

“By Faith We Understand...”

Hebrews 11:1-6

December 30, 2018

VIDEO: *“It Really Happened...”*

INTRO: Today transitions from “The Gift” of “Christmas-Faith,” to the certainty of *Christian faith*

Having said that... let me ask you a couple questions...

- What would your life look like if you had great, ***bullet proof faith... bullet proof trust... bullet proof confidence in Jesus, the Christ?***
- Do you want (***REALLY WANT***) great faith?

CONTEXT:

- The Bible... New Testament... **waffling church**
- 5 Warnings... New Covenant... **Divine-divider...**
- Hebrews = Information, Inspection, **Inspiration!**

BIG IDEA: *God wants you to KNOW that there is NO SUBSTITUTE for biblical, faith-filled obedience*

Think about this... *When you get right down to it... the fall of mankind was nothing more than a failure of faith... a discontinuation of trust... a failing confidence in God (see Genesis 3)... and to tell the truth, today’s consistent failings & falling continue to be more failure of faith.* - JDP

PREVIEW:

- Biblical Faith **WORSHIPS**
- Biblical Faith is a **WORLDVIEW**
- Biblical Faith **WORKS**

I. Biblical Faith is **WORSHIP**

A. Faith is worship Defined & Described...

1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

- Faith is God's warranty per God's Word...
- ...God's warranty that we hold as His guarantee!

Faith is...

- **F** *Foundational Faith*
 - **Personal Grace Gift** – Ephians 2:8-10
 - **Proclamation Gift** – Romans 10:17
 - **Producing Gift** – Galatians 5
 - **Protective Gift** – Ephesians 6
 - **Power Gift** – 1 Corinthians 12
- **A** *Assertive Faith* – Luke 14:27 & Acts 1:8
- **I** *Inspirational Faith* – Hebrews ch.11
- **T** *Tested Faith* – Hebrews' 5 warnings...
- **H** *Holy Faith* – John 14:15 & 20:21

Biblical faith is an act of biblical worship! – JDP

VIDEO: “Martin Luther’s Meaning of Faith”

B. Faith is worship on Display...

2 *For by it the men of old gained approval.*

This verse & chapter are clear... God makes his approval known to those who trust Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (ESV)

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

1 John 5:12-13 (ESV)

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

II. Faith Is a **WORLDVIEW**

A. Faith DEMANDS...foundational convictions

1. *It’s a “world” vs. neighborhood view!*
2. *These are “rock” vs. “sand” building issues*

*3 By faith we understand that the worlds
were prepared by the word of God,
so that what is seen was not made
out of things which are visible.*

John Calvin reminds us:

*Creation is the theater of God's glory...
in the drama of redemption.*

NOTE: *2 Corinthians 4:4 & 1 Corinthians 2:14 & "wolves"*

B.Faith Divides... Go back to 10:37-39!

- 1. Abel foreshadows Christ...*
- 2. Abel's sacrifice foreshadows the Lamb...*

The first sacrifice was Abel's lamb—one lamb for one person. Later came the Passover—with one lamb for one family. Then came the Day of Atonement—with one lamb for one nation. Finally came Good Friday—one Lamb for the whole world.

- 3. Again.... Biblical faith is "divine divider!"*
- 4. Cain's sacrifice was formal but faithless**
 - a. He is the father of all false-religions*
 - b. He is the first true "apostate"*
 - c. He's Satan's ambassador of worldliness*

The difference between the two was that Abel gave what God wanted, whereas Cain gave what he himself wanted. Abel was obedient and Cain was disobedient. Abel acknowledged his sin. Cain did not.

Cain believed in God, else he would not have brought Him a sacrifice. He acknowledged a supreme being and even that he owed Him some sort of worship. He recognized God, but he did not obey God. He believed in God, but he did not believe God. He thought he could approach God in whatever way he wanted, and expected Him to be impressed and satisfied. In so doing, Cain became the father of all false religion.

C. Faith Disciples ...

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, thru which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Dead men do tell tales...

James Moffatt wrote, *"Death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man. When a man leaves this world, be he righteous or unrighteous, he leaves something in the world. He may leave something that will grow and spread like a cancer or a poison, or he may leave something like the fragrance of perfume or a blossom of beauty that permeates the atmosphere with blessing."*

*** COMMUNION ***

1 John 4:9

God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

VIDEO: *"The Beginning"* - JDP #5

T/S: *Whereas Abel exemplifies worshiping by faith—which must always come first—Enoch exemplifies walking by faith.*

III. Biblical Faith Works

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he (was commended) obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

- A. Biblical faith delivers & defies death...
- B. Biblical faith walks with & pleases God

*The age in which he lived was undoubtedly one of great wickedness. Enoch is selected as the only one of that generation signalized by eminent piety, and he appears to have spent his life in publicly reproving a sinful generation, and in warning them of the approaching judgment, **Jude 1:14,16.** - Barnes*

6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him,

C. Biblical Faith distinguishes the lovers from the liars

Faith honors God and God honors faith.

- Mohler

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (ESV)

...just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

VIDEO: *“Actions of Faith”* – Erik Ludy

6b for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Obedience does not bring faith, but faith will always bring obedience and the desire to live righteously. - MacArthur

Andy Stanley's 5 catalysts for growing one's faith:

1. *Practical biblical teaching*

- a. Sermon on the Mount = "How to live life"
- b. Equipping to BE needs teaching to DO...
- c. Living & BEing requires loving & DOing!

2. *Providential relationships*

- a. Who did God use to get your attention?
- b. Who had Satan used to distract you?
- c. BE on the lookout for:
 - i. The Lord's "Persons of Peace"
 - ii. The Devil's deceiving dividers...
- d. BUILD biblical relationships:
 - i. God's "Persons" (good/bad - see above)
 - ii. God's "Pod" for you (Tim, Barny, Paul)
 - iii. God's "Pose" for you (Life Groups)
 - iv. God's "Platoon" for you (Church family)
 - v. God's "People-group" for you (mission)
 - vi. **NOTE:** *Relationships shape your life...*

Proverbs 13:20 (ESV)

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

3. *Private (spiritual) disciplines*

- a. Disciplines = delayed gratification
- b. Your love & passions have your devotion. - JDP

Matthew 6:1 (ESV)

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

- c. Our time, talent & treasure tell our trust story! - JDP
- d. The exercises that strengthen faith...
- e. Give God your first & your best...
- f. Spiritual obligations become our celebrations...

4. *Personal ministries*

- a. *“Your selfless & sacrificial commitments to God-honoring service that is the fruit of your salvation & a refining aspect of your sanctification.”* – JDP
- b. Get outside your comfort zone to be poured out
- c. *Christ supplies & Christians serve.* – JDP
- d. Give God what you have...then trust (ie. Peter)
 - i. Walking on water = personal trust!
 - ii. **When his faith was sinking, so was he!**

5. *Pivotal circumstances*

- a. Life-changing times in our lives
- b. Some are sweet & positive (new baby)
- c. Most are trying, if not tragic
- d. Some are local, national, even global...
- e. Most are highly personal
 - i. Remember Isaiah 53
 - ii. Remember Laz
 - iii. Remember Romans 8:28

VIDEO: *“Biblical Teaching”* – Andy Stanley

Faith worships, walks, & works for God’s witness!

Faith is that which unites us to the blessings of God. How does one enjoy the blessings of God? By believing that God will make good on his word to shower us with grace if we come to him with the empty hands of faith.

- Christ-Centered Exposition

Faith = hearing+understanding+obedience. - JDP

*** Example:** *hearing & understanding nutrition and exercise does not take the place of eating right & exercising*

- *How you live reveals who/what you love. – JDP*
- *What you believe... determines how you behave...*
- *How you behave... reveals what you really believe!*

CLOSE:

1. Faith reveals God’s **PERSPECTIVE:**
 - a. Authoritative Word of God...
 - b. Awesome WOW & Wonder of our Creator
 - c. Applying Walks & Works matter!
 - d. Absolutes define Worship
 - e. Appreciative Witness

2. Faith reveals God's **PEOPLE**:

- a. Hearers of God's Word
- b. Hebrew heroes
- c. Holy "we"
- d. Abel
- e. Cain
- f. Enoch
- g. Everyone

3. Faith reveals God's **POINTS**:

- a. Defining Doctrines...
 - i. Authority of Scripture
 - ii. Doctrine of Creation
 - iii. Doctrine of Sin
 - iv. Doctrine of Grace
 - v. Doctrine of Mercy
 - vi. Doctrine of Faith
 - vii. Doctrine of Sacrificial Atonement
 - viii. Doctrine of Salvation
 - ix. Doctrine of Sanctification
 - x. Awesomeness of THE Gospel
- b. Divine Disciples/Discipleship are on display here

4. Faith reveals God's **PLEASING**:

- a. God witnesses to our faith by giving more faith...
- b. Walking with & pleasing God brings His witness
- c. Our worship, walk, work, & witness are the fruit of God's witness to our witness...

Great revelation from this passage...

- “Faith” = 6X
- “Commend/Testify/Witness” = 4X
- “Please God/Walk with God” = 2X

*See that our worship brings
God’s witness to us... which will
fuel & feed our pleasing walk
with God.*

5. Herein, Faith reveals God’s Perfecting POWER!
 - a. Faith begets our **WORSHIP**
 - b. Faith births our **WORLDVIEW**
 - c. Faith builds through our **WORKS**
 - d. Faith brings out Divine **WITNESSING!**

Let’s Pray!

Study Notes:

Hebrews Chapter 11

Analysis of the Chapter.

In the close of the previous chapter the apostle had incidentally made mention of faith, [Hebrews 10:38,39](#), and said that the just should live by faith. The object of **the whole argument in this epistle was to keep those to whom it was addressed from apostatizing, from the Christian religion, and especially from relapsing again into Judaism.** They were in the midst of trials, and were evidently suffering some form of persecution, the tendency of which was to expose them to the danger of relapsing. **The indispensable means of securing them from apostasy was faith; and with a view to show its efficacy in this respect, the apostle goes into an extended account of its nature and effects, occupying this entire chapter.** As the persons whom he addressed had been Hebrews, and **as the Old Testament contained an account of numerous instances of persons in substantially the same circumstances in which they were, the reference is made, to the illustrious examples of the efficacy of faith in the Jewish history.**

The object is to show that faith, or confidence in the Divine promises, has been in all ages, the means of perseverance in the true religion, and consequently of salvation.

In this chapter, therefore, the apostle first describes or defines the nature of faith, ([Hebrews 11:1](#)), and then illustrates its efficacy and power by reference to numerous instances, [Hebrews 11:2-40](#).

In these illustrations he refers to the steady belief which we have that God made the worlds, and then to the examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Rahab in particular, and then to numerous other examples without mentioning their names.

The object is to show that there is power in faith to keep tile mind and heart in the midst of trials, and that, having these examples before them, those whom he addressed should continue to adhere steadfastly to the profession of the true religion.

Verse 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for. On the general nature of faith, [Mark 16:10](#). The margin here is, "ground, or confidence." There is scarcely any verse of the New Testament more important than this, for it states what is the nature of all true faith, and is the only definition of it which is attempted in the Scriptures. Eternal life depends on the existence and exercise of faith, ([Mark 16:16](#),) and hence the importance of an accurate understanding of its nature. The word rendered *substance*—[ὑποστασις](#)—occurs in the New Testament only in the following places. In [2 Corinthians 9:4](#), [11:17](#), [Hebrews 3:14](#), where it is rendered *confident* and *confidence*; and in [Hebrews 1:3](#), where it is rendered *person*, and in the passage before us. Comp. [Hebrews 1:3](#). Prof. Stuart renders it here *confidence*; Chrysostom, "Faith gives reality or substance to things hoped for." The word properly means *that which is placed under*, (Germ. *Unterstellen*;) then *ground, basis, foundation, support*. Then it means, also, *reality, substance, existence*, in contradistinction from that which is unreal, imaginary, or deceptive, (*tauschung*.) *Passow*. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here has reference to something which imparts reality in the view of the mind to those things which are not seen, and which serves to distinguish them from those things which are unreal and illusive. It is that which enables us to feel and act *as if* they were real, or which causes them to exert an influence over us *as if* we saw them. Faith does this on all other subjects as well as religion. A belief that there is such a place as London or Calcutta, leads us to act *as if* this were so, if we have occasion to go to either; a belief that money may be made in a certain undertaking, leads men to act *as if* this were so: a belief in the veracity of another leads us to act *as if* this were so. As long as the faith continues, whether it be well-founded or not, it gives all the force of reality to that which is believed. We feel and act *just as if* it were so, or *as if* we saw the object before our eyes. This, I think, is the clear meaning here. We do not

see the things of eternity. We do not see God, or heaven, or the angels, or the redeemed in glory, or the crowns of victory, or the harps of praise; but we have faith in them, and this leads us to act *as if* we saw them. And this is, undoubtedly, the fact in regard to all who live by faith, and who are fairly under its influence.

Of things hoped for. In heaven. Faith gives them reality in the view of the mind. The Christian hopes to be admitted into heaven; to be raised up in the last day from the slumbers of the tomb; to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy. Under the influence of faith he allows these things to control his mind *as if* they were a most affecting reality.

The evidence of things not seen. Of the existence of God; of heaven; of angels; of the glories of the world prepared for the redeemed. The word rendered *evidence* *ελεγχος* occurs in the New Testament only in this place and in [2 Timothy 3:16](#), where it is rendered *reproof*. It means, properly, proof, or means of proving, to wit, evidence; then proof which convinces another of error or guilt; then vindication or defence; then summary or contents. See Pussow. The idea of *evidence* which goes to demonstrate the thing under consideration, or which is adapted to produce *conviction* in the mind, seems to be the elementary idea in the word. So when a proposition is demonstrated; when a man is arraigned, and evidence is furnished of his guilt, or when he establishes his innocence; or when one by argument refutes his adversaries, the idea of *convincing argument* enters into the use of the word in each case. This, I think, is clearly the meaning of the word here. "Faith in the Divine declarations answers all the purposes of a convincing argument, or is itself a convincing argument to the mind, of the real existence of those things which are not seen." But is it a good argument? Is it rational to rely on such a means of being convinced? Is mere *faith* a consideration which should ever convince a rational mind? The infidel says no; and we know there may be a faith which is no argument of the truth of what is believed. But when a man who has never seen it believes that there is such a place as London, his belief in the numerous testimonies respecting it which he has heard and read is, to his mind, a good and rational proof of its existence, and he would act on that belief without hesitation. When a son credits the declaration or the promise of a father who has never deceived him, and acts *as though* that declaration and promise were true, his faith is to him a ground of conviction and of action, and he will act as if these things were so. In like manner the Christian believes what God says. He has never seen heaven; he has

never seen an angel; he has never seen the Redeemer; he has never seen a body raised from the grave; *but he has evidence which is satisfactory to his mind that God has spoken on these subjects*, and his very nature prompts him to confide in the declarations of his Creator. Those declarations are, to his mind, more convincing proof than anything else would be. They are more conclusive evidence than would be the deductions on his own reason; far better and more rational than all the reasonings and declarations of the infidel to the contrary. He feels and acts, therefore, as if these things were so-for his faith in the declarations of God has convinced him that they are so. The object of the apostle, in this chapter, is not to illustrate the nature of what is called *saving faith*, but to show the power of *unwavering confidence in God* in sustaining the soul, especially in times of trial; and particularly in leading us to act, in view of promises and of things not seen, *as if they were so*. "Saving faith" is the same kind of confidence directed to the Messiah-the Lord Jesus-as the Saviour of the soul.

