

LIVING BY FAITH¹

Main and Oklahoma Church of Christ
Summer, 2008

June 1

Week One: The Cloud of Witnesses

Have you ever struggled with your faith? Do you sometimes find it hard to persevere? Do you find it hard to focus on Jesus? You are not the only person who has had that experience. In fact, throughout history, many of God's great people have struggled with the paradox of faith. In Hebrews 12, these are the "great cloud of witnesses".

People who live by faith are not people without problems. People who live by faith are not perfect people. We do not want to overemphasize the faults of the people of God we will study in this series, but we want to understand that faith allows us to overcome the challenges of our lives. History ("his" story) tells of many folks who lived by faith, but in this series, we examine those mentioned in Hebrews 11.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:1-12:3, "let us fix our eyes on Jesus...."

Key Themes

Faith

Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith

Focusing on Jesus

1. Let's talk about the purpose of and the need for this study series

2. Overview of Hebrews 11-12

3. Faith is Important to God

It empowers his people for perseverance

It pleases God

It does the work of God in the lives of men

4. Faith is Important for God's people

It empowers us to persevere

It gives hope

It commends us to God

It provides understanding

It anticipates the future

It overcomes fear

It overcomes the temptations of sin

It motivates obedience

¹ These student sheets are generally based on a series of lessons by the same title. It is believed that the series originated at the Memorial Road church in Edmond, Oklahoma. Because the original series as received provided only Teachers' Guides, these student guides were developed.

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June 8

Week Two: Abel, “The First”

Why do people give to God? What empowers our giving and generosity? How do some people manage to give so much to God? The answer is a matter of the heart. “The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart.” While those words were not originally spoken with reference to faith, they accurately describe faith. Faith is a heart matter.

This week, we begin with Abel as an example of someone who lived by faith. Abel’s heart demonstrates his faith. People are generous because they have giving hearts.

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Scripture

Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:1-16

Key Themes

Giving

Decisions have consequences

The importance of our hearts

Where is our focus?

1. The Story of Abel and Cain, from Abel’s perspective

2. Understanding Abel’s Heart

3. Understanding Abel’s Giving

What he gave

Giving is worship

4. Understanding the Consequences

5. So what?

Following God has consequences in other relationships

Sin is powerful, but faith is even more powerful

God accepts worship from our hearts

Materialism is the great enemy of spirituality

Just thinking....

What does it mean for me to live by faith in the area of sharing my blessings and resources?

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June 15

Week Three: Noah, “The Flood”

Do you ever think you are alone in your struggle to follow God faithfully? Do you ever feel that everyone is against you and you are alone in your walk? The Noah story is for you! Imagine what it was like for Noah—no one else is faithful, people make fun of your faith for over 100 years.

Against all opposition, Noah by faith acts to save his family. He is righteous and obedient and patient. Certainly that is some of what it means to live by faith.

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Scripture

Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:1-9:17

Key Themes

Favor or grace in the eyes of the Lord

Righteousness—what is it?

Now that’s patience!

Obedience is not optional

1. The Story of Noah

2. The challenge of Noah—finding favor with God

Why does Noah find favor with God?

Is it because he is different from the people of his day?

3. The perseverance of Noah

Making the connections....

Righteous

Obedient

Patient

4. Facing the unknown

5. The Faith of Noah

Just thinking....

What might I conclude about God’s timing and my patience?

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June 22

Week Four: Abraham, “The Journey”

What is the longest trip you have ever made? Where did you go? How long did it take? How many miles did you cover? How long did it take you to get ready?

This week’s lesson is about a man who went on a trip but did not know exactly where he was going. The trip took him a lifetime. More important than the physical details of this week’s story are the spiritual details. Abraham made this journey by faith.

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Scripture

Hebrews 11:8-10; Genesis 12-25

Key Themes

Journey—a story of physical and spiritual changes, going to places never before seen

Seeking a heavenly country

Fatherhood—the example of a patriarch

When faith is tested

1. The Story of Abraham

2. The journey of Abraham

Understanding the journey

Seeing the parallels in our lives today

3. The heavenly country

Longing for something future, something better

4. When Faith is tested

Just thinking....

Abraham is called the father of the faithful. Am I faithful? Is he my father? In what way?

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June 29

Week Five: Jacob, “The Struggle”

It seems that struggles are a part of life. Struggles come in all sizes and shapes—physical, emotional, spiritual. What is the longest you have ever wrestled with a specific problem? Have you ever struggled with your faith in God? Jacob was a man who had many struggles—in his family, with his God, with his faith. His life was filled with struggles—many of them of his own making.

This week we look at Jacob’s struggles as our model of living by faith—because he eventually overcame them.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:21; Genesis 25-35; 46-50

Key Themes

Struggles are a part of life.

