

Hebrews 11:1–6

Faith the Facts

TSC, Hebrews 11

MPT: Hebrews 11:1–6 begins giving illustrations as encouragement to not throw away confidence in Christ (10:35) or shrink back (10:39) in light of opposition, but rather to describe what enduring, saving faith that is pleasing to God looks like.

MPS: Faith begins with understanding, leads to conviction, and is shown in trust.¹

Memorial Day ... We **remember** and **honor** the men and women who gave their lives in service to our country. Through their sacrifice, we are able to **freely gather, serve, and worship**.

- Put our hands together in gratitude for their sacrifice...

Open to Hebrews 11, which is where we are gonna be for the next 10 weeks or so. As Pastor J.D. introduced last weekend, the biggest theme in Hebrews 11 is that of **faith**. Last weekend, he used the first six verses to show you **faith exemplified** in the lives of **Abel** and **Enoch**. ... This weekend, I'm actually gonna go back through a few of those verses and dig deeper into the **nature** and **aspects** of **faith proper**.

STAND + READ

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³By 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.

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

INTRODUCTION

When I was around 12, my grandfather was going through a major heart surgery. My mom was super stressed and overwhelmed by that, while at the same time trying to work and take care of me and my brother and do all the sports things.

¹Keller, [The Nature of Faith – Gospel in Life](#)

One day, we went to the grocery store to grab a few things and once we paid, Mom went to grab the car and pull up front so I could just bring the groceries out. I waited. And waited. And waited. And about 15 minutes later, my mom pulled back in all frantic. That woman had left the grocery store without me.

- Y'all ever been left? . . . or been the one who left someone?
- I used to think, "How did that happen?" Now I have four kids and, frankly, there's a chance I was supposed to bring one with me today and maybe left them. I'm not sure.

One of our elders at Apex texted me and said, "*Oh, we accidentally left kids places numerous times. Once, going to an evening service we left a child at home. Once, coming home from a church service we left a child at church. Once, heading to the mountains we left a child at Hardee's. In our defense, we had a foster baby that time and it threw our headcount off.*"

- If you see any children wandering aimlessly around RDU there's a high likelihood that child belongs to this elder.
- **There's nothing more central to parenting than not losing your kid.**

In the Christian life, there is nothing more central than faith . . . and Hebrews 11 is the classic chapter in the Bible on faith. At its core it's addressing, **What is faith?** and, **What difference does it make in my life?** And faith isn't just for Christians—**The difference between a Christian and non-Christian is not whether you have faith, but where you put the faith you have.**

Pretty much everything we do, know, and learn is the result of faith. Every day we exercise faith in all sorts of stuff:

- When you get on an **airplane**.
- When you sit down to get your **hair cut**.
- When you **make investments**.
- When you choose a **spouse**, or a **surgeon**, or a new **key member of your team** at work . . . All of these things are based on faith!

Now, when I say "faith," I imagine it might conjure up all sorts of thoughts for you. So let me start by explaining what faith is NOT.

What Faith Is Not

1. Not a feeling

In case you haven't figured this out already, your feelings are not always the best indicators of reality. Just because you feel it doesn't make it true; your *feelings* might be true, but they don't always **tell the truth**.

2. Not a leap into the dark

Faith is not checking your brain at the door without examining evidence. We need to know *what* we believe and *why* we believe it.

3. Not a force or power

For us in the church, this one might be the most important to understand. Faith is not some force or power you tap into that gets God to work on your behalf. It's not something that only a group of super faith-filled Christians have figured out—they know the **secret passcode for God**, and now God is their little **spiritual vending machine** that spits out whatever they want because they know the right keys to hit and right prayers to pray. God is not a **Cosmic Doordasher** waiting for our orders and ready to deliver 24/7 all because “we had enough faith.”

For some of you, this notion of faith is the very reason **you've been hurt by the church**. Something occurred in your life—an **illness**, a **death**, a **loss**—and you prayed and believed, and the pastor and your small group came and prayed these powerful prayers, but God still didn't answer. And you were left to wonder, *“Did the miracle not happen because I didn't have enough faith?”*

Listen, we have an entire generation abandoning faith because they're signing God's name to checks and promises God never made; faith is not a blank check that gets God to do whatever your heart desires in life. Our faith is the certainty and assurance that **God will do as God has promised as he sees we are trusting him to do it** ... not getting him to do our bidding and fulfill our desires.

