

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

August 2, 2026

Heros of the Faith
“True Faith”
Hebrews 11:1-3
Rev. Mike Fordham

This past week another superhero movie came out called *Spider-Man: Brand New Day*. *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* set an all-time domestic box office record by bringing in \$72 million to \$74.5 million in Thursday night preview ticket sales alone. This beats the previous record held by *Avengers: Endgame* (\$60 million). Marvel has also announced that a new Avengers movie called *Avengers: Doomsday* will premiere December 18th of this year. The movie will be 2 hours 45 minutes long.

If you have never watched any DC and Marvel movies before and would like to watch the new *Avengers: Doomsday* when it comes out in December, you can follow a graphic that shows you the order and the number of movies and television series that you will need to watch to be able to fully embrace the entire story and really appreciate the movie in December. You will need to get started right away on this project because they add up to 350 hours of content. We do love our superheroes! I have been a big fan since I was a kid enjoying all kinds of superhero comics and watching the original Batman TV show. There is just something appealing about what appears to be every day, common people who have their own unique superpowers or abilities that enable them to defeat evil. Maybe, in watching these we just might wish we had their superpowers and abilities to help in the fight or some of us may honestly just want these superpowers and abilities to use for our own selfish gain.

In this sermon series that we begin today, we are looking at a different kind of hero; Heroes of the Faith as found in *Hebrews 11*. These heroes are every day, common, imperfect women and men in the Old Testament who learned to live by faith in God and their faith in God made all the difference in their lives. The next couple of months we will visit these heroes and heroines and learn from them how to walk by faith in God out in the real world, and the good news is, we don't need any superhero powers or abilities to do so.

HEBREWS 11:1-3

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. ² Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

³ By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

FAITH IS BELIEVING

The Bible gives us what I would call three stages of faith. The first one we learn about here in Hebrews is that *Faith is Believing*. True faith begins in believing in God whom we cannot see or prove with our physical senses. There are a couple of phrases in *Hebrews 11* that point to faith as believing in that which we cannot prove. *Verse 1b* says that faith is “*the evidence of things we cannot see.*” *Verse 3* gives an example of faith that believes without seeing as it says, “*By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.*” We were not there when God created this world and we do not have scientific, verifiable proof that it was God who created this world and the manner in which God created the world and yet we believe that God did so and that is faith. *Hebrews 11:6* says in part, “*Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists....*” We cannot pray to God and have a relationship with God without first believing that God exists. Christian faith is first believing God exists even though we do not have scientifically verifiable proof.

I don’t know if we realize it or not, but we actually apply this definition of faith to a lot of elements of our lives. For example, do you believe George Washington existed? Have you ever met George? Do we have any videos or pictures of George? We are told all kinds of facts about George Washington by historians. He was born on February 22, 1732, in Westmoreland County, Virginia and he grew to be somewhere between 6’2” to 6’3” feet tall which made him much taller than most people at that time. Washington did not go to college as he left school at age 15 because his family lacked money. Everyone knows that his wife was the famous Martha Washington. As a result of George Washington’s poor dental health, he had one tooth pulled when he was just 24 years old, and by the time of his inauguration as the first president of the United States in 1789, at around 57 years of age, he had just one natural tooth left. We are now told that his false teeth weren’t made of wood, as many had believed, but consisted of teeth from slaves, his own pulled teeth, as well as ivory, animal teeth, and assorted metals. Some historians believe that Washington’s dental problems likely impacted the shape of his face and may have contributed to his quiet demeanor. You might know that Washington’s didn’t need to wear a wig as his own hair was just styled with white hair powder. Washington also loved ice cream so much he owned special ice cream-making gear. Another interesting fact is that Washington loved mules for farm work and helped make them popular in America. Washington was the only president in history to be elected unanimously by the Electoral College, and he never lived in the White House because it was finished after he died. George Washington died on December 14, 1799, at 67 years of age following a brief throat infection. It would be a safe guess to say that most of us if not all of us believe all these historical facts about George Washington to be true and yet we have no videos, pictures, and no one alive today who has ever met George Washington face to face. In other words, we accept these facts based on faith on a mountain of evidence of the life of George Washington.

We also have a mountain of evidence for believing in God, the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit even though we do not have scientifically verifiable proof.

Romans 1:20 says, “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.” We believe that God exists, and we know details about God just through looking at *creation* all around us. The entire universe shows order, complexity, and fine-tuning with complex designs that can only come from an intelligent designer. The personal God is the cause of all personal life for personal life cannot come from some impersonal force. We also know there is a God from our *conscience* or a sense of moral rights and wrongs within all of our hearts. Also, from the many *historical accounts* passed down to us of people from all walks of life and cultures who have experienced God and their lives changed because of their faith in God. Of course, for us a Christians, the *Bible* has passed down to us not only many stories of people whose faith changed their lives but also eyewitness accounts of people meeting Jesus face to face and in so doing seeing God in flesh. As Jesus said in *John 20:29*, “Then Jesus told him, ‘You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.’” We are those who are blessed as we believe that Jesus lived, died, and rose again on our behalf even though we were not there to witness it all. As one of our church fathers, Augustine, once said, “Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.” Faith is a choice to believe.