(*) "substance" "ground"

(*) "things" [Romans 8:24,25](#)

Verse 2. *For by it.* That is, by that faith which gives reality to things hoped for, and a certain persuasion to the mind of the existence of those things which are not seen.

The elders. The ancients; the Hebrew patriarchs and fathers.

Obtained a good report. Literally, **"were witnessed of;"**

...an honourable testimony was borne to them in consequence of their faith.

The idea is, that their acting under the influence of faith, in the circumstances in which they were, was the

ground of the honourable testimony which was borne to them in the Old Testament.

See this use of the word in Hebrews 7:8, Hebrews 11:4, as well as Luke 4:22 and Acts 15:8.

In the cases which **the apostle proceeds to enumerate in the subsequent part of the chapter,** he mentions **those whose piety is particularly commended in the Old Testament, and who showed, in trying circumstances, that they had unwavering confidence in God.**

(*) *"understand"* **Genesis 1:1, Psalms 33:6**

v.3. *Thru faith we understand that the worlds were framed.*

The first instance of the strength of faith, which the apostle refers to, is that by which we give credence to the declarations of the Scriptures about the work of creation, **Genesis 1:3,**

This is selected first, evidently, because it is the first thing that occurs in the Bible, or is the first thing there narrated in relation to which there is the exercise of faith.

He points to no particular instance in which this faith was exercised-for none is especially mentioned-but refers to it as an illustration of the nature of faith which every one might observe in himself.

The faith here exercised is confidence in the truth of the Divine declarations in regard to the creation. The meaning is, that our knowledge on this subject is a mere matter of faith in the Divine testimony.

It is not that we could reason this out, and demonstrate that the worlds were thus made; it is not that profane history goes back to that period and informs us of it; it is simply that God has told us so in his word. The *strength* of the faith, in this case, is measured

(1.) by the fact that it is *mere faith*-that there is nothing else on which to rely in the case, and

(2.) by the greatness of the truth believed. After all the acts of faith which have ever been exercised in this world, perhaps there is none which is really more strong, or which requires higher confidence in God, than the declaration that this vast universe has been brought into existence by a word!

We understand. We attain to the apprehension of; we receive and comprehend the idea. Our knowledge of this fact is derived only from faith, and not from our own reasoning.

That the worlds. In Genesis 1:1, it is "the heaven & the earth." The phrase which the apostle uses denotes a plurality of worlds, and is proof that he supposed there were other worlds besides our earth. How far his knowledge extended on this point we have no means of ascertaining; but there is no reason to doubt that he regarded the stars as "worlds," in some respects, like our own. On the meaning of the Greek word used here, Hebrews 1:2. The plural form is used there also, and in both cases, it seems to me, not without design.

Were framed. It is observable that the apostle does not here use the word *make or create*. That which he does use—καταρτιζω—means, to put in order, to arrange, to complete, and may be applied to that which before had an existence, and which is to be put in order or re-fitted, Matthew 4:24, Mark 1:19, Matthew 21:16, Hebrews 10:5. *The meaning here is, that they were set in order by the word of God. This implies the act of creation, but the specific idea is that of arranging them in the beautiful order in which they are now.*

Doddridge renders it "adjusted." Kuinoel, however, supposes that the word is used here in the sense of form or make. It has probably about the meaning which we attach to the phrase "*fitting up anything*"—as, for example, a dwelling—and includes all the previous arrangements, though the thing which is particularly denoted is not the *making*, but the *arrangement*. So in the work here referred to. "We arrive at the conviction that the universe was fitted up or arranged, in the present manner, by the word of God."

By the word of God. This does not mean here, by the Logos, or the second Person of the Trinity, for Paul does not use that term here or elsewhere. The word

which he employs is $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ -rema-meaning, properly, a word spoken, and in this place *command*.

Comp. Genesis 1:3,6,9,11,14,20, Psalms 33:6;

—"*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*"

In regard to the agency of the Son of God in the work of the creation, see [Hebrews 1:2](#); comp. [John 1:3](#).

So that things which are seen. The point of the remark here is, that the visible creation was not moulded out of pre-existing materials, but was made out of nothing.

In reference to the grammatical construction of the passage, see Stuart, Comm. *in loc*. The doctrine taught is, that matter was not eternal; that the materials of the universe, as well as the arrangements, were formed by God, and that all this was done by a simple command.

The *argument* here, so far as it is adapted to the purpose of the apostle, seems to be, that there was nothing which *appeared*, or which was to be *seen*, that could lay the foundation of a belief that God made the worlds; and, in like manner, our faith now is not to be based on what "*appears*," by which we could infer or *reason out* what would be, but that we must exercise strong confidence in Him who had power to create the universe out of nothing.

If this vast universe has been called into existence by the mere word of God, there is nothing which we may not believe he has ample power to perform.

(*) *"understand"*. [Genesis 1:1](#), [Psalms 33:6](#)

[Verse 4](#). *By faith Abel offered.*

See [Genesis 4:4,5](#). In the account in Genesis of the offering made by Abel, there is no mention of faith—as is true also indeed of most of the instances referred to by the apostle. The account in Genesis is, simply, that Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Men have speculated much as to the reason why the offering of Abel was accepted, and that of Cain rejected; but such speculation rests on no certain basis, and the solution of the apostle should be regarded as decisive and satisfactory, that in the one case there was faith, in the other not. It could not have been because an offering of the fruits of the ground was not pleasing to God, for such an offering was commanded under the Jewish law, and was not in itself improper.

Both the brothers selected that which was to them most obvious; which they had reared with their own hands; which they regarded as most valuable. Cain had cultivated the earth, and he naturally brought what had grown under his care; Abel kept a flock, and *he* as naturally brought what he had raised: and had the temper of mind in both been the same, there is no reason to doubt that the offering of each would have been accepted. To this conclusion we are led by the nature of the case, and the apostle advances substantially the same sentiment—for he says that the particular state of mind on which the whole turned was, that the one had faith and the other not. *How* the apostle

himself was informed of the fact, that it was faith which made the difference, he has not informed us. The belief that he was inspired will, however, relieve the subject of this difficulty—for, according to such a belief, all his statements here, whether recorded in the Old Testament or not, are founded in truth. It is equally impossible to tell with certainty what was the nature of the faith of Abel. It has been commonly asserted that it was faith in Christ—looking forward to his coming, and depending on his sacrifice when offering that which was to be a type of him. But of this there is no positive evidence, though, from [Hebrews 12:24](#), it seems to be not improbable. **Sacrifice, as a type of the**

Redeemer's great offering, was instituted early in the history of the world.

There can be no reason assigned for the offering of *blood* as an atonement for sin, except that it had originally a reference to the great atonement which was to be made by blood; and as the salvation of man depended on this entirely, it is probable that that would be one of the truths which would be first communicated to man after the fall. **The bloody offering of Abel is the first of the kind which is definitely mentioned in the Scriptures, (though it is not improbable that such sacrifices were offered by Adam, comp. Genesis 3:21,) and consequently Abel may be regarded as the recorded head of the whole typical system, of which Christ was the antitype and the fulfilment. Hebrews 12:24.**

A more excellent sacrifice. Πλείονα θυσίαν—as rendered by Tindal, "more plenteous sacrifice;" or as Wickliffe renders it, more literally, "a much more sacrifice;" that is, a more full or complete sacrifice; a better sacrifice.

The meaning is, that it had in it much more to render it acceptable to God. In the estimate of its value, the views of him who offered it would be more to be regarded than the nature of the offering itself

By which. By which sacrifice so offered. The way in which he obtained the testimony of Divine approbation was by the sacrifice offered in this manner. It was not merely by faith; it was by the offering of a sacrifice in connexion with, and under the influence of faith.

He obtained witness that he was righteous. from God.

His offering, made in faith, was the means of his obtaining the Divine testimonial that he was a righteous man.

[Hebrews 11:2](#). This is implied in what is said in [Genesis 4:4](#): "*And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering;*" that is, he regarded it as the offering of a righteous man.

God testifying of his gifts. In what way this was done is not mentioned either here or in Genesis. Commentators have usually supposed that it was by fire descending from heaven to consume the sacrifice. But there is no evidence of this, for there is no intimation of it in the Bible. It is true that this frequently occurred when an offering was made to God, (see [Genesis 15:17](#), [Leviticus 9:24](#), [Judges 6:21](#), [1 Kings 18:38](#);) but the sacred writers give us no hint that this happened in the case of the sacrifice made by Abel; and since it is expressly mentioned in other cases and not here, the presumption rather is that no such miracle occurred on the occasion. So remarkable a fact-the first one in all history if it were so-could hardly have failed to be noticed by the sacred writer. It seems to me, therefore, that there was some method by which God "testified" his approbation of the offering of Abel which is unknown to us, but in regard to what it was conjecture is vain.

And by it he, being dead, yet speaketh. Marg. *Is yet spoken of.* This difference of translation arises from a difference of reading in the MSS. That from which the translation in the text is derived, is *λαλει*-*he speaketh*. That from which the rendering in the margin is derived, is *λαλειται* *is spoken of*; that is, is praised or commended. The latter is the common reading in the Greek text, and is found in Walton, Wetstein, Matthaei, Tittman, and Mill; the former is adopted by Griesbach, Koppe, Knapp, Grotius, Hammond, Storr, Rosenmuller, Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield, and Hahn, and is found in the Syriac and Coptic, and is that which is favoured by most of the Fathers. See Wetstein. The authority of Mss. is in favour of the reading *λαλειται*-*is spoken of*. It is impossible, in this variety of opinion, to determine which is the true reading, and this is one of the cases where the original text must probably be for ever undecided. Happily, no important doctrine or duty is depending on it. Either of the modes of reading will give a good sense. The apostle is saying that **it is by faith that the "elders have obtained a good report,"** ([Hebrews 11:2](#);) he had said, ([Hebrews 11:4](#);) that it was by faith that Abel obtained the testimony of God in his favour; and if the reading "is spoken of" be adopted, the apostle means that, in consequence of that offering thus made, Abel continued even to his time to receive an honourable mention. This act was commended still; and the "good report," of which it had been the occasion, had been transmitted from age to age.

A sentiment thus of great beauty and value may be derived from the passage—that true piety is the occasion of transmitting a good report, or an honourable reputation, even down to the latest generation.

It is that which will embalm the memory in the grateful recollection of mankind; that on which they will reflect with pleasure, and which they will love to transmit to future ages. But, after all, it seems to me to be probable that the true sentiment in this passage is that which is expressed in the common version, "he yet speaketh." The reasons are briefly these:

(1.) The authority of Mss., versions, editions, and critics, is so nearly equal, that it is impossible from this source to determine the true reading; and we must, therefore, form our judgment from the connexion.

(2.) The apostle had twice in this verse expressed substantially the idea that he was honourably testified of by his faith, and it is hardly probable that he would again repeat it so soon.

(3.) There seems to be an allusion here to the *language* used respecting Abel, ([Genesis 4:10](#)), "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground;"- or utters a distinct voice-and the apostle seems to design to represent Abel as still speaking.

(4.) **In Hebrews 12:24, he represents both Abel and Christ as still speaking-as if Abel continued to utter a voice of admonition.** The reference there is to the fact that he continued to proclaim from age to age, even to the time of the apostle, the great truth that salvation was only by *blood*.

He had proclaimed it at first by his faith when he offered the sacrifice of the lamb; he continued to speak from generation to generation, and to show that it was one of the earliest principles of religion that there could be redemption from sin in no other way.

(5.) The expression "*yet speaketh*" accords better with the connexion. The other interpretation is cold compared with this, and less fits the case before us.

Of the faith of Noah, Abraham, and Moses, it might be said with equal propriety that it is still commended or celebrated as well as that of Abel, but the apostle evidently means to say that there was a voice in that of Abel which was peculiar; there was something in his life and character which continued to speak from age to age. His sacrifice, his faith, his death, his blood, all continued to lift up the voice, and to proclaim the excellence and value of confidence in God, and to admonish the world how to live.

(6.) This accords with usage in classic writers, where it is common to say of the dead that they continue to speak. Comp. Virg. AEn. vi. 618

**Et magna testatur voce per umbras:
Discite justitiam moniti, et non tetonere Divos.**

If this be the true meaning, then the sense is, that there is an influence from the piety of Abel which continues to admonish all coming ages of the value of religion, and especially of the great doctrine of the necessity of an atonement by blood. His faith and his sacrifice proclaimed from age to age that this was one of the first great truths made known to fallen man; and on this he continues to address the world as if he were still living. Thus *all who are pious continue to exert an influence in favour of religion long after the soul is removed to heaven, and the body consigned to the grave.* This is true in the following respects,

(1.) They speak by their example. The example of a pious father, mother, neighbour, will be remembered. *It will often have an effect after their death in influencing those over whom it had little control while living.*

(2.) They continue to speak by their precepts. *The precepts of a father may be remembered, with profit, when he is in his grave, though they were heard with indifference when he lived; the counsels of a minister may be recollected with benefit, though they were heard with scorn.*

(3.) They continued to speak from the fact that the good are remembered with increasing respect and honour as long as they are remembered at all. The character of Abel, Noah, and Abraham, is brighter now than it was when they lived, and will continue to grow brighter to the end of time.

"The name of the wicked will rot," and the influence which they had when living will grow feebler and feebler, till it wholly dies away.

Howard will be remembered, and will proclaim from age to age the excellence of a life of benevolence; the character of Nero, Caligula, and Richard III., has long since ceased to exert *any* influence whatever in favour of evil, but rather shows the world, by contrast, the excellence of virtue; and the same will yet be true of Paine, and Voltaire, and Byron, and Gibbon, and Hume. The time will come when they shall cease to exert any influence in favour of infidelity and sin; and when the world shall be so satisfied of the error of their sentiments, and the abuse of their talents, and the corruption of their hearts, that their names, by contrast, will be made to promote the cause of piety and virtue. If a man wishes to exert any permanent influence after he is dead, he should be a good man. The *strength* of the faith of Abel, here commended, will be seen by a reference to a few circumstances.

(1.) It was manifested shortly after the apostasy, and not long after the fearful sentence had been pronounced in view of the sin of man. The serpent had been cursed; the earth had been cursed; woe had been denounced on the mother of mankind; and the father of the apostate race, and all his posterity, doomed to toil and death. The thunder of this curse had scarcely died away; man had been ejected from Paradise, and sent out to enter on his career of woes, and the earth was trembling under the malediction, and yet Abel maintained his confidence in God.

(2.) There was then little truth revealed, and only the slightest intimation of mercy. The promise in [Genesis 3:5](#), that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, is so enigmatical and obscure, that it is not easy even now to see its exact meaning—and it cannot be supposed that Abel could have had a full understanding of what was denoted by it. Yet this appears to have been *all* the truth respecting the salvation of man then revealed, and on this Abel maintained his faith steadfast in God.

