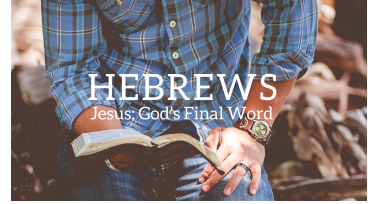


## DISCUSSION GUIDE :: EPISODE 7

**JESUS; GOD'S FINAL WORD**  
**LEARNING TO LIVE WITH FAITH**  
**HEBREWS 11:1-40**  
**10/29/2017**



### MAIN POINT

We don't have to see to believe. We can let go of our doubts and learn to live with faith.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Think back to the time you first began following Christ. Would you say your faith was strong or weak? Explain.**

**How has your faith grown since then? What is an experience that helped strengthen your faith?**

**Do you expect your faith to grow even stronger as you get older? How do you think that will happen?**

The antonym of doubt is faith. As we struggle through seasons of doubt, God wants to remove the weight of that burden and strengthen our faith. Like Thomas, and scores of other biblical characters, we must learn to believe without seeing. This is where we walk and live in freedom with Christ.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 11:1,23-40.**

**Put verse 1 in your own words.**

**There is an expression that says, "Feed your faith and starve your fears." How did Moses and Rahab live this out? What other experiences from verses 32-37 stand out to you as examples of this?**

**What does it mean to you that not all these people of faith met with "success"? What does this tell you about the life of faith? Do you find this encouraging or discouraging? Why?**

The hardships these Old Testament individuals faced teach us that faith expresses itself in obedience, courage, and endurance. Also, having faith does not guarantee a carefree life. Enduring pain requires more faith than escaping pain.

As believers, we often experience circumstances in which it's hard to truly believe God's goodness, but we can face these difficult situations with trust in God, who is good and is present to help us. We're reminded that God often saves us through the fire, not from the fire (v. 34; Daniel 3). God doesn't promise to take away our suffering and affliction; He promises to help us endure it and draw us closer to Him through the process.

**What is the good news for us in these verses? How does that truth impact your faith?**

Throughout the chapter, the author provided examples of people in the Old Testament who exercised faith. He focused most heavily on Abraham and Moses. To complete the list with a crescendo, he recounted an inspiring litany of the fruit of faith displayed in the virtuous life, faithful death, and anticipated resurrection of numerous Old Testament heroes. However, although their faith was approved, they did not receive what God had promised. The purpose of this delay was to ensure that they would not be perfected apart from Jesus Christ. It's ultimately through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that we know for certain God is good and with us.

## APPLICATION

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

**What is one situation where you need to "feed your faith and starve your fears"?**

**Name at least one way you have been blessed by believing without seeing.**

**Who is someone who needs you to show mercy as they right now struggle with doubts? What is challenging about that? What is one way you can do it?**

## PRAY

Thank God for His mercy that strengthens your faith through seasons of doubt. Invite Him to show you how you can live in faith this week in such a way that you strengthen others, too.

## COMMENTARY

### HEBREWS 11:1,23-40

11:1. The Greek word for "reality" is hypostasis. It has been used previously to describe the relationship of Christ to God (1:3) and the firm confidence that believers possess (3:14). Faith is not fleeting but substantial enough to generate confidence. The Greek word for "proof" is elegchos, indicating an inner conviction that is not based on visible matters. Divine approval is the primary consequence of faith. Other results of faith are the declaration of righteousness, the ability to look forward to the heavenly city of God, the ability to understand that faith is possible only because God is faithful, the ability to accomplish great things in the world, and the ability to see that even when believers are persecuted and murdered, beyond this world is a better resurrection.

11:24-26. The events narrated in 11:24-26 find no parallel in the Exodus narrative, but are the author's reflections and conclusions based on the Old Testament's overall statements about Moses and possibly on current tradition concerning Moses known to the author.

11:27. This verse seems to contradict the Exodus account of Moses' fear when he left Egypt. This in turn raises the question of whether the author is speaking of the first time Moses left Egypt in his flight to Midian (Exod 2:14-15) or is it a reference to the exodus event itself under Moses' leadership (Exod 13:17-15:21). Moses "persevered" because he saw "him who is invisible." This has been applied to the burning bush experience (Exod 3:1-4:17), the pillar of cloud and fire, and to various visions. It is probably more accurate to suggest the author was summing up all such events in the general statement he makes.

11:28. The reference to the Passover and the sprinkling of blood comes from Exod 12:7,13,21-23. Moses "kept" the first Passover in direct response to the command of God. This act of placing the blood on the doorposts prevented "the destroyer" from "touching" (an idiom for "killing") the firstborn.

