

# Faith: Into the Unknown

A Study of Hebrews - (Hebrews 11:8-16)

John Tabler, March 29th, 2020

## - \_\_\_\_\_ by faith (Hebrews 11:8-10)

*“not knowing where he was going”*

## - \_\_\_\_\_ by faith (Hebrews 11:11-12)

*“By faith, Sarah herself received power”*

## - \_\_\_\_\_ by faith (Hebrews 11:13-16)

*“but having seen them and greeted them from afar”*

## This Week’s Discussion Guide:

Welcome to 12th and last week of this 12 week study of Hebrews 5-11! After this week, our groups will be taking a break from our normal discussion of our current sermon series. Our plan is to start a new small group season the week of Sunday April 19th (a week after Easter). Even though our Hebrews study is wrapping up, it is our hope to continue to connect with each other between now and when our groups start back up again :).

### Getting Started:

Last Sunday morning was our third on-line service. What was it like for you to stay at home and watch instead of us gathering together on our church campus? Who did you watch the on-line service with? What were some of your feelings while watching the on-line service and what did you feel when it was over?

The latest news regarding this social distancing season we are in is that it most likely will be extended through the month of April. We were all hoping for a shorter conclusion and now need to gear up for a longer season of being stretched and trusting God for many things.

There are some clear challenges and concerns regarding what we and our world are experiencing. Along with opportunities for us to trust and persevere through this season, what positive outcomes have you noticed in our surrounding communities? Because God can bring good out of anything for those who are pursuing God (Romans 8:28), what are some positive personal things that you can identify as you have strived to lean toward God?

One of the first insights we heard last Sunday was how Abraham obeyed God because of his faith (Hebrews 11:8). We all have opportunities to obey God (trusting Him enough to follow His promptings regardless of our feelings).

During this pandemic season, how have you chosen to trust God enough to do something (small or not so small) because you believed God was prompting you to take a step of obedience?

Another insight we heard last Sunday was how Abraham and Sarah chose not to focus on what was behind them, so that they were able to focus on what was ahead of them (Hebrews 11:15). Ok - let’s not focus too much on the past, but ... what have you been missing (large or small) during this season that you look forward to experiencing again when life returns to something closer to normal?

## Quick Review:

Let's re-read Hebrews 11:8-16. Looking back at your notes from last Sunday's teaching on this passage, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, confused you, encouraged you, or stretched your thinking?

1. As we have heard the past few weeks, Hebrews 11 is God's "Hall of Faith". This chapter is full of "jersey's from the rafters" of this "Legendary Locker room" of men and women of faith. We all have our "Past heroes" we remember and admire. John Tabler shared about his "gnarly grandma" who often reflected on Hebrews 11. Looking back in your life, were there anyone who had 'gnarly faith' that personally inspired you to raise the level of your faith in God?

Beyond those you are personally related to, who else in history (from the Bible or outside of the Bible) do you reflect on with admiration and inspiration?

2. So far, we looked at several examples of faith in Hebrews 11. (Abel, Enoch, Noah and now Abraham and Sarah). The author of Hebrews shares these examples of faith who would have been familiar to the original readers of this letter. Rather than looking at each in detail, let's reflect back and look at what the writer says about faith so far through these examples.

What do the following verses say to support or expand the writer's definition of faith?

Hebrews 11:3

Hebrews 11:6

Hebrews 11:7b

Hebrews 11:10

Hebrews 11:13

What themes or commonalities do you see in the examples of faith in Hebrews 11, so far ?

3. Read Hebrews 11:13. Abraham and Sarah lived by faith as they followed God's call to leave a safe, developed city to live in tents for the rest of their lives. Abraham lived about 2100 BC and the people of Israel finally settled in the land and called it their own in 1400 BC. For 700 years, the people of Israel, starting with Abraham and Sarah were sojourners and not settlers.

Read Genesis 12:1-3. How much of what was promised to Abraham did he receive before he died? (Read also Acts 7:1-5) Compare Hebrews 11:11 with Romans 4:17, 21. What do we learn that Abraham specifically believed about God?

The details in Hebrews 11:8-16 reveal motives not provided in the Genesis story of Abraham and Sarah. What do the following verses (Hebrews 11:10, 14, 16) refer to ? (See also Revelation 21:1-4)

4. What is implied by the phrase in Hebrews 11:13 "having acknowledged that they were strangers and aliens on the earth."? Compare the above verse with 1 Peter 2:11-12. How can this practically be a perspective we can embrace as we live out our lives?

As faithful followers of Christ, and students of Scripture, we are not encouraged to believe God will protect us from all strife and struggle. The truth is (back in Abraham's day and ours) sometimes God's people face tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and even death. (see Romans 8:35, 2 Corinthians 6:4-5; 11:23-28).

How is this helpful and hard at the same time as we live our days in a broken world? Paul describes himself "as having nothing, yet possessing all things" in 2 Corinthians 6:10.

In this season we are in, what 'simple pleasures' have you experienced and seen others experience that would not have been a reality if it wasn't because of this pandemic we are enduring?

5. One commonality the people of faith had, that are listed in Hebrews 11, was hope beyond the here and now.

Read Romans 15:13 How can we help ourselves and help each other maintain our hope in God during this season of uncertainty and challenge?

6. As we wrap up our time together, and wrap up this 'small group season' ... What would you like to say to the rest of us about how you are feeling? What would you like to say to the rest of us about how this group has made a positive difference in your life? How can we stay connected for the next few weeks?

Looking back on the message from Sunday and from our discussion, what is one truth that stands out to you that you can prayerfully ask God to help apply to your life somehow?

Before we wrap up our sharing time, let's prayer for one another! What are some specific requests you have that we can pray for?