(3.) Abel had an elder brother, undoubtedly an infidel, a scoffer, a mocker of religion. He was evidently endowed with a talent for sarcasm, ([Genesis 4:9](#);) and there is no reason to doubt, that, like other infidels and scoffers, he would be disposed to use that talent when occasion offered, to hold up religion to contempt. The power with which he used this, and the talent with which he did this, may be seen illustrated, probably with melancholy fidelity, in Lord Byron's, "Cain." No man ever lived who could more forcibly express the feelings that passed through the mind of Cain—for there is too much reason to think that his extraordinary talents were employed, on this occasion, to give vent to the feelings of his own heart, in the sentiments put into the mouth of Cain. Yet, notwithstanding the infidelity of his elder brother, Abel adhered to God and his cause. Whatever influence that infidel brother might have sought to use over him—and there can be no reason to doubt that such an influence *would* be attempted—yet he never swelled, but maintained with steadfastness his belief in religion, and his faith in God.

(*) "Abel offered" [Genesis 4:4,5](#)

(*) "yet speaketh" "is yet spoken of"

Verse 5. *By faith Enoch was translated.*

The account of Enoch is found in Genesis 5:21-24.

It is very brief, and is this, that "*Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*"

There is no particular mention of his faith...

...and the apostle attributes this to him, as in the case of Abel, either because it was involved in the very nature of piety, or because the fact was communicated to him by direct revelation.

In the account in Genesis, *there is nothing inconsistent with the belief that Enoch was characterized by eminent faith, but it is rather implied in the expression, "he walked with God."*

Comp. 2 Corinthians 5:7.

It may also be implied in what is said by the apostle Jude, (Jude 1:14,15), that "he prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," etc.

From this it would appear that he was a preacher; that he predicted the coming of the Lord to judgment, and that he lived in the firm belief of what was to occur in future times.

Moses does not say expressly that Enoch was translated. He says "he was not, for God took him." **The expression "he was not," means he was no more among men; or he was removed from the earth.**

*This language would be applicable to any method by which he was removed, whether by dying, or by being translated. A similar expression respecting Romulus occurs in Livy, (i. 16,) Nec deinde in tetris Romulus fuit. The translation of the Septuagint on this part of the verse in Genesis is, ουχ ευρισκετο—"was not found;" that is, he disappeared. The authority for what the apostle says here that he "was translated," is found in the other phrase in Genesis, **"God took him."** The reasons which led to the statement that he was translated without seeing death, or that show that this is a fair conclusion from the words in Genesis, are such as these.*

(1.) **There is no mention made of his death, and in this respect the account of Enoch stands by itself. It is, except in this case, the uniform custom of Moses to mention the age and the death of the individuals whose biography he records, and in many cases this is about all that is said of them. But in regard to Enoch there is this remarkable exception, that no record is made of his death—showing that there was something unusual in the manner of his removal from the world.**

(2.) The Hebrew word used by Moses, found in such a connexion, is one which would rather suggest the idea that he had been taken, in some extraordinary manner from the world. That word **קָחַ** means, *to take*—with the idea of taking *to one's self*. Thus, **Genesis 8:20**, "Noah *took* of all beasts, and offered a burnt-offering." Thus it is often used in the sense of *taking a wife*—that is, to one's self, (**Genesis 4:19, 6:2, 12:19, 19:14;**) and then it is used in the sense of *taking away*, (**Genesis 14:12, 27:35, Job 1:21 Genesis 12:20, Psalms 31:13, Jeremiah 15:15.**) The word, therefore, would naturally suggest the idea that he had been taken by God to himself, or had been removed in an extraordinary manner from the earth. This is confirmed by the fact that the word is

not used anywhere in the Scriptures to denote a removal *by death*, and that in the only other instance in which it לָקַח is used in relation to a removal from this world, it occurs in the statement respecting the translation of Elijah. "And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel, came forth to Elisha, and said to him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away (לָקַח) thy master from thy head to-day?" 2 Kings 2:3,6; comp. Hebrews 11:11. This transaction, where there could be no doubt about the manner of the removal, shows in what sense the word is used in Genesis.

(3.) It was so understood by the translators of the Septuagint. The apostle has used the same word in this place which is employed by the Seventy in Genesis 5:24-μετατίθημι.

This word means to transpose, to put in another place; and then to transport, transfer, translate, Acts 7:16, Hebrews 7:12.

It properly expresses the removal to another place, and is the very word which would be used on the supposition that one was taken to heaven without dying.

(4.) This interpretation of the passage in Genesis by Paul is in accordance with the uniform interpretation of the Jews. In the Targum of Onkelos it is evidently supposed that Enoch was translated without dying. In that Targum the passage in Gen. v. 24 is rendered, "And Enoch walked in the fear of the Lord, and was not, for the Lord did not put him to death"— לֹא־אָמַיִת נָתַיָהּ נְיִ So also in Ecclesiasticus or the Son of Sirach, v: (xlix. 14,) "But upon the earth was no man created like Enoch; for he was taken from the earth." These opinions of the Jews and of the early translators, are of value only as showing that the interpretation which Paul has put upon Genesis 5:24 is the natural interpretation. It is such as occurs to separate writers, without collusion, and this shows that this is the meaning most naturally suggested by the passage.

That he should not see death. That is, that he should not experience death, or be made personally acquainted with it. The word *taste* often occurs in the same sense. Hebrews 2:9, "*That he should taste death for every man,*" Comp Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27.

And was not found. Genesis 5:24: "*And he was not.*" That is, he was not in the land of the living. Paul retains the word used in the Septuagint.

He had this testimony, that he pleased God. Implied in the declaration in Genesis 5:22, that *he "walked with God."*

This denotes a state of friendship between God and him, and of course implies that his conduct was pleasing to God.

The apostle appeals here to the sense of the account in Genesis, but does not retain the very words. The meaning here is not that the testimony respecting Enoch was actually given before his translation, but that the testimony relates to his having pleased God before he was removed. *Stuart.* In regard to this instructive fragment of history, and to the reasons why Enoch was thus removed, we may make the following remarks.

(1.) The age in which he lived was undoubtedly one of great wickedness. Enoch is selected as the only one of that generation signalized by eminent piety, and he appears to have spent his life in publicly reproving a sinful generation, and in warning them of the approaching judgment, Jude 1:14,16.

The wickedness which ultimately led to the universal deluge seems already to have commenced in the earth, and Enoch, like Noah, his great-grandson, was raised up as a preacher of righteousness to reprove a sinful generation.

(2.) It is not improbable that the great truths of religion in that age were extensively denied; and probably, among other things, the future state, the resurrection, the belief that man would exist in another world, and that it was maintained that death was the end of being—was an eternal sleep. If so, nothing could be better adapted to correct the prevailing evils than the removal of an eminent man, without dying, from the world. His departure would thus confirm the instructions of his life; and his removal, like the death of saints often now, would serve to make an impression which his living instructions would not.

(3.) His removal is, in itself, a very important and instructive fact in history. It has occurred in no other instance except that of Elijah; nor has any other living man been translated to heaven except the Lord Jesus. That fact was instructive in a great many respects.

(a.) It showed that there was a future state—another world.

(b.) It showed that the body might exist in that future state-though doubtless so changed as to adapt it to the condition of things there.

(c.) **It prepared the world to credit the account of the ascension of the Redeemer. If Enoch and Elijah were removed thus without dying, there was no intrinsic improbability that the Lord Jesus would be removed after having died and risen again.**

(d.) **It furnishes a demonstration of the doctrine that the saints will exist hereafter, which meets all the arguments of the sceptic and the infidel.**

One single fact overturns all the mere speculations of philosophy, and renders nugatory all the objections of the sceptic. The infidel argues against the truth of the resurrection, and of the future state, from the difficulties attending the doctrine. A single case of one who has been raised up from the dead, or who has been removed to heaven, annihilates all such arguments-for how can supposed difficulties destroy a well authenticated fact?

(e.) **It is an encouragement to piety. It shows that God regards his friends; that their fidelity and holy living please him; and that *in the midst of eminent wickedness and a scoffing world, it is possible so to live as to please God.* The conduct of this holy man, therefore, is an encouragement to us to do our duty, though we stand alone; and to defend the truth, though all who live with us upon the earth deny and deride it.**

(4.) **The removal of Enoch shows that the same thing would be possible in the case of every saint.** God could do it in other cases, as well as in his, with equal ease. That his friends, therefore, are suffered to remain on the earth—that they linger on in enfeebled health, or are crushed by calamity, or are stricken: down by the pestilence as others are, is not because God *could* not remove them, as Enoch was, without dying, but because there is some important reason why they should remain, and linger, and suffer, and die. Among those reasons may be such as the following:

(a.) The regular operation of the laws of nature, as now constituted, require it. Vegetables die; the inhabitants of the deep die; the fowls that fly in the air, and the beasts that roam over hills and plains die; and man, by his sins, is brought under the operation of this great universal law. It would be *possible*, indeed, for God to save his people from this law, but it would require the interposition of continued *miracles*; and it is better to have the laws of nature regularly operating, than to have them constantly set aside by Divine interposition.

(b.) **The power of religion is now better illustrated in the way in which the saints are actually removed from the earth, than it would be if they were all translated. Its power is now seen in its enabling us to overcome the dread of death, and in its supporting us in the pains and sorrows of the departing hour. It is a good thing to discipline the soul so that it will not fear to die; it shows how superior religion is to all the forms of philosophy, that it enables the believer to look calmly forward to his own certain approaching death. It is an important matter to keep this up from age to age,** and to show to each generation that religion can overcome the natural apprehension of the most fearful calamity which befalls a creature—death; and can make man calm in the prospect of lying beneath the clods of the valley, cold, dark, alone, to moulder back to his native dust.

(c.) **The death of the Christian does good.**

The death of the Christian preaches to the living. The calm resignation, the peace, the triumph of the dying believer, is a constant admonition to a thoughtless and wicked world. The deathbed of the Christian proclaims the mercy of God from generation to generation...

...and there is not a dying saint who may not, and who probably *does* not do great good in the closing hours of his earthly being.

(d.) It may be added, that the present arrangement falls in with the general laws of religion, that we are to be influenced by faith, not by sight. If all Christians were removed like Enoch, it would be an argument for the truth of religion addressed constantly to the senses. But this is not the way in which the evidence of the truth of religion is proposed to man. It is submitted to his understanding, his conscience, his heart; and in this there is of design a broad distinction between religion and other things.

Men act, in other matters, under the influence of the senses; it is designed that in religion they shall act under the influence of higher and nobler considerations, and that they shall be influenced not solely by a reference to what is passing before their eyes, but to the things which are not seen.

(*) "Enoch was translated" [Genesis 5:22,24](#)

Verse 6. *But without faith it is impossible to please him.*

Without *confidence* in God - in his fidelity, his truth, his wisdom, his promises. And this is as true in other things as in religion. It is impossible for a child to please his father unless he has confidence in him. It is impossible for a wife to please her husband, or a husband a wife, unless they have confidence in each other. If there is distrust and jealousy on either part, there is discord and misery. We cannot be pleased with a professed friend unless he has such confidence in us as to believe our declarations and promises. The same thing is true of God.

He cannot be pleased with the man who has no confidence in him; who doubts the truth of his declarations and promises; who does not believe that his ways are right, or that he is qualified for universal empire. The requirement of faith or confidence in God is not arbitrary; it is just what we require of our children, and partners in life, and friends, as the indispensable condition of our being pleased with them.

For he that cometh to God. In any way - as a worshipper. This is alike required in public worship, in the family, and in secret devotion.

Must believe that he is. That God exists.

Believing/having faith that God exists, is the first thing required in worship.

We cannot come to him in an acceptable manner if we doubt his existence. We do not see him, but we must believe that he is; we cannot form in our mind a correct image of God, but this should not prevent a conviction that there is such a Being. But the declaration here implies more than that there should be a general

persuasion of the truth that there is a God. It is necessary that we have this belief in lively exercise in the act of drawing near to him, and that we should realize that we are actually in the presence of the all-seeing JEHOVAH.

And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

That He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him is equally necessary as the belief that he exists.

If we could not believe that God would hear and answer our prayers, there could be no encouragement to call upon him. It is not meant here that the desire of the reward is to be the motive for seeking God-for the apostle makes no affirmation on that point; but that **it is impossible to make an acceptable approach to him unless we have this belief.**

(*) "*him*" [Psalms 105:21,22](#)

- Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

[Hebrews 11:1-10](#)

Main Idea: Our Old Testament forefathers received the salvific blessings of God by faith. New covenant believers receive these blessings by faith as well and so must emulate the faith of those who came before.

- I. **An Invested Assurance ([11:1-2](#))**
- II. **Abel's Faith ([11:3-4](#))**
 - A. Walking by faith
 - B. A faith that still speaks
- III. **Enoch's Faith ([11:5-6](#))**
 - A. Enoch's example
 - B. Faith's impossibilities
 - C. Reason for faith
- IV. **Noah's Faith ([11:7](#))**
 - A. Noah's reverence
 - B. Justified by faith
- V. **Abraham's Faith ([11:8-10](#))**
 - A. Faith of a foreigner
 - B. Faithful living for a promised future

[Hebrews 11](#) is one of the most familiar passages in the entire Bible; it's the so-called hall of faith. While familiarity with certain passages in Scripture is wonderful, it can also be dangerous. We may become so accustomed to the words of a chapter that we lose sight of their meaning and function within the section's larger context.

[Hebrews 11](#) comes after a repeated series of warnings to the original audience. The author has been reminding his congregation not to take the gospel lightly and not to have a superficial understanding of sin ([10:31](#)). Indeed, he even warns them what is in store for those who spurn the Son of God and set aside the gospel ([10:29](#)).

[Hebrews 10:32-39](#) connects the admonitions and exhortations of [chapter 10](#) to [chapter 11](#).

“Remember the earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings” ([10:32](#)). These are words we need to remember as we enter into chapter 11 . We must remember the “hard struggle” that the audience is called to endure in the midst of persecutions and trials.

As the author reminds them, *“We are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved” ([10:39](#)).* **Notice the theme here:**

perseverance. Perseverance is the demonstration of faith. Faith is grounded in what God has done for us in Christ. The author expresses confidence that his audience's endurance

of persecution for the sake of Christ is a demonstration of their faith. **This leads us right into the main subject of [Hebrews 11](#).**

Additionally, as I have already mentioned many times, one of the author's primary goals is to teach us how to read the Old Testament.

Christians must read the Old Testament Christologically. God embedded in the history of redemption types and shadows that pointed forward to Jesus Christ. Thus, from Genesis to Revelation the Bible tells one story—the story of the grace of God found only in Jesus Christ.

Yet, we must also remember that reading the Old Testament Christologically does not mean we are imposing something on the Old Testament that is not already there. In fact, **one of the most important hermeneutical observations we can glean from Hebrews 11 is that the true people of God in the Old Testament (those with circumcised hearts) understood that the old covenant and all of its attendant features pointed forward to a Messiah.**

This was something they received *by faith*.

