior they worship is sitting at God’s right hand, daily forgiving our sins and preparing a place for us to live. Faith is taking God at his word that his every promise is true. Faith begins with saving faith in Jesus and his work on the cross. It also accepts as true all of God’s promises relating to our temporal and eternal lives. (The leader may want to ask the class for some examples.)

2. Why are “the ancients” such good examples of people who were sure of what they hoped for and certain of what they did not see?

We today have seen how God fulfilled his promise of a Savior, but the ancients only had God’s promises. Yet they put their faith in those promises and let them shape their lives.

3. What is the first example of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11? Why is this such an important element of faith?

Faith in the creation. In this chapter the author presents a chronological list of men and women of faith. It is logical that he start at creation. Faith that God created the world is foundational for everything else we read in Scripture. God is our Father and Creator. We are his children. Everything he created belongs to him, and all people owe him their honor and praise.

Studying God's Word

Exploring Abel's faith

Read Genesis 3:15.

1. Review the story of Abel's parents in Genesis 3. After they fell into sin, God gave Adam and Eve a promise. Describe this promise in your own words.

The leader will look for answers that express the gospel content of this verse. The hostility God created between Satan and Eve's believing seed was good news. This hostility could only come about if God would bring Adam and Eve back into his fellowship. The promised seed, Jesus, would destroy Satan's work by overcoming sin through his death on the cross. Although the serpent, Satan, would strike Jesus' heel, Jesus would not be destroyed. Rather, Jesus would crush the serpent's head, killing him and taking away any power he might have to accuse mankind before God. Note: The account of wicked Cain killing righteous Abel is the first example of Satan's (unbelieving) seed showing hostility to Eve's (believing) seed.

2. What did Adam and Eve do for their children as soon as their children could listen and understand?
3. What effect did Adam and Eve's words have on Abel?

They told their children about God's promise and began to worship God.

He came to faith. He believed the promise of the Savior.

Exploring Abel's life

“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead” (Hebrews 11:4).

Read Genesis 4:2-9.

Much of what we learn about Abel is in the context of his brother Cain's wickedness.

1. Both Cain and Abel offered a sacrifice to God. Abel's was accepted. Cain's was not. God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's because (pick one)
 - ___ God loves shepherds more than farmers.
 - ___ it is God's right to show favoritism to one person over another.
 - ___ Abel's heart was pure while Cain's was not.

It was not Abel's profession that mattered, nor did God show some sort of arbitrary favoritism. Abel's heart was filled with faith in the Lord while Cain was merely going through the motions of worshiping God.

2. Describe why Abel's offering and heart were pleasing to God. See Hebrews 11:4.

Abel believed in God's promise of a Savior. Through faith he was a righteous man.

3. Describe why Cain's offering and heart were not pleasing to God. See Hebrews 11:4.

Cain did not believe in God's promise of a Savior. He depended on outward acts rather than the righteousness that comes from God.

Read 1 John 3:12.

1. According to John, why did Cain murder Abel?

Cain was one of the offspring, or seeds, of Satan mentioned in Genesis 3:15. The love of God was not in him. He refused to believe his parents when they told him about God's promise of a Savior. Without faith in Christ's righteousness, nothing he did could please God. When God accepted Abel's sacrifice, Cain couldn't stomach the continual reminder that God wouldn't accept his righteousness and motives. Cain's rejection of God's witness against him led him to murder his own brother.

Read Jude 11.

1. From what we have learned, what was the "way of Cain"? What was the way of Abel?

Cain's sacrifice was an act of work-righteousness. His anger at being rejected led him to kill his brother Abel. Abel's sacrifice was offered in thanks for God's promise of a Savior. Abel's way was to show continual love for God and man.

2. Abel might be described as a reverent person. Webster's dictionary gives several definitions for the word *reverent*. Which do you think fits Abel best? Give reasons for your answer.

- "honor or respect felt or manifested"
- "deference duly paid or expressed"
- "profound respect mingled with love and awe"

All definitions fit. The third captures Luther's statement in his explanation to the Commandments: "We should fear and love God . . ."

3. How does Abel continue to speak today? See Genesis 4:10 and Hebrews 12:24.

Abel's blood cries out from the earth for vengeance. This is not a cry for sinful revenge but a godly cry that God avenge the blood of his saints who have been martyred for their faith. Note that Abel's cry is typical of the cries of all Christian martyrs. See Revelation 6:9,10.

Imitating Abel's faith and life

1. You are probably very familiar with comments like these:

- "I don't need to go to church to be a Christian."
- "No one is going to tell me how much money to give."
- "I don't understand why you won't let us have this song for our wedding! It was playing on the radio when we first met!"