

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, June 1 – Read Hebrews 11:1-7; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 1:3 We walk by faith, not by sight,” wrote the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 5:7). This dichotomy between faith and sight captures the description of faith that opens Hebrews 11. However, deeply ingrained instincts often attune our expectations and emotions, our attitudes and actions, more to the circumstances we see than to the voice of God who speaks in Scripture. To please God by taking him at his word for things we cannot see, we must resist the attention-hoarding demands of the visible. At creation, God’s unseen word brought about all that our senses now perceive, and the Son’s powerful word still sustains his universe (Heb. 1:3). The primacy of God’s speech over our sight still stands. Trust that truth, and act in its light. God will be pleased.

Tuesday, June 2 – Read Hebrews 11:8-16 Four generations of Israel’s forebears illustrate the forward-looking hope that characterizes faith in the living God, who drew them into his gracious covenant. Our faith often fluctuates and falters. The brutally honest record of Genesis shows that theirs fluctuated and faltered also. Yet their experiences of God’s faithfulness and power bear witness to us from the pages of Scripture, and their testimony must fortify our fragile faith. They trusted and followed a Lord who could begin with an elderly, childless couple and create a countless multitude of descendants; who could confer on the offspring of a tent-dwelling nomad the possession of a bountiful homeland; who could raise the dead; and who could lift their hearts’ line of sight beyond the span of their earthly “sojourn” to greet “from afar” blessings to come in a distant future and a “better country” than anything we have yet encountered.

Wednesday, June 3 – Read Hebrews 11:17-22; Genesis 18:14; Genesis 22:16; Romans 8:32 We who live since Jesus inaugurated the new covenant have seen God keep his greatest promises at the greatest cost to himself. Trusting God’s life-restoring power, Abraham was prepared to perform a heart-wrenching act and received God’s commendation: “You . . . have not withheld your son, your only son” (Gen. 22:16). His son was spared, replaced by a substitute that foreshadowed God’s ultimate gift of faithful love: “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). When humanly impossible circumstances confront us as they did Abraham, our trembling hearts and fretful minds must be stilled to hear and heed our God’s probing question: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14).

Thursday, June 4 – Read Hebrews 11:23-31; Hebrews 3:18; Hebrews 4:6; Joshua 7:1 The OT portraits of Moses and Rahab differ widely, yet their stories converge to show us that the faith that delights God is both costly and courageous. Honored by God above all other prophets, Moses had privileged access to God’s glorious presence. Yet the self-portrait Moses offers in the Pentateuch exposes the fear mingled with his faith. Rahab, a pagan prostitute, exercised fearless faith and received the Lord’s rescue. Her confidence that God would give his people the Promised Land set her apart from “those who were disobedient,” not only in idolatrous Jericho but also in Israel (cf. Heb. 3:18; 4:6; Josh. 7:1). We too must look beyond the fleeting pleasures of sin and the threats of rejection and persecution, setting our sights on the living God, too glorious to be seen by human eyes, and the reward he will bestow (Heb. 11:24-27).

Friday, June 5 – Read Hebrews 11:32-40 Our preacher concludes his survey of OT history with an avalanche of vignettes graphically portraying the costs of living by faith in God: mockery and mistreatment, destitution and alienation, homelessness, abuse, torture, and death. Our cultural contexts, as well as our own hearts, often incline us to weigh the “pros” and “cons” of entrusting ourselves wholly to Jesus in terms of the tangible outcomes that may appear in the short run. When the reward is distant and the price to be paid is very present and painfully high, we feel pressured to conform and blend in. But Jesus called his followers to swim upstream against the downward current of the culture around them. The ancient exemplars of faith, for all their flaws, held fast to a hope in things not yet seen, considering the God who promised to be faithful and the reward worth receiving, whatever the cost. Both their testimony to God’s faithfulness and his testimony to their faith challenge our self-centered and frivolous conceptions of faith, calling us instead to lifelong endurance, with our eyes fixed steadfastly on Jesus and our hearts resolved to follow him to the end, by the grace he supplies.

Adapted from <https://www.crossway.org/books/the-esv-bible-expository-commentary-hconly-3/>