In other words, just as by faith we look back to the cross of Christ and his resurrection to receive the salvific grace of God, so too did the Old Testament saints look forward, through the types and shadows of the old covenant, to the Messiah. They thereby received the salvific blessings of God by faith.

An Invested Assurance

[Hebrews 11:1-2](#)

“Approval” does not just refer to temporary material blessings. Rather, this is the final eschatological approval—an eternal commendation instead of an eternal condemnation. It is important to remember that these are the only two options: commendation or condemnation. There is no third alternative. On the day of judgment, we will either be approved in Christ or we will be condemned without him.

How did the people of old win God’s approval? In other words, why were the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel commended? This is not just an important question theologically; it is a particularly important question for the writer and for the original audience. **In light of what has come before in this epistle, it would be natural for these Jewish Christians to be thinking, So what about Abraham? What about Moses? How were they included in this story of God’s grace to us in Christ?** The author plainly answers that these men and women received their approval because they exercised faith.

Paul makes this same point in Romans 4:1-12. Abraham was counted righteous before God because of his faith (see [Gen 15:6](#)).

These passages demonstrate the consistent and clear New Testament teaching that the redeemed from Israel who lived before the death and resurrection of Christ were saved because they trusted God to be faithful to his promises. Their faith was a messianic faith. They had an assurance that they invested in the promises of God. They hoped in things yet unseen, in a deliverer that had been promised but had not yet come.

Abel's Faith

[Hebrews 11:3-4](#)

In [verse 3](#) the author indicates that *just as we begin our Christian lives by faith, we also embrace the Christian worldview through faith in the Word of God. We were not eyewitnesses to creation. Simply put, we were not there to experience it. We affirm the divine creation of the cosmos because by faith we receive it from Scripture and affirm with Scripture that everything exists to display God's glory.*

Even more, as [Calvin reminds us](#):

creation is the theater of God's glory in the drama of redemption.

We know this by faith.

Walking by Faith

[Hebrews 11:4](#) begins the catalog of biblical characters who function as exemplars of faith.

This catalog is interesting on numerous accounts, if nothing else because it provides a great deal of information that we would not know merely by reading the Old Testament. **The introductory words *by faith* not only introduce the main theological point of the chapter but also structure the text and provide a powerful rhetorical device for getting our attention.**

Furthermore, **repeating *by faith* also teaches us to avoid the error of moralizing the Old Testament stories. This happens quite often among evangelicals, particularly in children's Sunday school**

curricula: “Be like Moses, not like Pharaoh.” While the Old Testament narratives do indeed contain moral lessons we ought to learn, the author reminds us that these moral lessons are not the main point. We must remember that the moral lessons of the Old Testament come within the context of the storyline of the gospel. The writer draws some hortatory applications from these individuals, but he does so while reminding us that *the reason these men lived as they did was because they walked by faith—looking to a Redeemer.*

A Faith That Still Speaks

The first “by faith” story mentioned is that of Abel. In [Genesis 4](#) Moses indicates that Abel offered a sacrifice from his flock whereas Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. There is of course nothing wrong with offering a sacrifice from a harvest. As a matter of fact, God demanded the firstfruits of the harvest in his statutes given to Israel later in the Old Testament. **So why did God accept Abel’s sacrifice but not Cain’s offering? Genesis does not answer that question. The rest of the Old Testament, however, provides a few hints** as to why Abel’s offering was accepted. For example, earlier in Hebrews we saw that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” ([Heb 9:22](#)). We see then that **Abel’s sacrifice was in some sense foreshadowing the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament and thus the sacrifice of Christ.** Abel understood that his greatest problem was that he was under divine judgment, and he needed a propitiatory sacrifice. His blood sacrifice pointed to his own sin and to his hope in God’s provision of a sacrificial Savior. This is why Abel’s sacrifice was “acceptable” to God: it was offered “by faith” in God’s promises ([Gen 4:4](#)).

The final statement, “even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith,” is both tremendously interesting and encouraging. Think about it this way: **what will be said at your funeral? What words are going to make up the content of your eulogy?** How will your life be summarized in fifteen minutes of reflection? **Hopefully, we will all leave the type of testimony left by**

Abel: though he was dead, his life bore witness to the grace and mercy found only in a substitutionary sacrifice.

Christians should aspire to leave behind a legacy of faith. They should aspire to leave their eulogists a wealth of material that testifies to the saving power of Jesus Christ, just as Abel did. His faith testified to the greatness of Christ even beyond the extent of his life.

Enoch's Faith

[Hebrews 11:5-6](#)

The Old Testament characters the author chooses to highlight in this chapter are remarkable. We would expect to find many of them. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many of the other Old Testament figures mentioned are major Old Testament characters. But sometimes the author of Hebrews highlights a minor character, someone we might never expect to see in the Bible's own "hall of faith." This is certainly the case when we read about Enoch in [verse 5](#).

Enoch's Example

We know little about Enoch. In fact, he is mentioned in only a few verses in Genesis:

Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. And after he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. So Enoch's life lasted 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him. ([Gen 5:21-24](#))

The account of God "taking" Enoch is not very descriptive. In other words, here we have recorded a remarkable end to the life of Enoch, yet we know almost nothing about him and the extraordinary event that ended his life. The only other time in the Old Testament where something similar happens is with the case of Elijah, who was taken to heaven by a fiery chariot.

The author does, however, tell us something important about Enoch: the miraculous end to his life here on earth was a result of his faith. Enoch's faith honored God; thus, God commended Enoch so that "he did not experience death."

Faith honors God and God honors faith.

Enoch is the prime example of this reality. His faith was a pleasing aroma before God.

Faith's Impossibilities

The author uses Enoch and Abel as his Old Testament proofs of the theological assertion found in [verse 6](#): “without faith it is impossible to please God.”

These words teach us two important theological truths.

***First,** without faith it is impossible to be commended. While works of external righteousness and general morality may commend us before men, these things are not sufficient to commend us before God. Humanitarianism, religiosity, morality, and following the most scrupulous personal ethical codes cannot bring us God's approval on the day of judgment. Without faith it is impossible to please God. There is no divine commendation for anyone who walks uprightly (by the world's standards) without placing faith in Jesus Christ.*

***Second,** with faith it is impossible to be condemned. This, of course, is the glory of the gospel. The righteousness of Christ is credited to us...*

...such that even our worst sins and most atrocious deeds cannot separate us from the love of God. By faith in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice and resurrection, we can have confidence that we cannot be condemned. As Paul says in [Romans 8:38-39](#),

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Reason for Faith

This leads us directly to the final clause of [verse 6](#): “*the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*”

Faith is that which unites us to the blessings of God.

It trusts the promises of God and recognizes that he is not a greedy miser; God is a gracious giver, a “rewarder” of those who trust in his goodness.

This clause makes two primary affirmations: first, we accept the existence of God by faith, and second, we accept the promises of God by faith.

Of course, to say that we accept the existence of God by faith is not to claim that we accept the reality of God's existence against reason. As the history of theology and philosophy has shown, there are many good reasons to believe in the existence of God and even more reasons not to be an atheist. Some of the best and most time-tested arguments for theism are what we call the “classical proofs” for God's existence (the teleological argument, the moral argument, the cosmological argument, and so on). Yet the author of Hebrews reminds us that the ultimate reason we accept the existence of God is because we believe that he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ and that he has spoken in Scripture ([1:1-2](#)).

This should not scare Christians. All convictions on ultimate authority are based on faith commitments. *Norman Geisler and Frank Turek hint at this in the title of their book, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. In other words, it is not that Christians are people of faith and atheists are people of reason. Everyone has an ultimate intellectual starting place, a system of beliefs that are basic to their worldview. Atheists operate from a worldview that is based on a set of assumptions and presuppositions that they have received by faith: secular naturalism and materialism. The Christian, however, accepts the biblical worldview as his ultimate intellectual starting point—again, not against evidence and reason but in concert with them.*

The second assertion, “that he rewards those who seek him,” reminds us of the grace of the gospel. God is a “rewarder” because he gives grace and mercy to those who trust in his promises. In the gospel, God makes promises of salvation and declarations about the goodness of his character. When we trust those promises and believe those declarations, he fulfills his word and rewards us with his kindness. **What a glorious truth!**

How does one enjoy the blessings of God? By believing that God will make good on his word to shower us with grace if we come to him with the empty hands of faith.

11:1-40 This famous discourse on faithful men and women of the Old Testament begins and ends with commentary that alerts the reader to the specific aspect of Old Testament faith highlighted here—the certainty of receiving what God has promised but not yet given (vv. 1, 2, 39, 40).

11:1 things hoped for ... things not seen.

*For the time being, only faith can see the future,
as it receives the promises of God.*

11:2 *received their commendation.*

God declared that they were righteous by faith

(v. 4 note), as is explicitly stated regarding Abel and Enoch (vv. 4, 5; cf. v. 39).

11:3 Although no human witnessed the creation, we know from Scripture that God brought the world into being through His Word (Ps. 33:6, 9).

We discern that "what is seen" is not ultimate, self-existent reality.

11:4 a more acceptable sacrifice.

The principle that sacrifices were worthless without faith was true from the beginning (cf. 10:4 note).

It was for Christ alone to offer not only a better but a perfect sacrifice.

commended ... commending.

The Greek word used twice in this verse is also found in vv. 2, 5, & 39.
Abel is the first example of one who received this divine commendation as a righteous one who lived by faith (cf. [10:38](#); [Rom. 1:17](#)). The entire chapter offers such examples.

still speaks. As one of the "*cloud of witnesses*" ([12:1](#)).

[11:5](#) As one who did "*not see death*" (cf. [Gen. 5:18-24](#)), *Enoch prefigured the deliverance from death into which Jesus leads the faithful.*

pleased God. Pleasing God is the criterion of appropriate worship ([12:28](#); [13:16, 21](#); [Rom. 12:1](#); [Phil. 4:18](#)).

11:6 *Faith is an absolute necessity, whether to perceive the things for which we should hope (v. 1), to understand that God is the Creator of all (v. 3), or to offer acceptable worship (v. 4).*

See "*Pleasing God*" at 1 Thess. 2:4.

It is a familiar truth that every Christian's overriding purpose must be to glorify God.

Everything we say and do, our relationships with others, the use we make of the gifts and opportunities God gives us, and even our enduring of adverse situations and human hostility, must be managed so as to give God honor and praise for His wisdom and goodness (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. Matt. 5:16; Eph. 3:10; Col. 3:17).

Equally important is the truth that every Christian has a personal calling to please God.

Jesus did not live to please Himself, nor may we (John 8:29; Rom. 15:1-3). Faith (Heb. 11:5, 6), praise (Ps. 69:30, 31), generosity (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16), obedience to divinely instituted authority (Col. 3:20), and single-mindedness in Christian service (2 Tim. 2:4), are all ways of pleasing our Creator. God enables us to live according to the Bible and takes pleasure in us as we serve Him. In His sovereign grace He gives what He commands and delights in the result (Heb. 13:21; cf. Phil. 2:12, 13).

We please God through our relationship with Him.

Abraham was called God's friend (2 Chr. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23), and Christ called His disciples His friends (Luke 12:4; John 15:14). Under divine inspiration, Paul compares the church to the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:32; cf. Rev. 21:2). Like friends and family members, God and His people have pleasure in each other.

We also please God through imitating His deeds. His love in us is living and active, compelling His people to use their talents and energies in all kinds of activities. (Deut. 10:17-19; Luke 6:35, 36).

What Faith Is ([Hebrews 11:1-3](#))

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. ([11:1-3](#))

"The Saints' Hall of Fame," "The Heroes of Faith," "The Honor Roll of the Old Testament Saints," "The Westminster Abbey of Scripture," and "The Faith Chapter" are but a few of the titles that have been given to [Hebrews 11](#). This chapter deals with the primacy and the excellency of faith, and fits perfectly into the flow of the epistle, that the new is better than the old.

First-century Jews saw everything as a matter of works. Even after being shown the basic truths of the New Covenant, the tendency was for them to try to fit these new principles into the mold of works righteousness.

By the time of Christ, Judaism was no longer the supernatural system God had originally given. It had been twisted into a works system, with all kinds of legalistic requirements. It was a system of self-effort, self-salvation, and self-glorification. It was far from the faith system that God had given. In many ways it was a religious cult built on ethics. (And even the divinely ordained Judaism was falsified without its fulfillment in Christ.)

As all works systems, it was despised by God—particularly because it was a corruption of the true system He had given.

God has never redeemed man by works, but always by faith
(cf. [Hab. 2:4](#)).

As this chapter makes clear, from the time of Adam on, God has honored faith, not works. Works have always been commanded as a by-product of faith, never as a means of salvation. God does not tolerate any self-imposed ethical system as a means of reaching Him.

This theme of faith connects with chapter 10, where the writer has already presented the principle of salvation by faith, of which the saints named in chapter 11 are examples. He quoted from Habakkuk, a Jewish prophet, reinforcing the truth that this was the principle of redemption that God had always honored.

"But My righteous one shall live by faith" ([Heb. 10:38](#); [Hab. 2:4](#)).

*Faith is the way to life, and faith is the way to live.
There has never been any other way.*

These Jews who have heard the powerful arguments for the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old are being told that, in regard to faith, the two covenants are the same. That is, the faith principle did not originate with the New Covenant. It was also active in the Old.

In fact...

...it was active the moment man fell and needed a way back to God. It originated even before the earth began. Since God chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world" ([Eph. 1:4](#)), and since the only way God accepts us in Christ is by our faith, then God obviously established salvation by faith at that time. The way back to God, as far as man's part is concerned, is by faith—it has always been by faith and only by faith.

Between the statement of the faith principle and the long list of Old Testament men and women who illustrated it, is a brief definition of this faith.

The Nature of Faith

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ([11:1](#))

In a form the old Hebrew poets often used, the writer expresses his definition of faith in two parallel and almost identical phrases. It is not a full theological definition, but an emphasizing of certain basic characteristics of faith that are important in understanding the message the writer is trying to get across.

The Assurance of Things Hoped For

In Old Testament times, men and women had to rest on the promises of God. God had told them of a coming Messiah, a Deliverer who would take away sin. He told them that one day all Israel would be made clean and be ruled by this righteous Messiah. God's faithful believed God's promises, as incomplete and vague as many of those promises were. They did not have a great deal of specific light, by New Testament standards, but they knew it was God's light, & put their full trust and hope in it.

That is what faith is.

*Faith is living in a hope that is so real
it gives absolute assurance.*

The promises given to the Old Testament saints were so real to them, because they believed God, that they based their lives on them. All the Old Testament promises related to the future—for many believers, far into the future. But the faithful among God's people acted as if they were in the present tense.

They simply took God at His word and lived on that basis. They were people of faith, and faith gave present assurance and substance to what was yet future.

Faith is not a wistful longing that something may come to pass in an uncertain tomorrow.

