

# Living by Faith

## Lesson 1: What Is Faith? Assurance and Conviction -- Hebrews 11:1-3

Picture a chair you have never seen before. Someone you trust pulls it out, sets it behind you, and says, 'Sit down.' For a half a second your body hesitates. You cannot see what is behind you. You have not tested it. And then you sit, because you believe it is there. That small, ordinary act, leaning your full weight onto something you cannot see, is closer to the heart of faith than most of us realize. Faith is not a leap into the dark. It is the confidence to rest your weight on what God has said.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is one of the most stirring passages in all of Scripture. It is a long roll call of ordinary people who lived by trusting God, and before the writer names a single one of them, he stops to tell us what faith actually is. 'Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' Two great words anchor everything that follows. Assurance. Conviction. Faith is not wishful thinking with its fingers crossed. It is settled confidence and inner certainty about realities we cannot yet see with our eyes.

Maybe you have wondered whether your own faith is the real thing. You believe in God, but some mornings the believing feels thin, like a coat too light for the weather. You are not alone in that. Every name in this chapter faced a moment when what God promised was nowhere in sight, and they had to decide whether God's word was enough to stand on. Their lives shout one answer across the centuries: it was.

This lesson begins the study by asking the most basic question of all, the question the whole chapter is built to answer. What is faith, and what does it rest on? Before we walk with Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, we need to know what carried them. The answer is not their strength or their feelings. It was their God, and the word He had spoken. That same word is still able to hold the full weight of a human life.

**Group Discussion:** When people in our culture use the word 'faith,' what do they usually seem to mean by it? How is that popular idea different from the way Hebrews 11:1 describes faith?

**Personal Reflection:** Think of a time you had to trust God for something you could not see or control. What did that experience teach you about where your confidence was really resting?

*Read Hebrews 11:1-3*

### Study Questions

1. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as 'the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' What do the words 'assurance' and 'conviction' tell us about the nature of true faith, and how does this differ from a vague hope that something might turn out well?

2. Be honest with yourself for a moment. When you think about your own walk with God, does your faith feel more like settled assurance or like anxious hoping? What might be feeding the difference?
3. The verse speaks of 'things hoped for.' In Scripture, biblical hope is not uncertainty but confident expectation of what God has promised. What are some of the unseen things God has promised His people that faith is meant to lay hold of?
4. Name one promise of God that you find genuinely hard to live as if it were true. What would change this week if you treated that promise as solidly real?
5. Faith is called 'the conviction of things not seen.' Why is it significant that the most important realities in the Christian life are things we cannot see? How does this shape the way a believer is meant to live (compare 2 Corinthians 5:7)?
6. We are surrounded by a culture that says 'seeing is believing.' Where do you feel the pull to live by sight rather than by faith, and what does that pull look like in your daily decisions?
7. Verse 2 says that 'by it the people of old received their commendation.' What does it mean that God commended these men and women specifically for their faith, and what does that reveal about what pleases God (compare Hebrews 11:6)?

8. Whose example of faith has shaped you the most, whether someone in Scripture or someone you have known? What about their trust in God do you most want to imitate?
  
9. Verse 3 says, 'By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.' Why does the writer ground faith in the word of God, and how does this connect to the truth that 'faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ' (Romans 10:17)? How does this guard us against the idea that faith is merely a feeling or that any sincere belief will do?
  
10. Looking back over Hebrews 11:1-3 as a whole, name one specific area of your life where God is calling you to rest your full weight on His word this week. What is one concrete step of trust He is forming in you?

### **Now or Later**

Reflect on these passages: Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing the word of Christ, so trust grows as we feed on Scripture; 2 Corinthians 5:7, we walk by faith and not by sight, the settled posture of the Christian life; Hebrews 11:6, without faith it is impossible to please God, and He rewards those who seek Him; John 20:29, the blessing pronounced on those who have not seen and yet believe; Genesis 1:1-3, the God who created all things by the power of His spoken word.