Deepening faith. Jacob started by going through the motions of faith; eventually faith “took hold”.

Integrity. What is the connection between integrity and faith?

Patience. Sometimes Jacob struggled because he was not willing to wait and let God take care of things in God’s own time.

1. The Story of Jacob

2. The struggles of Jacob in the realm of faith

How were Jacob’s struggles with God and with others related to his faith?

3. The faith of Jacob at his death

Jacob blessed Joseph’s sons as an evidence of his faith in God’s future for his family

4. The faith journey of Jacob

Jacob’s early struggles reflected a shallow faith

His deeper faith later in life led to a more peaceful life free of struggles

Just thinking....

Sometime, somehow, somewhere, in some way, I am going to have to take responsibility for my spiritual life. When, where, how?

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July 6

Week Six: Joseph, “The Big Picture”

You’ve experienced it, haven’t you? Getting so caught up in things that we lose sight of the big picture? Not seeing the forest for the trees? Sometimes solutions are so obvious that we make things hard. We miss what God is trying to show us because of the distractions, or because we have our own plans, or because of limited vision.

This week, Joseph provides us an example of one who overcame the “stuff” of life and lived out God’s big picture in his life. Despite heartbreaks, family rejection, slavery, prison, false accusations, hardships and disappointments, God came through for Joseph. One of the times it’s hardest to live by faith is when you can’t see.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:22; Genesis 37; 39-45, 47, 50

Key Themes

The big picture. What is God’s big picture in your life, in the life of this church?

Patience. God acted on God’s timeline, not Joseph’s.

Endurance. Daily temptations may cause us to lose hope, but Joseph endured.

Hope. When the big picture focuses, hope for the future is secure.

Promise. God’s promises are certain—despite what the little picture suggests.

1. The Story of Joseph

2. The problems of Joseph’s life.

Can you imagine how he must have felt?

3. The faith responses of Joseph’s life.

Review Joseph’s responses to the painful events of his life. What does faith really look like?

4. The motivations of Joseph’s life.

What things kept Joseph going on in hope, even when he couldn’t see?

Just thinking....

Disappointments come. Frustrations abound. Doubts surface. Perhaps God has abandoned his people. How can we overcome? God, help me see the big picture!

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July 13

Week Seven: Moses, “The Leader”

What is the special talent God has given you for his service? Moses is one of the first persons in the Bible whom we identify by the contemporary word “leader”. Moses became a leader in spite of the obstacles. Being a leader is hard work and often extremely frustrating. As a leader, Moses had his share of frustrations. He spent a long time in preparation.

In one sense, all are leaders. Someone is watching us, following us. This week, Moses shows us what it means to live by faith.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:23-29; Exodus 2-4

Key Themes

Leadership vs. faithful leadership.

God’s calling in our lives.

Accepting God’s timing.

Getting ready.

Envisioning—seeing the future through God’s eyes.

1. The Story of Moses

2. The nature of leadership.

What connections do you see between faith and leadership?

3. The preparation of Moses.

What is the difference between leading, and leading by faith?

Explore the way in which God’s timing is evident in Moses’ faith journey.

4. The calling of Moses.

The burning bush is followed by Moses’ many excuses. How do you get from excuses to faithful leader?

Just thinking....

Living by faith is no easy thing—face to face with God, accepting God’s timing, way, and call, picking up the snake that scares us. Living by faith is not something we do alone. Living by faith is life with God.

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July 20

Week Eight: Rahab, “The Facts”

Isn't God amazing? He can forgive any sinner who acknowledges him and obeys him. How remarkable this is stands out in this week's study of Rahab. Although she was a foreigner and a sinner by the standards of most any society, she concluded that God was real. Because of this, she acted. She is not only part of the record of Hebrews 11, she is also mentioned in James 2. Living by Faith takes a new twist this week.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:30-31; Joshua 2:1-14; 6:1-27

Key Themes

Knowledge.

Inclusion.

Action.

Trusting in the face of the unknown.

1. The Story of Rahab

2. The facts, just the facts.

What causes one to act? Rahab had only the facts she had heard about Israel and Israel's God.

3. Understanding the risk involved.

How risky was it for Rahab to do what she did?

When is it risky to trust God?

4. When action makes a difference.

Rahab's actions saved the spies, and also saved her family.

Just thinking....

Living by faith ultimately depends upon seeing God. Without the knowledge of God—his power and his will—faith will always be fleeting and faint.

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July 27

Week Nine: Gideon, “The Coward”

All of us have talents God has provided for his ministry. Not all of us use the talents God has provided for his ministry. One reason we fail is lack of courage. Lots of things get in our way and sap our courage and strength. Gideon’s cowardice came in the face of the threat of the enemy. By listening to God’s call, he was able to find the strength to attack Israel’s enemies in the face of insurmountable odds. Living by faith is often the journey from fear to faith. Gideon gives us a great example of what can be when we let God transform us.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:32-38; Judges 6-8

Key Themes

Turning Fear into Faith

Patience

God is in Control

Making noise for God may encourage others.