*True faith is an absolute certainty, often of things
that the world considers unreal and impossible.*

Christian hope is belief in God against the world—not belief in the improbable against chance. If we follow a God whose audible voice we have never heard and believe in a Christ whose face we have never seen, we do so because our faith has a reality, a substance, an assurance that is unshakable. **In doing so, Jesus said, we are specially blessed (John 20:29).**

Moses considered "the reproach of Christ [Messiah] greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward" ([Heb. 11:26](#)). Moses took a stand on the messianic hope, and forsook all the material things he could touch and see for a Messiah who would not come to earth for more than 1400 years.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were confronted with the choice of obeying Nebuchadnezzar, whom they could see very well, or God, whom they had never seen. Without hesitation, they chose to obey God. Man's natural response is to trust his physical senses, to put his faith in the things he can see, hear, taste, and feel. But the man of God puts his trust in something more durable and dependable than anything he will ever experience with his senses. Senses may lie; God cannot lie ([Titus 1:2](#)).

The philosopher Epicurus, who lived several hundred years before Christ, said the chief end of life is pleasure. But he was not a hedonist, as many people think. He was talking of pleasure in the long view—ultimate pleasure, not immediate, temporary gratification. He held that we should pursue that which, in the end, will bring the most satisfaction. Understood in the right way, this should also be the Christian's objective.

Christians are not masochists. Quite to the contrary, we live for ultimate and permanent pleasure. We live in the certainty that whatever discomfort or pain we may have to endure for Christ's sake on earth, will more than be compensated for by an eternity of unending bliss, of pleasure we cannot now imagine.

The Greek word *hupostasis*, translated here as assurance, appears two other times in Hebrews.

In [1:3](#) it is rendered "exact representation," speaking of Christ's likeness to God, and in [3:14](#) it is rendered "assurance," as in [11:1](#).

The term refers to the essence, the real content, the reality, as opposed to mere appearance.

Faith, then, provides the firm ground on which we stand, waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise.

Far from being nebulous and uncertain, faith is the most solid possible conviction.

Faith is the present essence of a future reality.

The Old Testament saints "died in faith, without receiving the promises, but... welcomed them from a distance" ([Heb. 11:13](#)). They saw the fulfillment of God's promise with the eye of faith, which, when it is in God, has immeasurably better vision than the best of physical eyes. They held on to the promise as the ultimate reality of their lives, as the most certain thing of their existence.

The Conviction of Things Not Seen

Conviction of things not seen carries the same truth a bit further, because it implies a response, an outward manifestation of the inward assurance.

The person of faith lives his belief. His life is committed to what his mind and his spirit are convinced is true.

Noah, for example, truly believed God. He could not possibly have embarked on the stupendous, demanding, and humanly ridiculous task God gave him without having had absolute faith. When God predicted rain, Noah had no concept of what rain was, because rain did not exist before the Flood. It is possible that Noah did not even know how to construct a boat, much less a gigantic ark. But **Noah believed God and acted on His instructions. He had both assurance and conviction—true faith.** His outward building of the ark bore out his inward belief that the rain was coming and that God's plan was correct for constructing a boat that would float. **His faith was based on God's word, not on what he could see or on what he had experienced. For 120 years he preached in faith, hoped in faith, and built in faith.**

The natural man cannot comprehend that kind of spiritual faith.

We see Him who is invisible ([Heb. 11:27](#)), but the unsaved man does not, because he has no means of perception. Because he has no spiritual senses, he does not believe in God or the realities of God's realm. He is like a blind man who refuses to believe there is such a thing as light because he has never seen light.

Yet there is a sense in which all men live by faith. As illustrated in an earlier chapter, society is built on a foundation of faith. We drink water out of a faucet, with perfect confidence it is safe. We eat food in a restaurant, confident that it is not contaminated. We willingly receive our pay in the form of a check or paper money—neither of which has any intrinsic value at all. We accept them because of our faith in the person or the company or the government that issues them. We put our faith in a surgeon, and in medical science in general, though we may not have the least training, competence, or experience in medicine ourselves. We submit to the surgeon's knife entirely by faith. The capacity for faith is created in us.

Spiritual faith operates in the realm of that capacity. It willingly accepts and acts on many things it does not understand. But spiritual faith is radically different from natural faith in one important way. It is not natural, as is our trust in water, money, or the doctor. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" ([Eph. 2:8](#)). Just as natural trust comes by natural birth, so spiritual trust comes from God.

The Testimony of Faith

For by it the men of old gained approval. ([11:2](#))

Men of old gained approval from God because of their faith, and because of nothing else. God has always approved and recognized the person of faith.

This verse implies what other parts of the chapter make clear—that God makes his approval known to those who trust Him.

How God shows His approval varies, but every saint, just as surely as Enoch (Heb. 11:5), has God's witness that his faith is pleasing to his Lord.

Faith isn't one way to please God; it's the only way.

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (11:6). No matter what else we may think, say, or do for or in the name of God, it is meaningless and worthless apart from faith. It cannot possibly be approved by God.

Modern man has put himself in a dilemma, as evangelical scholars such as Francis Schaeffer have frequently pointed out. Throughout virtually all of history, man had what philosophers call a unified field of knowledge. That is, man understood the supernatural, human history, science, ethics, economics—everything—within one frame of reference. These areas were all part of total reality. But then we had a great movement in philosophy known as rationalism, which denied the very existence of the supernatural, including—especially including—God. Men such as Graf, Wellhausen, Bauer, Strauss, Renan, and many others began systematically to undercut every supernatural doctrine or belief.

A prime target was the Bible. Often in the name of biblical scholarship they contradicted, by supposed disproof, every supernatural claim of Scripture. They reduced all knowledge and reality to the area of natural reason, which dealt only with what the physical senses could observe and measure and with what the human mind could interpret on its own. Man became the measure of all things. Everything outside the sphere of man's physical experience and intellectual understanding was denied or discounted.

But most men could not handle this radical explanation. Even from the human perspective, it left too much unaccounted for. It made man nothing more than part of a huge, meaningless machine. Some philosophers began to see the limitations of rationalism. Kierkegaard, for example, decided to make a place for the supernatural by putting it in a different order of reality than the everyday world. This "upper story," as Schaeffer describes it, is thought not to be knowable in the same way that the lower, earthly level is knowable. It is experienced only by a "leap of faith." Because it supposedly cannot really be known, every man is free to make of the supernatural what he wants. He can believe in a "Wholly Other" kind of god, as did Paul Tillich; or he can simply believe in believing, have faith in faith. But what is believed has no definite content, no definite reality, no definite truth. It is purely existential, without content, nonrational, and nonlogical. To use a phrase from Schaeffer again, it is an "escape from reason"—the opposite extreme from that of rationalism. Both of these philosophies, of course, are escapes from the true God.

This new, nonrational philosophy first began to influence art, which had always been basically realistic. Artists varied widely in style and technique, but they all sought to portray reality. That is, a picture of a man always looked like a man, a picture of a flower looked like a

flower, and so on. Art was reasonable and realistic. It corresponded to what all men saw and experienced. But with the coming of nonrational philosophy, art began to reflect this new outlook. There were no absolutes, no certainties about anything. A man was represented as the artist felt like representing him at the moment. A flower took the form of whatever the artist had in mind when he painted. Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, and many others developed what became known as abstract art, which was completely subjective, imaginative, and contentless.

The next influence was on music. It, too, began to reflect only the subjective and imaginative, apart from content or structure—as seen in Debussy, Cage, and rock music.

Then came the effect on literature, with Dylan Thomas, Arthur Miller, and such writers who used their skills to undercut absolutes and standards not only in literature but in spiritual and moral areas as well. Love, honesty, truth, purity, the sacred, the right—all were grist for their existential mills to grind into relativism.

Relativism can lead nowhere but to meaninglessness and despair, which many proponents of this philosophy realized and acknowledged. But they insisted that this is all there is to the world, to life, to man, and that we therefore have to make the best of it. Since God was ruled out, man had no measure of himself or of his world—and could not expect to find any.

The most significant area to be affected was theology. A god that may be there, that may be good, that may care is hardly a god that inspires devotion and commitment. A god that man makes and imagines, man can remake and reimagine. A theology of a god that cannot be known or understood is not theology at all.

It is hardly surprising that the extreme form of contentless theology declared that God is dead. Of course, even this "doctrine" had no content, no exact meaning. It simply meant whatever the person who used it may have meant when he said or wrote it.

Such nonrational philosophy is perfectly illustrated in the book *Catch-22*, which centers on a squadron of World War II American fliers stationed on the fictitious island of Pianos in the Mediterranean. Their job was to fly extremely dangerous missions over southern Europe, and they had to complete 25 missions before being eligible for transfer. One of the men, Yosarian, was especially anxious to get out. But when he had completed his twenty-fifth mission, the new commanding officer raised the number to 30, and then to 40, 45, 50, and so on. Insanity became the only justification for transfer. But if a flyer turned himself in for being insane in order to get out of flying the missions, that was evidence he was sane. It became clear to the fliers that they were playing a sadistic game, with no way out. So Yosarian decided to build a raft and float to Sweden—no matter that a whole continent was between him and Sweden or that the ocean currents would have taken him anywhere but there. Despite the impossibility of accomplishing what he intended, he could not be dissuaded. He had devised a hopeless escape from a hopeless situation, and insisted on his right to pursue it. He jumped headlong into the absurd.

People take alcohol and drugs today because they have run out of rational options. They are also trying to escape into witchcraft, astrology, reincarnationism, and countless cults. They are looking for meaning and sense and reality, often while denying that there can be any such things.

These are some of the desperate lengths to which men will go when they reject God, and even the rational and the sensible. They are left only with the absurd—no faith, no hope, no peace, no assurance, no confidence. They can only leap from one vapid and empty absurdity to another, with no prospect or expectation that the next will be better than the previous.

God is the only rational answer, the only sure answer. **Only the God who made men can ever satisfy men.** Only the God who made reason can make life reasonable. Only the God who made the universe can show man any purpose in it. Since the time of Adam, some men have believed in God and believed what He has said. For them life has been meaningful; it has had assurance, substance, and confidence. They did not make a blind leap of faith, but put their faith in a future reality that, because of their faith, God made certain and sure for them. And with this certainty came assurance, confidence, and hope.

Believing in God gives reason for living—and for dying.

Just before Stephen was stoned, "he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (**Acts 7:55**). This glimpse of his Lord vindicated all he had endured for the gospel's sake and all he was then about to suffer. He had something to live for and to die for.

The Illustration of Faith

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (11:3)

The writer is saying to the Jews who had not yet trusted Christ, "You already have a certain faith in God. You believe that He created the universe and everything in it."

They believed this without any doubt, even though they were not there when God created. They could not see His act of creating, but they could see His creation and they believed in the Creator. They had a start of faith. **They knew and accepted this truth by faith, not by sight. Their own Scriptures taught it and they believed it.**

God did not just create the world, but the **worlds (aiōn)**, which designates the **physical universe itself and also its operation, its administration.**

He created everything simply by His word (rhēma), His divine utterance.

He created from nothing, at least not from anything physical, or **visible**. The writer makes an absolutely stupendous claim in this short verse.

The greatest claim, and the one hardest for an unbeliever to accept, is that understanding of creation comes entirely by faith.

The origin of the universe has been a long-standing problem for philosophers and scientists.

Centuries of investigation, speculation, and comparing of notes and theories have brought them no closer to a solution. Every time a consensus seems to be developing about a particular theory, someone comes up with evidence that disproves it or makes it less plausible.

Bertrand Russell spent most of his 90 years as a philosopher. His most certain conviction was that

Christianity was the greatest enemy of mankind, because it taught of a tyrannical God who stifled man's rightful freedom. He admitted at the end of his life that philosophy "was a wash-out," that it held no answers for anything. He had written that "we must conquer the world by intelligence," and yet all of his own great intellect and all of the other intellects who looked to themselves for answers never found an answer. Russell's greatest faith was in the idea that there is no God. He rejected the only source of answers, meaning, and hope.

Most philosophy is mere doodling with words, as many people do with a pencil. Without revelation, a source of basic truth, the best it can do is make verbal squiggles. Some are more impressive than others, but none can lay claim to the truth or to ultimate meaning.

Paul warned the Colossians, *"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men"* (**Col. 2:8**).

Science has done no better than philosophy in offering answers to the origin of the universe. Even though science, by definition, is limited to the observable, measurable, and repeatable, some scientists persist in speculating about the origin of the earth and of the entire universe—trying to reconstruct the process from what can be observed today. They, like the philosophers, have assumed a burden far beyond their competence and resources.

For some 100 years the nebula theory was the dominant scientific explanation of the origin of the universe. It was eventually replaced by the tidal theory, which was soon replaced by the steady-state theory, the super dense (big bang) theory, and so on. None of these theories gained universal acceptance among scientists. Today, theories are still multiplying and none yet is universally accepted, much less proved. **The same is true of theories of evolution. Even some nonreligious scientists are calling for science to reconsider the very notion of evolution.** Discovery of origins is far outside man's scope of knowledge and investigation. His attempts to discover where the universe came from, or where man himself came from, cannot possibly end in anything but futility. He is doomed to go from one unprovable theory to another.

Physics professor T. L. Moore of the University of Cincinnati has said, "To talk of the evolution of thought from sea slime to amoeba, from amoeba to a self-conscious thinking man, means nothing. It is the easy solution of a thoughtless brain."

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, a truth the world's most brilliant thinkers have not discovered and cannot discover on their own. It is beyond the realm of scientific investigation, but it is not beyond knowing—if we are willing to be taught by the Word of God.

The Christian has no reason to be proud of his knowledge. It is a gift from God, like every other blessing of faith. By his own resources, he could no more discover the truth about origins than could the rankest atheist.

The Christian insists that all truth is God's truth. Some of it—the natural world—is discoverable with our eyes, ears, touch, and intellect. A great deal more of it, however, is not. It is apprehended only by faith, for which the Christian should make no apology.

The very attempt to explain the universe, or our own being and nature, apart from God is a fool's effort. These things we understand only by faith in the revealed Word of Scripture. Faith comprehends that which the mind of man, no matter how brilliant, cannot fathom. "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God" ([1 Cor. 2:9-10](#)).

An evangelist of many years ago told the beautiful story of two little boys he once visited in a London hospital...

The cots were side-by-side. One boy had a dangerous fever, the other had been struck by a truck and his body was badly mangled. The second one said to the first, "Say, Willie, I

was down to the mission Sunday school and they told me about Jesus. I believe that if you ask Jesus, He will help you. They said that if we believe in Him and pray to God, then when we die He'll come and take us with Him to heaven." Willie replied, "But what if I'm asleep when He comes and I can't ask Him?" His friend said, "Just hold up your hand; that's what we did in Sunday school. I guess Jesus sees it." Since Willie was too weak to hold up his arm, the other boy propped it up for him with a pillow. During that night, Willie died, but when the nurse found him the next morning, his arm was still propped up.

We can be sure that the Lord saw his arm, because the Lord sees faith and the Lord accepts faith. By faith Willie saw the way to heaven. By faith he saw what the learned will never discover on their own. God's greatest truths are discovered by simple faith. It is not the world's way to truth, but a thousand years from now—if the Lord tarries that long—the world will still be devising and rejecting its theories. The person of faith knows the truth now. Faith is the only way to God.

