

# HEBREWS

## “NO TURNING BACK”

### Hebrews Lesson 17

**Ice Breaker:** What is your favorite newspaper or television news source and why?

**INTRO:** Most people want “news you can rely on”. If you can’t trust what someone tells you, why would you listen to them? The writer of Hebrews has spent most of his time telling us the difference between the Old Testament and the New, however one thing is absolutely the same in both: Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith comes down to trusting what God has said.

#### **READ: Hebrews 11**

***1** Now **faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** **2** This is what the ancients were commended for.*

***3** **By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.***

***4** **By faith** Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*

***5** **By faith** Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. **6** And **without faith it is impossible to please God**, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

***7** **By faith** Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

***8** **By faith** Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **9** By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

***11** **By faith** Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. **12** And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.*

***13** All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. **14** People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. **15** If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

17 **By faith** Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

20 **By faith** Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

21 **By faith** Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

22 **By faith** Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

23 **By faith** Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 **By faith** Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

29 **By faith** the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

30 **By faith** the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.

31 **By faith** the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, **33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.**

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Q: Vs. 1 says, "Now faith is **being sure of** what we hope for and **certain** of what we do not see." The original Greek text uses one word that is translated here as "being sure of" ... that word is **hypostasis**. This word carries the idea of a floor or a wall... something tangible that you can stand or lean on. The word translated "certain" is **elenchos** and it means "proof." What do these words tell you about faith?

- It is real! It has substance. It can be seen and felt by those who possess it.

- It is more than a thought, a feeling or a conviction.
- You can lean on it, stand on it and point to it as proof.

Q: What is the difference between “things hoped for” and “things not seen”?

- Things you “hope for” are things you don’t have yet, but you know are coming... maybe like a paycheck or an inheritance.
- Things “not seen” are things that are real and present, but not visible to the naked eye.
- The author is saying that faith allows you to put your full weight on what you are waiting for... He’s saying that faith itself is the proof that you’ve already received something that can’t be seen with the human eye.

Q: Verse 3 says by faith we can know how the universe was made and by who, even though we weren’t there to see it with our own eyes. How many things do you believe because a believable person or source told you, even though you don’t have any first hand information?

Q: If faith is based on the believability of source, does having weak faith mean you have judged the source to be less than believable?

- What are the implications of a weak faith in God?

Q: Verses 4-31 are often referred to as the “Faith Hall Of Fame”. Review what each of them did by faith, and then read these verses again substituting the words “by faith” with the words “by believing what God said”. What insights do you get from this exercise?

- Believing God is the key that unlocks the door to a purposeful and powerful life!
- If you want your life to matter, faith is the only way.

Q: Why do you think it is impossible to please God without faith? (vs. 6)

- God has told us He is real and that He rewards... if you don’t believe Him, you’re saying He isn’t believable.
  - Most people take offense when someone says they are not believable.
  - Saying someone is not believable is saying they either don’t know what they are talking about or not telling the truth.
  - Without faith, you’re calling God either incompetent or a liar!

Q: Verses 33–38 summarize all the great things people in previous generations did by believing what God said.

- What insights do you get from these stories?
  - Some people had great things happen, some experienced terrible things.
  - Having faith doesn’t mean things will always go the way you want.
  - Believing what God said may cause terrible pain and suffering.
    - However, by faith I will be able to stay the course, play the role God has for me and please God.

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APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. What kinds of things have you been able to do through faith?
  - a. What does this tell you about the strength of your faith?
2. In what areas of your life have you judged God to be less than believable?
3. 2Cor. 5:7 says, "*We walk by faith, not by sight*". What percentage of your walk is really by faith and what percentage is by sight?
  - a. What specifically can you do to walk more by faith?