1. The Story of Gideon

2. When we look a whole lot like Gideon.

If we face the same challenges and problems as Gideon, could we expect help from the same source?

3. Turning fear into faith.

Does God have any other way to develop faith other than through fear?

Define victory.

Consider the progression of faith.

Are you afraid? Perhaps God is calling you to step out and lead the way.

Just thinking....

Living by faith doesn’t always feel like faith—sometimes it feels more like fear, and doubt, and despair. In God’s patience, we grow in faith so we can live by faith. That is good news!

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August 3

Week Ten: Samson, “The Weakling”

Some people seem to have everything going for them. Like Samson—good parents, religious history, devotion, vows, commitment. Samson was strong, had friends, and always had a beautiful woman nearby. However, he didn’t have the one thing that really matters. He didn’t have faith—at least not at first.

Trusting God is not always easy. Trusting self and our own strength is easier. Samson gives us a wonderful lesson in how living by faith demands that we depend on God.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:32; Judges 13-16

Key Themes

Strength

Weakness

Focusing life.

It’s never too late.

1. The Story of Samson

2. The importance of perspective.

Samson’s life changed because his perspective changed. What is the connection between faith and perspective?

3. God doesn’t give up.

Many ask, “How can we go on?” How can we not go on when we recall that God is keeping on.

Just thinking....

Living by faith reminds me that it is never too late. What a God we serve!

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August 10

Week Eleven: David, “The Heart”

Most people have heard the phrase, “a man after God’s own heart”. Careful Bible students know it is a description of David. David did many wonderful things in his life to please God and glorify God. However, not everything David did pleased God. Living by faith doesn’t mean we never fail or fall. David’s road was not always easy, because sin is never easy. This we should learn: living by faith is easier when our heart is set on God.

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Scripture

Hebrews 11:32; 1 Samuel 16-17; 2 Samuel 11-12

Key Themes

The importance of a good heart.

The challenge of a bad heart

When God sees the heart

1. The Story of David

A study in contrasts

2. Describing the good heart of David.

Study the Goliath story to identify characteristics of David’s good heart.

3. Describing the bad heart of David.

Study the Bathsheba story to identify characteristics of David’s bad heart.

4. The connection between a good heart and living by faith.

What can one do to keep one’s heart aligned with God in the faith journey?

Just thinking....

Living by faith has an impact on others. David’s victory over Goliath sparked a national revival. When we live by faith, anything is possible. We do believe that, don’t we?

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August 17

Week Twelve: Samuel, “The Listener”

Have you ever known a really good listener? How important is listening to you? Do you listen as well as you would like? Always? How important is it to listen to the word of God? Samuel entered the history of God’s people at a time when God rarely spoke to his people. That changed with Samuel. From the time he was a young servant working with Eli, until he was an old man, Samuel listened to the Lord. If we really want to understand this matter of living by faith, we can’t ignore the life of Samuel who lived by faith because he listened to God.

Note: Your teacher may choose to include additional ideas or eliminate some of those in this outline, but here are the basics of this lesson.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:32; 1 Samuel 2,3,7,12

Key Themes

Listening to God

A strong heritage

The heart of a servant

1. The importance of listening.

How will we live by faith if we don’t learn how to listen?

2. The spiritual development of Samuel.

3. The family heritage of Samuel.

Hannah gave Samuel a head start. How is Hannah also an example of one who lived by faith?

4. The ability to listen will take one a long way in the right direction.

Samuel served as priest and judge, and also as prophet. In what ways does he foreshadow Christ?

Just thinking....

Each of us is a part of God’s plan, but we might never know it if we don’t listen. Others are part of God’s plan, but how will they know it? This living by faith is not as easy as it sounds!

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August 24

Week Thirteen: The Prophets, “The Servants”

The prophets of God in the Old Testament were very special people. They made known his will, and helped in carrying it out. God frequently refers to them as his servants. They deserve mention in the “Hall of Faith”. They also lived by faith.

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Scripture

Hebrews 11:32-38

Key Themes

My servants

Good prophets and bad prophets. All are servants; not all are genuine.

Being a servant in today’s world.

1. The work of the prophets.

Speak for, speak forth, fore-speak.

2. The reliability test for prophets.

So how does one know if a prophet is really a prophet?

3. The reliability test for Christians.

How does living by faith provide a reliability test for Christians?

What other reliability tests can you mention, or are part of how the world evaluates Christians?

Just thinking....

If God were to inspire a new “Hall of Faith”, who would be included?

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