Abel: Worshiping in Faith (Hebrews 11:4)

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. (11:4)

James Moffatt wrote, "Death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man. When a man leaves this world, be he righteous or unrighteous, he leaves something in the world. He may leave something that will grow and spread like a cancer or a poison, or he may leave something like the fragrance of perfume or a blossom of beauty that permeates the atmosphere with blessing."

Man leaves this world either a Paul or a Nero.

Dead men do tell tales. They are not silent, but still speak to those who will listen. From many thousands of years ago, Abel speaks to twentieth-century man. This man who lived when the earth was new, who was of the second generation of mankind, has something to teach modern, sophisticated, technological man. He lived in a far distant age, in a far different culture, with far less light from God than we have. But what he has to tell us is more relevant than anything we are likely to read in our current newspapers or magazines.

The obvious theme of [Hebrews 11](#) is faith, and **it is about faith that Abel speaks to us. He is the first in a long line of faithful persons who can teach us about the life of faith.** He, and the others mentioned in chapter 11, illustrate a pure kind of faith that sharply isolates it from works. It is this distinction that the Jewish readers especially needed to see. They had to be shown that, **from the very beginning, faith has been the only thing that God will accept to save fallen man.**

Adam and Eve could not have been persons of faith in the same way as their descendants. They had seen God face-to-face, fellowshiped with Him, talked with Him, and had lived in the garden of paradise. Until they sinned, they had no need for faith, because they lived in God's very light. Even after they sinned, they had the memory and knowledge of this unique and beautiful relationship with their Creator. Their children were the first to have need of faith in its fullest sense. Abel was the first man of faith, and it is important to understand that his faith had to do with his personal salvation.

Abel's faith led to three progressive things: true sacrifice, true righteousness, and true witness.

Because he believed, he offered a better sacrifice. Because he offered a better sacrifice, he obtained righteousness. Because he obtained righteousness, he is for all the ages a living voice saying, "righteousness is by faith."

God put Adam and Eve out of the Garden because of sin. Sin violated their fellowship with God and forfeited their right to be in His presence. But even as **His judgment sent them out, His grace promised a way back.** Through woman a man would be born whose heel would be bruised by Satan but who would bruise Satan on the head ([Gen. 3:15](#)). That is, **this One who would be born from the seed of woman would conquer and destroy Satan, and thereby deliver mankind from sin's curse.** Within the very curse itself, a Redeemer was promised. While judgment was being executed, mercy was being offered.

Only one woman, the mother of Jesus, has ever possessed a seed apart from its being implanted by a man. The Holy Spirit placed the seed in her, and in this way it was the seed of woman that gave birth to Jesus, the promised Savior. Not only the coming of the Redeemer but also His virgin birth was prophesied in the first part of the first book of God's Word.

From her comments after the birth of Cain, it is possible that Eve thought her firstborn would be the promised deliverer. His name probably means "to get" or "to get something," and her statement, "have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD" ([Gen. 4:1](#)), might be rendered, "have gotten He is here." If she thought this son was the deliverer, she was greatly mistaken. This son became mankind's first murderer, not its savior. Even apart from Cain's wickedness and faithlessness, he could not have been the savior, nor could any of Adam and Eve's physical descendants. Flesh can only produce flesh. In Adam all died, and the sons of Adam could not give a life which they themselves did not have.

We do not know their age difference, but Abel was born sometime after Cain. The basic meaning of Abel could be "breath," "weakness," or "vanity," carrying the idea of brevity. In any case, his life was indeed brief, cut off by his jealous brother.

Abel was "a keeper of flocks," while Cain was "a tiller of the ground." One was a shepherd, the other a farmer. Both were conceived after the fall and were born outside of Eden. They were therefore both born in sin. They were the second and third men ever to live on earth. They lived and functioned as all mankind since their time has lived and functioned. They had the same natures and capacities and limitations and inclinations that every person since then has had. In other words, in all the essentials of human nature, they were exactly as we are. In no way do they resemble the primitive beings of evolutionist fantasy.

Showing their preconceptions and biases, evolutionists and various interpreters of Scripture have argued that the Genesis account of man's beginnings cannot possibly be correct, because Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and the others mentioned in the earlier chapters are far too advanced to have been the first human beings. Besides the impossible supernatural claims of Adam and Eve talking with God, critics reason that original man could not have domesticated animals, as Abel did, or plowed and planted fields, as Cain did—much less have invented musical instruments or metal tools ([4:21-22](#)).

The Bible is clear, however, that Adam and Eve were highly intelligent when God created them. Adam named all the animals, which required devising a creative vocabulary. Their sons understood animal husbandry and farming, and within a very few generations came the tools and musical instruments already mentioned. The Genesis account, brief as it is, gives the definite picture of people who were well-developed in language and in general culture.

The first human inhabitants of earth, Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel, lived and functioned as human beings in the ways that we do today.

Abel Made a True Sacrifice

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain. ([11:4a](#))

This verse takes us back to Genesis, where we read of Abel's sacrifice: "So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard" ([Gen. 4:3-5](#)).

A Place to Worship

Cain and Abel had a place to worship. Because they brought offerings, some sort of altar must have been used on which to make the sacrifices. There is no mention of their erecting an altar at this time, and it may be that an altar already existed near the east side of the Garden of Eden, where God had placed the cherubim with the flaming sword to prevent man from reentering.

It seems perfectly consistent with God's grace that, from the beginning, He would have provided for some means of worship. Perhaps the altar here was a forerunner of the mercy seat, a place where man could come for forgiveness and atonement. Very early in man's history God promised a future Deliverer, and very early He provided a temporary means of worship and sacrifice.

A Time for Worship

There seems also to have been a *time* for worship. "In the course of time," means literally, "at the end of days," that is, at the end of a certain period of time. It may be, therefore, that God had designated a special time for sacrificing. **God is a God of order, and we know that in later centuries He did prescribe definite times and ways of worshiping. The fact that Cain and Abel came to sacrifice at the same time also suggests that God had specified a particular time.**

A Way to Worship

I also believe that God had designated a *way* to worship. Cain and Abel would know nothing about the need for worship or sacrifice, much less the way, had they not been told by God—perhaps through their parents. It is especially significant that the first recorded act of worship was sacrifice, a sin offering, the supreme act of worship in all of God's covenants with His people. Abraham sacrificed to God, and through Moses came the complicated and demanding rituals of sacrifice of the Old Covenant. The heart of the New Covenant is Jesus' perfect, once-for-all sacrifice on the cross. It is inconceivable that Cain and Abel accidentally stumbled onto sacrifice as a way of worshiping God. The fact that God accepted only the one sacrificial offering also seems to indicate that He had established a pattern for worship.

Abel offered his sacrifice by faith. Since "faith comes from hearing" ([Rom. 10:17](#)), Abel must have had some revelation from God on which his faith was based. He must have known the place and time and way in which God wanted the sacrifice for sin to be offered.

There was nothing intrinsically wrong with a grain or fruit or vegetable offering. The Mosaic covenant included such offerings. But the blood offerings were always first, because only the blood offerings dealt with sin.

Here is where the life of faith begins, with a sacrifice for sin. It begins with believing God that we are sinners, that we are worthy of death, that we need His forgiveness, and that we accept His revealed plan for our deliverance. That is the beginning of the life of faith. *It was in such faith that Abel presented his sacrifice to God. And it was because of such faith that his sacrifice was acceptable to God.*

When Abel did what God said, he revealed his obedience and acknowledged his sinfulness. Cain, on the other hand, was disobedient and did not acknowledge his sin. **Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain** because God had prescribed a *blood* sacrifice. Somehow Abel, and

Cain as well, knew what God wanted. **The difference between the two was that Abel gave what God wanted, whereas Cain gave what he himself wanted. Abel was obedient and Cain was disobedient. Abel acknowledged his sin. Cain did not.**

Abel approached God and said, in effect, "Lord, this is what You said You wanted. You promised that if I brought it, You would forgive my sin. I believe You, God. I acknowledge my sin and I acknowledge Your prescribed remedy. Here it is." Cain had the same knowledge of God's requirements, but decided to worship in his own way. In the tradition of his parents, he did his own thing. In effect, he was denying his sin.

Cain believed in God, else he would not have brought Him a sacrifice. He acknowledged a supreme being and even that he owed Him some sort of worship. He recognized God, but he did not obey God. He believed in God, but he did not believe God. He thought he could approach God in whatever way he wanted, and expected Him to be impressed and satisfied. In so doing, Cain became the father of all false religion.

False religion is trying to come to God by any other way than the way God has prescribed.

It says, "I can get to God by thinking myself into Nirvana," or, "can please God by meditation," or, "can satisfy God by my works or by following the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, Joseph

Smith, or Charles Taze Russell." God's Word says, "There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" ([Acts 4:12](#)). False religion says that there is another name, another way. False religion is any way to God that God Himself has not ordained. [Proverbs 14:12](#) marks this truth: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

The idea that one way is just as good as another does not seem to be accepted in any area of life except religion and morality. When a person goes to a doctor with a problem, he first of all wants to know the truth. No one likes to hear a diagnosis of a terrible disease. But the sensible person would rather know the truth than live in ignorance of something that could ruin his health or even take his life. Once knowing the diagnosis, he then wants the *right* cure, not just any cure. He wants the best treatment he can find and will usually go to any lengths to get it. He would be insulted and infuriated with a doctor who told him simply to go home and do whatever he thought best—that one person's opinion was just as good as another's. The reason we think this way about medicine is that we believe there are medical *truths*. Medical science does not have all the answers, but a great deal is known and accepted as factual, reliable, and dependable. The reason this same kind of reasoning is not applied to spiritual and moral issues is that the absolute truths and standards God has given are rejected. In fact, the very *notion* of spiritual and moral absolutes is rejected.

Cain rejected God's standards and became the first apostate.

Cain failed to acknowledge his sin and refused to obey God by bringing the sacrifice God required. **He did not mind worshiping God, as long as it was on his own terms, in his own way.**

And God rejected his sacrifice & rejected him.

Cain's disobedience of God and setting up his own standards of living were the beginning of Satan's world system. Cain "went out from the presence of the LORD" ([Gen. 4:16](#)) and into a life of continuous self-will, which is the heart of worldliness and unbelief.

By his own decision, his own volition, he turned away from God and God's way to himself and his own way. We should not be sorry for him because God refused to honor his sacrifice. He knew what God required, and he was able to do it. But he chose instead to do what he himself wanted.

There are all kinds of people around under the guise of religion, even Christian religion, who are denying God.

"Woe to them!" Jude says,

"For they have gone the way of Cain" (v. 11).

Cain is an example of the religious natural man, who believes in God and even in religion but after his own will and who rejects redemption by blood. Paul says of such people *that, "they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God"* **(Romans 10:2-3).**

In addition to being wicked and unbelieving, Cain was a hypocrite. He did not want to worship God but only give the appearance of worship. His purpose was to please himself, not God.

His sacrifice was simply a religious activity designed to suit his own purposes and fulfill his own will. **Cain was like the Pharisee in the Temple who Jesus said was praying "to himself" (Luke 18:11). He was patronizing God and worshiping himself.** Also like the Pharisee, Cain went home unjustified; whereas Abel, like the penitent tax gatherer, went home justified.

God is not arbitrary or whimsical or capricious. He was not playing a game with Cain and Abel. He did not hold them accountable for what they could not have known or could not have done.

Abel's sacrifice was accepted because he knew what God wanted and obeyed. Cain's was rejected because he knew what God wanted, yet disobeyed.

*To obey is righteous;
to disobey is evil. Abel was of God; Cain was of Satan
([1 John 3:12](#)).*

Abel offered a better sacrifice because it represented the obedience of faith. He willingly brought God what He asked, and he brought the very best that he had. In Abel's sacrifice, the way of the cross was first prefigured. The first sacrifice was Abel's lamb—one lamb for one person. Later came the Passover—with one lamb for one family. Then came the Day of Atonement—with one lamb for one nation. Finally came Good Friday—one Lamb for the whole world.

Abel Obtained Righteousness

Through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous. ([11:4b](#))

The only thing that obtained righteousness for Abel was that, in faith, He did what God told him to do. That is the only thing that changes a man's relationship to God. It is not how good we are, but whether or not we trust in Him, that counts with God.

Trust is evidenced in obedience to His Word.

Abel was sinful, just as Cain was. But it is quite possible, even likely, that Abel was a better person than Cain. He was probably more moral, more dependable, more honest, and even more likable than Cain. It was not, however, these qualities of Abel that made his sacrifice acceptable, or the lack of these qualities that made Cain's sacrifice unacceptable. The difference was the way in which the sacrifices were made. One was made in obedient faith; the other made in disobedient unbelief.

Abel's was the kind of faith that allows God to move in on our behalf and make us **righteous**. True faith is always obedient.

Jesus said "to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine'" (John 8:31).

These people believed Jesus, but they had not yet trusted in Him, which Jesus said would be marked by obedience to His word.

Obedience does not bring faith, but faith will always bring obedience and the desire to live righteously.

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (Jude 3-4)

We cannot claim to have faith in God and then continually disregard His Word.

James must have known some people who thought this way, for he wrote, "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?...Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself" (**[James 2:14, 17](#)**). **Nonworking faith, disobedient faith, is not saving faith. It is not valid faith at all.** Cain believed that God exists. Even the demons believe this, James goes on to say. "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" ([2:19-20](#)).

James then drives the point home by reminding his readers that Abraham's faith, for which he was counted righteous, was demonstrated by his obedience in offering his son Isaac as God commanded. *"You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected"* (**[James 2:21-22](#)**).

James does not teach salvation by works. He is saying that our faith is only real when it issues in works. We cannot work our way to God, but having come to Him, works will become evident—and prove that our faith is genuine. The Christian, in fact, is "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" ([Eph. 2:10](#)).

It seems to me that God's **testimony** that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable and that He counted Abel as righteous could have been indicated by His causing this offering to be consumed. On at least five occasions recorded in Scripture, God showed His acceptance of a sacrifice by sending fire to consume it ([Lev. 9:24](#); [Judg. 6:21](#); [1 Kings 18:38](#); [1 Chron. 21:26](#); [2 Chron. 7:1](#)). In any case, it is clear from Genesis that **God made His approval and disapproval of the sacrifices known to Cain and Abel. He did not leave them in doubt as to their standing before Him.**

Abel was counted righteous, not because he *was* righteous, but because he trusted God. He stood righteous before God because He had faith in God. Abel was the same sinner as he was before he made the sacrifice. He did not even receive the Holy Spirit, as do believers today. He walked away with the same problems he had before. But He had God's approval, and God's righteousness credited to his account.

Abel Speaks from the Dead

God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. ([11:4c](#))

When the Lord confronted Cain after Abel's murder, He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground" ([Gen. 4:10](#)). Abel's first "speaking" after **death** was to God, asking for his murder to be avenged. Like the souls underneath the altar "who had been slain because of the word of God" ([Rev. 6:9-10](#)), Abel asked the Lord to avenge his blood.

His voice also spoke to his brother. "And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth" ([Gen. 4:11-12](#)). Every bit of soil on which Cain placed his feet would remind him of his wicked deed. The earth, in effect, rejected Cain as he had rejected God and his brother. Abel, though dead, continued to speak to his brother.

