

BY FAITH

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: HEBREWS 11

*Without faith it is impossible to please God*

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Faith is believing what we do not see. Faith is trusting God's Word. Unbelievers do not lack truth; they lack faith. They refuse to believe what they cannot see. People of faith believe what God says even if they cannot see it. We cannot always see but we can always read God's Word and believe it.

The writer of Hebrews turns to Creation for his first example. The Bible begins with these words: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). From the very opening of Scripture, we are called to believe something we cannot see. It takes faith to accept that everything around us was made by God from nothing. Our finite minds cannot comprehend it. Even though it is rational, science cannot confirm it. But if the Spirit of God has made us alive, we will believe it is true. We believe not only because it is reasonable to do so, but also because God says it in His Word.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith is the basic fundamental of Christianity. If a person has no faith, then he must conclude that God, who cannot be seen, does not exist. If someone denies God's existence, then he doesn't care to please Him.

But there is more to saving faith than believing that God exists. Those who believe in God but do not trust in God's Word are compared to demons, who know that God exists (see James 2:19) but who are not saved. Faith cannot save a person if what he or she trusts in is not Jesus and His gospel. Our faith must be in Christ. We must believe in God's plan as revealed in the Bible; we must believe the gospel. We must also trust God's Word. Believers demonstrate trust in God's Word by obeying it and agreeing with it.

The writer of Hebrews continues listing the men and women of faith pointing out their vision for a better country, a heavenly one. What an amazing thought to consider that God opened their eyes to understand that their earthly home was temporary. They looked forward longing for a place where God would live with them. The earth was a temporary country for them. They saw themselves as aliens – that is, not even a part of the earth. The people of God witnessed a taste of the power and majesty of God in the miracles they observed. The leading of the Israelites out of Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the collapse of Jericho all served to build their faith in a mighty God. As a result, they were strengthened to follow God and their faith lead them even though at the end of their lives they did not receive the promise.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Abraham was "looking forward" to a future city whose builder and maker was God (see Hebrews 11:10). Moses regarded disgrace "for the sake of Christ" as greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward (see Hebrews 11:26). How was it that they looked ahead to a heavenly city and to the coming of the Savior when neither of these things yet existed? God granted them faith in a future hope. All those who died in faith prior to Christ were saved, for they were looking forward to Christ. The same gospel hope we possess saved those who had faith in God's promise of redemption. Together with us who know Christ by name, they are made perfect.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 25:1-7

Connecting the passage to Christ:

David prayed to God in the midst of his suffering. But he prayed for more than just relief from his temporal enemies. David looked forward to a Savior who, out of God's great mercy and love, would not remember the sins of his youth or his rebellious ways. Jesus is God's answer to David's prayer. When we look back at this Scripture, we see Jesus.

Paul wrote to Titus, saying, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7).

Questions for reflection:

- Where do you see Jesus in this psalm? (Have your children look at the entire psalm and point out where they see Jesus or the plan of salvation by grace.)
- Where do you see yourself in this psalm? (We can all see ourselves as sinners like David in need of a Savior. This psalm is particularly relevant for young people because David realized that even the sins of his youth needed forgiveness.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY**BE A DOER OF THE WORD**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

WHAT WAS THIS MADE OUT OF?

Supplies:

- nail
- penny
- pencil
- rubber band
- live houseplant

The object of this lesson is to help the children see that in the end, everything we know was created out of nothing!

Line the object up on a table and ask the children one by one what it is made out of. Make a list on the board. When you get to the plant, ask them what it is made out of. A very studious child might say carbon, water and other trace minerals but you are likely to stump most of them. Then ask them who made it?

Take them back to creation and ask them, "What did God make the world out of?" (The answer is nothing.)

Then go back to the components of each of the man-made items. Perhaps for the nail they answered that it is made of iron. The follow-up question is, "What is iron made from?" The correct answer is nothing, which is also the answer for every component of every object.

Then ask the class if we can prove that these objects were made out of nothing? (The answer is no. We believe it by faith.) Why do we believe it by faith? (Mainly because God's word tells us that it is true, but also because it makes sense.)



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LOOK OUT FOR THAT HAMMER**Supplies:**

- nails
- a board

Use this object lesson to talk to the class about faith.

As you open up your lesson, pull out the hammer and the nails and act like you are going to nail a nail into the board. Keep hitting the nail on a slant so that it goes in crooked. Stop, take it out and try again. After several tries tell the class that you might need to ask them for some help to hold the nail while you hammer if you don't get it this time. On your final try, take time aim for the nail and then with a feigned blow hit the finger which is holding the nail and jump up and down in fake pain.