FAITH IS HOPEFUL TRUSTING

Believing that all that we’ve heard about God as Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is true, is only the first stage of faith and not enough for what the Bible means by faith. As *James 2:19* says, “You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.” The second stage of faith then is that *Faith is Hopeful Trusting*. Many people believe certain facts about Jesus Christ. Many people will *intellectually* agree with the facts the Bible declares about Jesus. But just knowing those facts to be true is not what the Bible means by “faith.” *The biblical definition of faith requires intellectual assent to the facts and trust in the facts.* J.D. Walt says in his daily Wake-Up-Call devotional that “[Faith] is visible reliance on an unseen reality.” Faith is a visible reliance that puts its trust and hope on an unseen reality. *Hebrews 11:1* puts it this way, “Faith shows the reality of what we hope for” Warren Wiersbe has a great quote that shows how faith is a hopeful trust. He writes, “The people who jest about faith don’t realize how big a part it plays in everyday affairs. It takes faith to get married because marriage vows are basically promises. It takes faith to send children off to school. It takes faith to get a prescription filled. It takes faith to eat in a restaurant, deposit money in a bank, sign a contract, drive on the highway, or get on an airplane or an elevator. Faith isn’t some kind of religious experience for the elite; it’s the glue that helps hold people’s lives together. *But remember, faith is only as good as its object. If we trust people, we get what people can do; if we trust money, we get what money can do; if we trust ourselves, we get what we can do; if we trust God, we get what God can do.*”

Our faith in the fact of Jesus living the perfect human life as God in the flesh and suffering and dying on the cross on our behalf gives us hopeful trust that God will keep His promise to forgive our sins and we can now have a relationship with God. Through our faith in the fact of Jesus’ bodily resurrection from the dead, we have hopeful trust

that God will keep His promise that when we die, we will defeat death by God giving us eternal life. Through our faith in God, when we face all kinds of various trials, we experience God's peace which passes all understanding as we have hopeful trust in God is walking with us through our trials. Francis Asbury, who was a British-American Methodist minister and who became one of the first two bishops of American Methodism said, "We live by faith in a prayer-hearing, soul-converting, soul-sanctifying, soul-restoring, soul-comforting God." All these promises from God and so many more in Scripture we can hold on to with hope because we believe and trust in our unseen God. God tells us that we can always trust Him as He says in *Isaiah 49:23b*, "*Those who trust in me will never be put to shame.*" *Hebrews 10:23* says, "*Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.*" D. Elton Trueblood stated, "Faith is not belief without proof but trust without reservation." I would add that faith is both belief without absolute proof and trust without reservation.

FAITH IS OBEYING

This leads to the third aspect of faith. If we have the first two elements of faith, belief and hopeful trust, the third piece will naturally fall into place, and that is that *Faith is Obeying*. Because of our belief and trust in God it follows that we will naturally obey God. Corrie ten Boom said, "Faith is something that has to be applied." Faith is not just something you have, it is something you receive and use. True faith in God is acted upon. If we trust God, we believe that whatever God says is best and we will follow that. That requires us to humbly admit that God's ways are better than our ways, for us to die to our own selfish ways to follow God's will and not our own. *Hebrews 11* provides us examples of women and men who believed in and trusted God so much so that they acted on what God revealed about his will and character. They lived their lives by faith in God. Their faith in God totally transformed every are of their lives. All of these women and men of faith from the Old Testament had in common a growing faith that believed in God, loved and trusted God, and based on that followed God's every direction for their lives. *Proverbs 3:5-6* perfectly lays out what a life of faith looks like in action, what it looks like to walk by faith. It says, "⁵ *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.* ⁶ *Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.*" If we believe in God and have a hopeful trust in God with all our heart, we will not depend upon our own understanding but will seek God's will in everything we do. As we do, God promises to guide every step of our lives. B. Clayton Bell wisely states, "Faith in God is not just believing he exists, but doing what he says because you believe he will keep his promises."

Those who live by faith take confident action based on what God has revealed about His character, seeking to do his will in all things. As *2 Corinthians 5:7*, "*For we live by believing and not by seeing.*" That means that how we live our lives is governed by our faith in God. As we will see in this sermon series in looking at these women and men of God from the Old Testament, they learned in their faith walk with God to obey God no matter what God asks even when the path ahead looks confusing or scary. When God directs us to give 10% of our income to Him as worship, we don't think twice about it because we trust His direction for our lives and live with the hope that He will take care of our all or needs as Jesus promised that God would do. We show our trust in God through our actions. Do we really trust God? Does it show by our actions? Living by

faith is following God's truth as found in the Bible and not popular modern opinions or shifting cultural trends or our own selfish desires. The Bible tells us in *James 2:17*, "*So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.*" As we learn to walk closely with God who graciously accepts even the weakest of faith, our belief and hopeful trust in God will grow, and our faith will begin to show in our lives as we no longer live for ourselves but our God in whom we place our faith.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *Be Confident: Live by Faith, Not by Sight*, Warren W. Wiersbe
- *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer

Icebreaker Questions

1. Who was your favorite superhero or hero growing up, and what quality made that person appealing to you?
2. What is something you regularly trust—such as a person, institution, or piece of technology—even though you do not completely understand how it works?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. The sermon describes true faith in three stages: believing, hopeful trusting, and obeying. Which of these comes most naturally to you, and which is most challenging?
2. Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as confidence in what we hope for and evidence of what we cannot see. How is biblical faith different from wishful thinking or believing without any reasonable basis?
3. The sermon states that faith is “visible reliance on an unseen reality.” What visible evidence might others see when someone is genuinely relying upon God?
4. Why is believing facts about God not enough? How do James 2:19 and James 2:17 challenge a faith that remains only intellectual?
5. Where might God currently be asking you to trust and obey Him even though the path ahead feels confusing, uncertain, or frightening?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week’s sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?