The primary meaning of [Hebrews 11:4](#), however, has to do with Abel's speaking to later generations of believers and potential believers. *He still speaks. He says three things: man comes to God by faith, not works; man must accept and obey God's revelation above his own reason and self-will; and sin is severely punished.*

This is Abel's timeless three-point sermon to the world, which he has been preaching for thousands of years to those who will hear. It could be titled, "The Righteous Shall Live by Faith."

Enoch: Walking in Faith ([Hebrews 11:5-6](#))

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. ([11:5-6](#))

The second hero of faith is Enoch.

*Whereas Abel exemplifies worshiping by faith—
which must always come first—Enoch
exemplifies walking by faith.*

God never intended works as a way for men to come to Him.

God intended works to be a result of salvation, not a way of salvation.

At no time has man been able to approach God on the basis of works. Rather, God has always intended that works be a product of the salvation men receive when they approach Him on the basis of faith.

And Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah. Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. ([Gen. 5:21-24](#))

Here we see a new concept in the book of Genesis. Abel knew what it was to worship by faith, but he did not really understand the concept of walking with God.

Revelation in Scripture is progressive. Abel received some revelation, and Enoch received more.

Adam and Eve had walked and talked with God in the Garden, but when they fell and were thrown out of the Garden, they ceased to walk with Him. The ultimate destiny of man is reinstated with Enoch, who stands as an illustration for all men of what it is to be in fellowship with God. In Enoch the true destiny of man is again reached, as he experienced the fellowship with God that Adam and Eve had forfeited.

I believe Enoch's faith included everything Abel's included. Enoch had to have offered a sacrifice to God, symbolic of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, because sacrifice is the only way into God's presence. **He could not have walked with God unless he had first come to God, and a person cannot come to God apart from the shedding of blood. The principle has not changed from the days of Abel and Enoch until today.**

[Hebrews 11:5-6](#) shows us five features in Enoch's life that were pleasing to God:

1. he believed that God is;
2. he sought God's reward;
3. he walked with God;
4. he preached for God; and
5. he entered into God's presence.

Enoch Believed That God Is

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is. ([11:6a](#))

Absolutely nothing from men can please God apart from *faith*. Religion does not please God, because it is essentially a system developed by Satan to counteract the truth. Nationality and heritage do not please God (cf. [Gal 3:28-29](#)). The Jews thought they pleased God just because they were descendants of Abraham. But most of the time they were displeasing to Him. Good works in themselves do not please God, "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" ([Rom. 3:20](#)). **Without faith it is impossible to please Him.**

The first step of faith is simply to **believe that He is**. This Enoch did. God is pleased with those who believe in Him, even with the first step of believing that He exists. This belief alone is certainly not enough to save a person, but if it is a sincere conviction and is followed up, it will lead to full faith.

In his book, *Your God is Too Small*, J. B. Phillips describes some of the common gods that people manufacture. One is the grand old man god, the grandfatherly, white-haired, indulgent god who smiles down on men and winks at their adultery, stealing, cheating, and lying. Then there are the resident policeman god, whose primary job is to make life difficult and unenjoyable, and the god in a box, the private and exclusive sectarian god. The managing director god is the god of the deists, the god who designed and created the universe, started it spinning, and now stands by far away watching it run down. God is not pleased with belief in any of these idolatrous substitutes.

Believing that the true *God* exists is what is pleasing to Him. Mere recognition of a deity of some sort—the "ground of being," the "man upstairs," or any of the man—made gods just mentioned—is not the object of belief in mind here. Only belief in the existence of the true God, the God of Scripture, counts.

We cannot know God by sight. "No man has seen God at any time," Jesus said ([John 1:18](#)). Nor can we know God by reason. Two chapters of the book of Job ([38-39](#)) are devoted to God's

forceful and colorful illustrations of how man cannot even fathom the operations of nature. How much less can we understand God Himself by our own observations and reasonings.

God gives much evidence of His existence, but it is not the kind of evidence that men often are looking for. He cannot be proved by science, for example. At best, scientific evidence is circumstantial. Paul Little wrote, "But it can be said with equal emphasis that you can't prove Napoleon by the scientific method, either. The reason lies in the nature of history itself, and in the limitation of the scientific method. In order for something to be proven by science, it must be repeatable. One cannot announce a new finding to the world on the basis of a single experiment. But history is, by its very nature, unrepeatable. No one can rerun the beginning of the universe. Or bring Napoleon back. Or repeat the assassination of Lincoln or the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. But the fact that these events can't be proved by repetition does not disprove their reality."

The point he is making is that you cannot apply the scientific method to everything. It does not work. You cannot put love or justice or anger in a test tube either, but no sensible person doubts their existence. By the same reasoning, God's existence should not be doubted merely because it cannot be scientifically proved.

Yet many things learned from science give *evidence* of His existence. The law of cause and effect, for example, holds that for every cause there must be an effect. If you keep pushing further and further back for causes, eventually you will end up with an uncaused cause. The only uncaused cause is God. This is the argument used previously by the writer of Hebrews: "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God" ([3:4](#)).

Philosopher J. H. Stirling said, "If each link of the chain hangs on another, the whole will hang and only hang in eternity unsupported like some stark serpent unless you find a hook for it. You add weakness to weakness in any quantity and you never get strength."

According to the law of entropy, the universe is running down. If it is running down, then it is not self-sustaining. If it is not self-sustaining, then it had to have a beginning. If it had a beginning, someone had to begin it, and we are back to the uncaused cause. There must be a first cause, for which only God qualifies.

The law of design also indicates that God is. When we look at plants and animals in all their marvelous intricacy, we see hundreds, thousands of amazingly complex designs that not only function beautifully but reproduce themselves perfectly. When we look at the stars, the planets, the asteroids, the comets, the meteors, the constellations, we see them kept precisely on their courses by centrifugal, centripetal, and gravitational forces. Such massive, marvelous, complex, and wonderfully operating design demands the existence of a designer.

We learn from science that water has a high specific heat, which is absolutely essential to stabilize chemical reactions within the human body. If water had a low specific heat, we would boil over with the least activity. Without this property of water, human and most animal life would hardly be possible.

The ocean is the world's thermostat. It takes a large loss of heat for water to go from liquid to ice, and a large intake of heat for water to become steam. The oceans are a cushion against the heat of the sun and the freezing blasts of winter. Unless the temperatures of the earth's surface were modulated by the ocean and kept within certain limits, we would either be cooked to death or frozen to death. How could such intricate, exacting, and absolutely necessary design come about by accident? It *demand*s a designer.

Even the size of the earth gives evidence of design. If it were much smaller, there would be no atmosphere to sustain life. Earth would then be like our moon or Mars. On the other hand, if it were much larger, the atmosphere would contain free hydrogen, as do Jupiter and Saturn, which also prevents life. The earth's distance from the sun is absolutely right. Even a small change would make it too hot or too cold. The tilt of the earth's axis ensures the seasons. And so it goes.

Science cannot prove God, but it gives overwhelming evidence of a master designer and sustainer, which roles could only be filled by God.

Like science, reason cannot prove God. But also like science, it gives a great deal of evidence for Him. Man himself is personal, conscious, rational, creative, volitional. It is inconceivable that he could have become so by accident or that his Creator could be anything *less* than personal, conscious, rational, creative, and volitional. To think that personal, thinking, decision-making man somehow could have developed from slime to amoeba and on up the evolutionary chain does not make sense.

Studies by anthropologists show that man is universally God-conscious. This does not mean that there is no man who does not believe in some sort of god—much less in the true God—but that men in general do. The fact that some men do not believe does not disprove the rule, any more than a one-legged man proves that men are not two-legged creatures.

The very idea of God lends substance to the fact that He is. The fact that a man can conceive of God suggests that someone has given the possibility of such conception and that there is someone who corresponds to this conception.

But with all the many natural, scientific, and rational evidences of God, acknowledging Him is still a matter of faith. The proof comes after belief. "The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself" ([1 John 5:10](#)). Even the scientist receives proof after faith. When he develops a hypothesis, his faith becomes greater and greater as evidence for the hypothesis mounts. It is his commitment to the hypothesis, his faith in it, that eventually leads to proof, if the hypothesis is true. The witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers is infinitely greater proof of God's existence than the conclusions of a laboratory experiment for the validity of a scientific theory ever could be.

Enoch Sought God's Reward

He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. ([11:6b](#))

It is not enough simply to believe that God exists. In order to please Him it is also necessary to believe that He is moral and just, that He will reward faith in Him. We must recognize God as a personal, loving, gracious God to those who seek Him. Enoch believed this within the revelation he had. He did not believe God was merely a great impersonal cosmic force. He believed in and knew God in a personal, loving way. You cannot "walk" with a ground of being or a first mover or an ultimate cause. For three hundred years Enoch had fellowship with the true God, a God whom he knew to be just, merciful, forgiving, caring, and very personal.

It is not enough merely to postulate a God. *Einstein said, "Certainly there is a God. Any man who doesn't believe in a cosmic force is a fool, but we could never know Him." Brilliant as he was, Einstein was wrong. We can know God. In fact, in order to please Him, we must believe that He is personal, knowable, loving, caring, moral, and responds graciously to those who come to Him. It is not enough even to believe in the right God. Many Jews to whom the letter of Hebrews was addressed acknowledged the true God, the God of Scripture. But they did not have faith in Him; they did not trust in Him. Enoch knew the true God and trusted the true God.*

Both testaments are filled with teachings that God not only *can* be found but that it is His great desire **to be** found. David said to his son Solomon, "If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever" ([1 Chron. 28:9](#)). "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth!" ([Ps. 58:11](#)). "I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me" ([Prov. 8:17](#)). "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" ([Jer. 29:13](#)). Jesus was very explicit: "For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened" ([Luke 11:10](#)). It is not enough just to believe that He is. We must also believe that He rewards those who seek Him.

The reward that God gives for faith is salvation. "Whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" ([John 3:16](#)). "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" ([Matt. 6:33](#)). In other words, every good thing that God has, including eternal life, constitutes the reward for belief. For faith we receive forgiveness, a new heart, eternal life, joy, peace, love, heaven—everything! When we trust in Jesus Christ, we become mutual heirs with Him. All that God's own Son has is ours as well.

Enoch Walked with God

Believing that God exists is the first step *toward* faith. Believing that he rewards those who trust in Him is the first step *of* faith. Trusting fully in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is only the beginning of the faithful life in God. To continue pleasing God, we must fellowship with Him, commune with, "walk" with Him—just as Enoch did. In the four verses in Genesis ([5:21-24](#)) describing Enoch, he is twice spoken of as "walking with God." In the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) this phrase is translated "pleased God," using the same Greek word (*euaresteō*, "to be well-pleasing") that is used twice in [Hebrews 11:5-6](#). Walking with God is pleasing God.

The term *walk* is used many times in the New Testament to represent faithful living. "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death,...so we too might walk in newness of life" ([Rom. 6:4](#)). "For we walk by faith, not by sight" ([2 Cor. 5:7](#)). "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" ([Gal. 5:16](#)). "Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us" ([Eph. 5:2](#)). Christ even speaks of our fellowship with Him in heaven as a walk: "They will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy" ([Rev. 3:4](#)). Like Enoch, every believer *should* walk with God every day he is on earth. When we get to heaven, we *will* walk with Him forever.

Reconciliation

The first thing implied in Enoch's walk with God is reconciliation. "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" ([Amos 3:3](#), NIV). The point is obvious. Two people cannot really walk together in intimate fellowship unless they are agreed. Walking together, then, presupposes harmony. If Enoch walked with God, he obviously was in agreement with God. Rebellion was over for this man of faith. Since Adam fell, every person born into the world has been in rebellion against God. We do not grow into rebellion or fall into rebellion; we are *born* into rebellion. Our very nature, from before birth, is at enmity with God. We are all "by nature children of wrath" ([Eph. 2:3](#)). The purpose of salvation is to reconcile men to God, to restore the relationship broken by sin. Because of his faith, Enoch was reconciled with God; and because he was reconciled with God, he could walk with God.

A Corresponding Nature

The second truth implied in Enoch's walk with God is that Enoch and God had corresponding natures. Some animals can become very good companions to men. They may have great loyalty and sensitivity to their owners, and a close relationship can develop over the years. But man cannot fellowship with even the smartest and most devoted animal. Our natures are far too different. Animals can offer companionship but not fellowship. We can *take* a walk with a dog, but we cannot "walk" with a dog, in the sense of having fellowship with him. It is just as impossible for an unbeliever to have fellowship with God ([2 Cor. 6:14-16](#)), and for the same reason—his nature is too different from God's. Even an unbeliever is created in God's image, but that image has been so shattered by sin, his nature so corrupted, that fellowship with his Creator is not possible—there is no common sphere in which he and God can be agreed.

When we are saved, we become citizens of a new domain. We are still on earth, but our true life, our real citizenship, is in heaven ([Phil. 3:20](#)). As Peter says, we "become partakers of the divine nature" ([2 Pet. 1:4](#)). In Christ we are given a heavenly nature, His own nature, and we can

therefore have fellowship with God. Because Enoch walked with God, he must have had a nature corresponding to God's.

Moral Fitness and a Judicial Dealing with Sin

Walking with God implies moral fitness as well as a judicial dealing with sin. We could not have a new nature unless God took away sin. Because a person walks with God means that his sin has been forgiven and that he has been justified, counted righteous by God. Only when sin has been dealt with can we move into God's presence and begin walking with Him. God will not walk in any way but the way of holiness. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" ([1 John 1:6-7](#)). The only persons God walks with are those who are cleansed of sin. Since Enoch walked with God, he had to have been forgiven of his sin and declared righteous by God.

A Surrendered Will

Walking with God implies a surrendered will. God does not force His company on anyone. He only offers Himself. God must first will that a person come to Him, but that person must also will to come to God. Faith is impossible without willingness to believe. Just as walking with God presupposes faith it also presupposes willingness—a surrendered will.

A surrendered will is a surrender in love. Willing surrender is not abject submissiveness, a determined resignation to the Lord's way and will. It is what might be called a willful willingness, a glad and free surrender. "And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments" ([2 John 6](#)).

Enoch walked with God for three hundred years! Small wonder that the Lord went for a walk with him one day and just took him on up to heaven. The New Testament refers to this sort of living as walking in the Spirit. We are to live continually in the atmosphere of the Spirit's presence, power, direction, and teaching. The fruit of this walk in the Spirit are: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)).

Walking in the Spirit is allowing Him to pervade your thoughts. It is saying, when you get up in the morning, "Holy Spirit, it is Your day, not mine. Use it as You see fit." It is saying throughout the day, "Holy Spirit, continue to keep me from sin, direct my choices and my decisions, use me to glorify Jesus Christ." It is putting each decision, each opportunity, each temptation, each desire before Him, and asking for His direction and His power. Walking in the Spirit is dynamic and practical. It is not passive resignation but active obedience.

The New Testament describes walking with God in many ways. [Third John 4](#) says it is a truth walk; [Romans 8:4](#) calls it a spiritual walk; [Ephesians 5:2](#) describes it as a love walk, [5:8](#) as a light walk, and [5:15](#) as a wise walk.