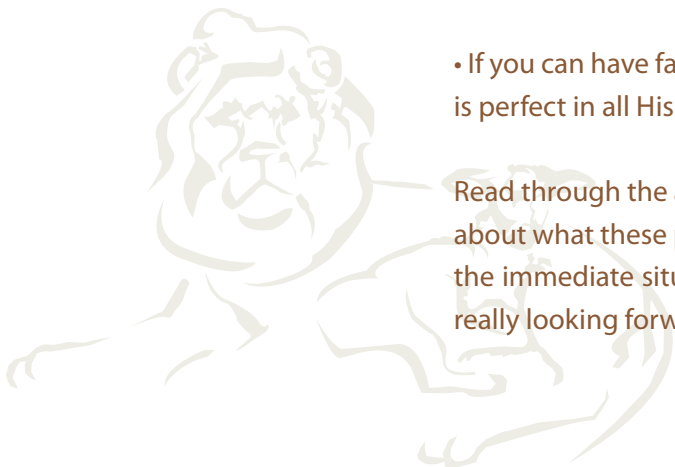
Turn to the class and say, "That's it, I need someone to hold the nail for me." Watch for those who are reluctant and ask one of them if he will hold it for you. See if you can convince him to come forward. The object is for him to trust your hammering.

Once the volunteer is convinced to hold the nail, take a few practice swings in slow motion. Hold the hammer with two hands. Your practice swings should look as though you are going to blast the nail. Then ask your holder if he is ready. And then fake one huge swing. He will likely flinch or even drop the nail. If so, draw him out about why he flinched. Ask him if he trusts you.

Excuse your volunteer after thanking him and ask the class the following questions:

- Why was it hard for my holder to hold the nail without flinching? (He or she didn't trust you.)
- What does the Bible call it when we trust something? (The Bible calls our trust – faith.)
- If you can have faith in God why is it so hard to have faith in my hammering? (God is perfect in all His ways; you are imperfect in your hammering.)

Read through the accounts of the faithful in Hebrews 11 and draw the children out about what these people were putting their faith in. You want to take their eyes off the immediate situation and help them to see that these heroes of the faith were really looking forward to God's plan in Jesus.



BY FAITH**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: HEBREWS 11****OUR HOPE IS IN A FUTURE PROMISE****Supplies:**

- (2) 8oz chocolate bars
- shoe box with lid
- 2 pennies
- 2 nickels
- 2 mini candy bars
- 4 regular sized candy bars

Use this game to help communicate our future hope of heaven to the children.

Set aside the two 8oz chocolate bars where they cannot be seen. Place the remainder of the items in a paper bag. Ask for a volunteer and invite him (or her) forward. Give him a penny and ask him if you gave him the option of keeping the penny or trading it for what is inside the box, which would he take? Do this again by adding the nickel, then one small candy bar, one regular sized candy bar and then a 2nd regular sized candy bar. Do this slowly reminding him that there might not be anything in the box. As soon as he takes your offer, stop and give him what he settled for. If he wants what is in the box, stop offering after the second regular chocolate bar. In either case open the box to reveal that there was nothing inside.

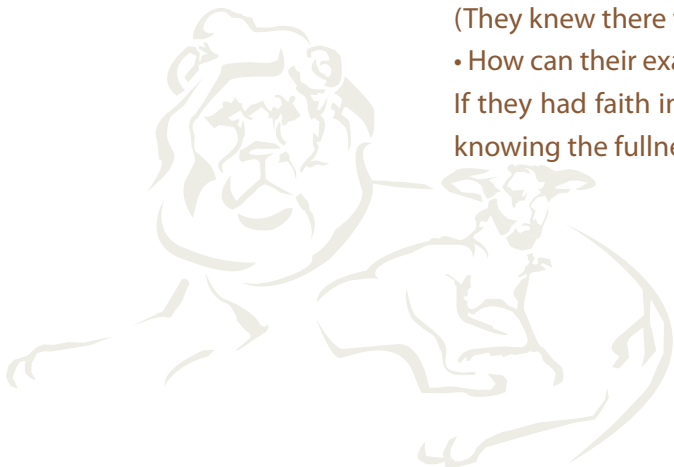
Round 2

This time show the class that you are placing two large 8oz candy bars in the box. Ask for another volunteer. Go through the whole exercise again offering the child the very same options. He or she will, of course hold out for the two large candy bars. When you get to the final opportunity, play it out a little bit. Ask her why she has so much faith to say no to all the other prizes. She will say that she knows what is coming is better.

Give her the chocolate bars then read Hebrews 11:1-16

Then ask the class the following questions

- Why did _____ (your volunteer) refuse the prizes I offered her? (He or she knew there was something better coming.)
- Why did all these heroes of the faith refuse to place their faith in worldly things? (They knew there was something better coming.)
- How can their example help us in our walk with God? (We know Jesus specifically. If they had faith in God's plan, knowing as little as they did, we should have faith knowing the fullness of God's plan.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture demonstrating the faith of one of the Old Testament Heroes.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES**PICK A HERO****Supplies:**

Paper and pencil

Read through Hebrews 11 and explain to the children how the Old Testament Heroes were looking forward to Christ. Then have each of the children write their answer to the following question:

I think _____ demonstrated the greatest measure of faith because _____.

They should fill in the blanks. Give the class some time to finish and then discuss the faith of the people mentioned in this passage. Make sure to connect their faith to a future hope that could not be found in their present experience.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Aliens – When we think of aliens we think of monsters from outer space. But when the Bible speaks of aliens, like in Hebrews 11:13, it is referring to a people who are in a land that is not their own. As Christians we have become aliens living in the world but longing for our own world, the one that is to come. We have become foreigners. We were once aliens to God, but now have become aliens to the world. See Ephesians 2:19 and 1 Peter 2:11.