11:29-31. These verses constitute a paragraph unit that contains a startling omission and a startling inclusion. The surprising omission is the absence of Joshua's name in conjunction with the fall of Jericho. The surprising inclusion is the mention of Rahab and the following three facts: she was a Gentile (in fact a Canaanite), a woman, and a prostitute. Her name is also mentioned positively in Matthew's genealogy (Matt 1:5) and in Jas 2:25.

Verse 30 references the fall of the walls of Jericho as found in Josh 6:1-21. "By faith" has no referent in the verse, but it would seem obvious that the people of Israel are being referred to here. Verse 31 speaks of Rahab from the account of Josh 2:1-21, especially vv. 10-11. She is called a "prostitute" in Josh 2:1; 6:17,22,25. Rahab "was prepared to assume present peril for the sake of future preservation (Josh 2:12-16)." Because of her actions which exhibited her faith, her family was spared (Josh 6:17,22-25). Rahab's commendation is not dependent upon her relationship to any male, including husband or father.

11:32-40. Much as a preacher who must compress part of a message for the sake of time, in Hebrews 11:32-38 the writer gave concise yet thorough summary of Old Testament heroes of faith. He referred to individuals, actions, and experiences without extensive elaboration. He mentioned names and situations, assuming his Jewish Christian readers were familiar with the Old Testament accounts.

The writer listed Old Testament judges. These were champions or deliverers—mostly military leaders who freed their people from oppression. Gideon was a man of faith who obeyed God. Reluctantly and with misgivings about his abilities, Gideon led his small, vastly outnumbered force against the Midianites. He trusted God, and God granted victory. Barak agreed to lead an army against the forces of Jabin, king of Canaan, only if the prophetess Deborah went with him. With the assurance God had given the enemy into his hands, Barak defeated Jabin's better-equipped army and freed his people. Samson, a flawed man of tremendous strength, resisted the Philistines who oppressed his people, single-handedly killing a large number of them. His final act against his enemy required faith. By God's power, Jephthah liberated his people from the Ammonites' oppression. To fulfill a tragically misguided and erroneous vow to God, Jephthah sacrificed his daughter. In this case, God used even misguided faith to accomplish His purpose.

The last heroes of faith listed by name are David and Samuel—last, but by no means least. Samuel was Israel's last Judge. He also was a priest and bridged the gap between the Judges and the kings. In addition, he was a link to the prophets. Samuel faithfully followed God's leading in anointing David to succeed Saul as Israel's king. David, Israel's greatest king, raised his nation to the pinnacle of power and prominence through military conquests.

To list all the prophets by name would have taken a lot of time and space, so the writer mentioned them as a group. These courageous men delivered God's messages of judgment and comfort to their people. They called for repentance and covenant loyalty; they addressed injustices and revealed that God expected His people to reflect His character and to live by His standards. The holy God demanded that His people be holy. The prophets' tasks were difficult and often dangerous, but they persevered in faith.

Without giving names, the writer referred to Old Testament saints who overcame a wide variety of difficulties by faith. Some conquered kingdoms (David); some administered justice (Samuel, Solomon, David); others obtained promises (Abraham; Israelites who entered the promised land); and some shut the mouths of lions (Daniel).

Who were the heroes of faith who quenched the raging of fire? The writer may have had in mind the three Hebrew young men who miraculously survived the super-heated furnace. David escaped the edge of the sword by hiding from Saul, and Elijah evaded Jezebel's clutches. Samson lost his power when Delilah cut his hair, but he gained strength after being weak. Many Old Testament leaders became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight as they fought Israel's enemies.

The statement that women received their dead raised to life again calls to mind Elijah's raising the widow's son and Elisha's raising the Shunammite woman's son. Verse 36 also could refer to numerous people of faith in the Old Testament and in the early years of the Christian movement who suffered because of their faith.

Death by stoning was a method of execution in Old Testament and New Testament times. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death. Jewish tradition taught that Isaiah was sawed in two. Many of God's faithful people died by the sword, and others too numerous to be named suffered persecutions and afflictions. The writer here may have had in mind Elijah and Elisha.

The writer bluntly asserted that the world was not worthy of the people of faith to whom he referred. The sin-darkened world that opposed them did not deserve the brilliance of their godly lives. The so-called civilized society that hounded their steps and made them homeless nomads was not fit to be their home.

## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Hebrews 12:3-13