It would have been wonderful to have had Enoch as an example—or Noah, Abraham, or any of the other faithful heroes of [Hebrews 11](#). But we have an even greater example—our Lord Jesus

Himself, the One who supremely walked with God. He did nothing, absolutely nothing, that was not the Father's will. The beloved apostle reminds us that "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" ([1 John 2:6](#)). If we want to know how to walk, we need simply to look at Jesus. From childhood He was continually about His Father's business, and only His Father's business. He constantly walked with God.

Continuing Faith

Finally, a person cannot walk with God unless he has first come to God by faith. Just so, he cannot continue to walk without continuing to have faith. Walking with God is a walk in faith and a walk by faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" ([2 Cor. 5:7](#)). "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith" ([Col. 2:6-7](#)).

Enoch believed God, and he continued to believe God. He could not have walked with God for three hundred years without trusting in God for three hundred years. Enoch never saw God. He walked with Him, but he did not see Him. He just believed He was there. That is how He pleased God.

Enoch Preached for God

And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." ([Jude 14-15](#))

That Enoch preached for God we learn only from the book of Jude. Judging from this account, his message on ungodliness was brief and perhaps repetitious, but it was inspired. We have no hint as to how effective it was, but Enoch's purpose was to be faithful, not effective. He did what God required of him and left the results to Him. One thing is certain: because of his faithful preaching and faithful living, no one who heard Enoch or lived around him had any excuse for not believing in God. Whether any of these people believed or not, the influence Enoch had on them must have been powerful.

Jude's report of Enoch's preaching contradicts any notion that Enoch lived in an easy time for believing. He was surrounded by false teachers and false teaching. We do not know if he had the fellowship of any fellow believers, but we know that he lived in the midst of a host of unbelievers. He could not possibly have preached as strongly as he did without considerable opposition. He battled against his own generation in the same way that Noah would later battle against his. He let them know they were ungodly, and he let them know God was going to judge them. I believe God was pleased with Enoch because his faith was not just something he felt in his heart. It was heard on his lips and seen in his life. His faith was active and dynamic, vocal and fearless.

Enoch Entered into God's Presence

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained a witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. ([11:5](#))

At last, after three hundred years of believing and walking and preaching, he went to be with the Lord—in a marvelously unique way. God just **took him up** without his experiencing death. He pleased God so much that God just reached down and lifted him up to heaven. One moment he was there, and the next moment "he was not, for God took him" ([Gen. 5:24](#)). By faith Enoch was translated. He walked so closely with God for so long that he just walked into heaven, as it were.

We do not know the reason God waited three hundred years before taking Enoch to be with Himself. Perhaps it was to allow sufficient time for him to preach and witness to the hard and unbelieving generation in which he lived. Furthermore, we do not know why God took Enoch in that unusual way at all. Perhaps it was to spare him further ridicule and persecution, which he was bound to have experienced. Perhaps it was because God wanted to be even closer to the one who pleased Him so much. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones" ([Ps. 116:15](#)). God loves His saints and loves the fellowship of His saints. Enoch was so precious to the Lord that He bypassed the death stage for this remarkable saint.

Enoch is a beautiful picture of believers who will be taken up directly to heaven when our Lord returns for His bride, the church. Just as Enoch was translated to heaven without seeing death, so also will be those of God's people who are alive at the rapture. "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" ([1 Thess. 4:17](#)).

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews.

*What would your life look like if you had bullet proof faith...
bullet proof trust... bullet proof confidence in God?*

*Think about this... When you get right down to it.... the fall of
mankind was nothing more than a failure of faith... a*

discontinuation of trust... a failing confidence in God (see Genesis 3)... and to tell the truth, today's consistent failings & falling continue to be more failure of faith. - JDP

CONTEXT:

Faith is... F.A.I.T.H.

- *Foundational*
- *Assertive*
- *Inspirational*
- *Tested*
- *Holy*

EXEGESIS:

- v.1 = *NOTE: Biblical faith both calls & keeps us!*

**** Answer to The How? question...*

> *Romans 10:17*

> *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

➤ *1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*

➤ *Titus 2:11-15*

➤ *Ephesians 2:8-10*

> ***hupostasis: a support, substance, steadiness, hence assurance***

Original Word: ὑπόστασις, εως, ἡ

Part of Speech: Noun, Feminine

Transliteration: hupostasis

Phonetic Spelling: (hoop-os'-tas-is)

Definition: a support, substance, steadiness, assurance

Usage: (lit: an underlying), (a) confidence, assurance, (b) a

giving substance (or reality) to, or a guaranteeing, (c) substance, reality.

HELPS Word-studies

5287 *hypóstasis* (from [5259](#) /hypó, "under" and [2476](#) /hístēmi, "to stand") – properly, (to possess) standing under a guaranteed agreement ("title-deed"); (figuratively) "title" to a promise or property, i.e. a legitimate claim (because it literally is, "under a legal-standing") – entitling someone to what is guaranteed under the particular agreement.

For the believer, [5287](#) /hypóstasis ("title of possession") is the Lord's guarantee to fulfill the faith He inbirths (cf. Heb 11:1 with Heb 11:6). Indeed we are only entitled to what God grants faith for (Ro 14:23).

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [hupo](#) and [histēmi](#)

Definition

a support, substance, steadiness, hence assurance

NASB Translation

assurance (2), confidence (2), nature (1).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 5287: ὑπόστασις

ὑπόστασις, ὑποστάσεως, ἡ (ὑφίστημι), a word very common in Greek authors, especially from Aristotle onward, in widely different senses, of which only those will be noticed which serve to illustrate N. T. usage;

1. a setting or placing under; thing put under, substructure, foundation: [Psalm 68:3\(\)](#); τοῦ οἴκου, [Ezekiel 43:11](#); τοῦ τάφου, Diodorus 1, 66.

2. that which has foundation, is firm; hence,

a. that which has actual existence; a substance, real

being: τῶν ἐν ἀεριφαντασμαμάτων τά μὲν ἐστὶ κατ' ἐμφασιν, τὰ δέκαθ' ὑπόστασιν, Aristotle, *de mundo*, 4, 19, p. 395{a}, 30; φαντασίαν μὲν ἔχειν πλούτου, ὑπόστασιν δέ μή, Artemidorus *Daldianus, oneir.* 3, 14;

(ἢ αὐγή) ὑπόστασιν ἰδίαν οὐκ ἔχει, γεννᾶται δέ ἐκ φλογός, Philo *de incorruptibil. mundi* § 18; similarly in other writings (cf. Sophocles *Lexicon*, under the word, 5; Liddell and Scott, under the word, III. 2).

b. the substantial quality, nature, of any person or thing: τοῦ Θεοῦ (R. V. **substance**), [Hebrews 1:3](#) (Wis.

16:21; ἴδε ... τίνος ὑποστάσεως ἢ τίνος εἴδους τυγχάνουσιν οὐς ἐρεῖτε καὶ νομιζετε Θεούς, *Epist. ad' Diogn.* 2, 1 [ET]; (cf. Suicer, *Thesaurus*, under the word)).

c. steadiness of mind, firmness, courage

resolution (οἱ δέ Ῥόδιοι θεωροῦντες τὴν τὸν Βυζαντινῶν ὑπόστασιν, Polybius 4, 50,

10; οὐχ οὕτω τὴν δύναμιν, ὡς τὴν ὑπόστασιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τολμᾶν καταπεπληγμένων τῶν ἐναντίων, *id.* 6, 55, 2;

add, Diodorus 16, 32f; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18, 1,

6); **confidence, firm trust, assurance:** [2 Corinthians 9:4](#); [2 Corinthians 11:17](#); [Hebrews 3:14](#); [Hebrews 11:1](#) (for *הַיָּקִיָּה*, [Ruth 1:12](#); [Ezekiel 19:5](#); for *תְּלִקְתּוּ*, [Psalm 38:8](#) ()). Cf. Bleek, *Br. an d. Hebrew ii.* 1, pp. 60ff, 462ff; Schlatter, *Glaube im N. T.*, p. 581.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

confidence, substance.

From a compound of [hupo](#) and [histemi](#); a setting under (support), i.e. (figuratively) concretely, essence, or abstractly, assurance (objectively or subjectively) -- confidence, confident, person, substance.

see GREEK [hupo](#)

see GREEK [histemi](#)

Forms and Transliterations

*υποστασει υποστάσει ὑποστάσει υποστασεως υποστάσεως
ὑποστάσεως υπόστασιν υποστασις υπόστασις υπόστασίς
ὑπόστασις hypostasei hypostásei hypostaseos hypostaseōs
hypostáseos hypostáseōs hypostasis hypóstasis upostasei
upostaseos upostaseōs upostasis*

- v.2 = "Commended"

> The root Gk word = "to witness/testify to"

> See reverse relationship to Acts 1:8...

** Here God witnesses to our redemption...*

~ Our Faith is from Him & for Him... Thus:

~ He gives us faith that validates our faith

** In Acts 1:8, we witness to Him as Redeemer*

*> NOTE: God's witness relates to our witness
the same way God's grace relates to
our faith... While there is definitely a*

*reciprocal & perpetual relationship,
the Lord is always the active Initiator
and Source of all aspects of salvation.*

- v.3 = *Faith is the starting point:*
 - > *Looking back to the beginning...*
 - * *Creation of Christ - who IS God*
 - * *Worldview from Christ - who IS God*
 - * *Family in Christ - who IS God*
 - > *Faith wins the battle of/for beginnings*

**** Key Examples:*

- *1st John 5:13*
- *2 Timothy 3:16-17*
- *Tax Collector vs. Pharisee = Abel vs. Cain*
- *Matthew 7:24*
 - > *Faith = hearing + understanding + obedience*
 - * *Example: hearing & understanding nutrition
and exercise does not take the
place of eating right & exercising*
 - * *Seat-fillers are not faithful-saints. - JDP*
 - > *How you live reveals who/what you love.-JDP*
 - > *What you believe... = how you behave...*
 - > *How you behave... = what you really believe*
 - > *Faith works!*
 - > *Works of Faith are faithful works of/for God!*
- *Acts 1:8*
- *John 20:21 (14:15)*

- *Matthew 28:18-20*
- *2 Timothy 2:2ff*
- ~~~ *Luke 4:28 ~~~ (response to Jesus' sermon)*

**** Andy Stanley's 5 Catalysts to Growing Faith*

- > *Breaking Faith/trust = the fall & futility...*
- > *Building Faith/trust = the family of faith*

1. Practical biblical teaching

- > *"How To Live Life" = Pastor Joel's series*
- > *Equipping to BE requires teaching to DO!*
- > *Living & BE-ing requires loving & DO-ing!*
- > *See Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24)*
- > *Matt. 5-7 = portrait of biblical faith...*

2. Providential relationships (people)

- > *Who did God use to get your attention?*

**** Ask opposite too!*

** Who drew you away from God?*

- 1. Drifting*
- 2. Distracting & Disconnecting*
- 3. Dilly-dallying (with lesser things)*
- 4. Disobeying deliberately*
- 5. Defying & Denying Christ/Church*

- > *How did God use them to do so?*

> *You need to look for God's "person"*

~ If you're lost, look for God's found person

~ If you're found, look for God's lost person

** Who? How? Where? When? Why?*

** Persons of Peace teaching per Jesus*

> *You need to look for God's "people"*

~ God's PERSON (see above)

~ God's POD

* Timothy

* Barnabas

* Paul

~ God's POSE (small/life group)

~ God's PLATOON (Church Family)

~ God's PEOPLE

> See Proverbs 13:20!

> See 1 Corinthians 15:33

> NOTE: Relationships have a spiritual impact

~ We want to get people out of caves and
into circles...

~ and out of religious rows into faith circles

> Relationships impact our faith - that's
reality, for better or for worse!

> If you are in (or even leading) a Bible study that is not equipping, challenging, & actually helping you to LIVE more Christ-like in a powerful & progressive way.... Then, get this... you are FAILING the Bible Study. And... or... that Bible Study (or church) and it's leadership... is failing YOU. - JDP

3. Private (spiritual) disciplines

> Look for biblical examples of:

* Thus says the LORD...

* Biblical commands...

* "When you..." passages

* "One another" passages

> Many disciplines begin as "obligations"

> Discipline always leads to progress

> Discipline is about delayed gratification

> See Matthew 6:1...motive matters eternally!

- > *Your love & passions have your devotions!*
- > *Time, talent & treasure tells your trust story*
- > *Give God your first & your best...PRINCIPAL*
- > *By faith... obligations become celebrations!*

4. *Personal ministry (serve)*

- > *Your selfless & sacrificial commitment to God-honoring service, that is the fruit of your salvation and a refining aspect of your sanctification. - JDP*
- > *See Matthew 14:13ff... (feeding the 5,000)*
 - * *We need to get outside our comfort zones*
 - * *See Christ provides... & Christians serve*
 - ~ *See His sovereignty & our responsibility*
 - ~ *Bring God what you have...*
 - ~ *Watch Him do what He does...*
 - ~ *Then go & do what He tells you to do...*
 - ~ *Thank Him w/ loving, faithful obedience*
 - ~ *No matter what!*
 - ~ *Biblical Faith is > unbelief & Fear!*
- > *See account of Peter walking on the water*
 - * *Peter says: If it's You Lord...*
 - ~ *This was NOT Peter's power...*
 - ~ *Christ's invitations have His*
 - * *When Peter's faith sinks... so does he!*

5. *Pivotal circumstances*

- > *Some "positive" pivotal circumstances*
 - * *Meeting a person...*
 - * *Hearing God's Word...*

- * *The miracle of life... a baby's birth*
- * *Experiencing God in a missional setting...*
- > *More "challenging" pivotal circumstances*
 - * *Tragedies on a personal level*
 - * *Tragedies on a regional, national, global...*
 - * *See C.S. Lewis' quote on pain...*
- > *NOTE: there are 3 types of pivotal c's (JDP)*
 - * *God gets your attention*
 - * *Drawing you to God*
 - * *Surrendering to victory!*
- > *James 1:2-4...*
 - * *Scripture says that trials test our faith*
 - * *Scripture... perseverance finishes our F*
- > *Jesus creates negative circumstances...*
 - * *John 11:1ff*
 - * *Jesus intentionally waited for Laz to die...*
 - * *Jesus felt/shared their pain... (even tho...)*
 - * *Jesus chose the "hard" to share the holy!*
- > *"Reframing pain does not 'excuse' God (for He is ALWAYS good), but rather, reframing pain helps to explain God."*
- Andy Stanley
- > *My own example...*
 - * *My mother took her own life when I was 3*
 - * *Gideon's infant stroke.*
 - * *Choosing my ministry path...*
 - * *Dealing with ministry devils...*
 - * *NEXT??? (...more will be coming)*
 - * *Out of the breaking of my sinful boulders, God pulverized the gravel down to*

powder...

** BUT... to that pulverized & refined dust,
God added His grace... and missional
mortar... to create the concrete, firm
foundation of my saving & sanctifying
faith... Amen & AMEN!*

**** Remember reverence...*

> 2018 was our year of REVERENCE

Reverence = applied awe in an awesome God!