This is really important for you to understand: God did not demonstrate his love for you by promising nothing bad would ever happen to you if you have enough faith. No ... **“God demonstrated his love for us in this: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). God's love for you is not a question mark. ... God's love for you was settled at the cross of Jesus Christ, not in whether he answers your prayers the way you think he should or not.

What Faith Is

So that's what faith is *not*. Here's what faith *is*; three words we're gonna unpack today from Hebrews 11:

Faith Is:

Understanding → Conviction → Trust

Faith—whether yours is in God or not—is the combination of **understanding, conviction, and trust**. (Luther called them: *Notitia; Assensus; Fiducia* ... but I'm not as smart as him so I'm gonna try to put the hay down here on the bottom where we can all get to it.)

Let's look at each of these...

1) Faith is a way of knowing that leads to understanding. (v. 3)

In order to place our faith in something (or, more appropriately for Christianity, *someone*), we have to **know something about that someone**. The word “understand” here in v. 3 means to think upon, ponder, consider.

³By faith we understand (think upon, ponder, consider) that the universe was created by the word of God...

See, contrary to maybe what you've thought about Christianity, the Bible doesn't call you to **check your brain at the door, believe blindly, and “just have faith.”** Quite the opposite: The Bible calls you to start thinking. Biblical faith consists of, requires, and stimulates the profoundest **thinking** and **reasoning** and **logic** and **rationality** ... and according to v. 3, even the creation of the universe will actually lead back to an understanding that Christianity is true.

³By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God...

It's undeniable there is a creation. It's undeniable we're all here (unless you can prove we're in The Matrix, which you can't), *so what's the best explanation for the universe? Well, you start with a premise:*

- Your premise can be that **there is a God**, which the skeptic would say is unprovable ... or you start with the premise there's **no such thing as the supernatural**, which is also, unprovable.
- See, whichever premise you start with you have to try and prove and explain as you seek understanding.

And what Christianity says about creation, as Pastor J.D. explained last weekend, is that **Nothing x nobody ≠ everything**. Something can't come from nothing, so *something* back there has to be eternal, and that eternal thing is the cause of everything else. The Christian isn't shutting their brain off by believing in a Creator; the Christian is saying, “There's far *less* chance that **life sprung out of some floating primordial goo.**” (Also, *where did the goo come from in the first place?!*)

It's like what the secular astronomer **Robert Jastrow** once speculated would happen in his book *God and the Astronomers*: "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance, he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

See, if there's reason to believe what God says, then that gives us a good starting place to consider things like the universe's beginnings, how it ends, what's wrong with the human soul and what it needs, what will bring us joy and pleasure and happiness, or what the purpose and meaning of life is.

Faith doesn't make you turn off your mind; it actually gives you a head start to thinking by giving you **boundaries** and **guidelines** for thinking and understanding things like **science** and **psychology** and **how to live a successful life**. Christianity isn't in opposition to those things; it actually helps us think *better* about them because our faith is a way of knowing that then leads to better understanding.

PIC: This is Robert Adair, a Yale physicist and member of the National Academy of Sciences. He was appointed by the Commissioner of MLB to conduct a study on "The Physics of Baseball."² What Adair concluded *from the physics* was that **hitting a 90 mph fastball is physically impossible**. (For those of you thinking, "Pfft, I could do it"— No, you couldn't. Your glory days are long gone, bro. Move on from high school, okay?) In Adair's research he determined:

- From the moment a 90 mph fastball leaves a pitcher's hand to the moment it crosses the plate it takes **400 milliseconds**.
- Here's the problem: The process for the batter to find the pitch, determine what kind of pitch it is, decide whether to swing or not, then decide what swing plane to take ... that process takes **450 milliseconds**.
- Therefore, he concluded that **scientifically it's impossible to hit a 90 mph fastball**.
- Now, **how many of you have ever been to a Durham Bulls game or an MLB game and seen someone hit a 90 mph fastball?**

So now we have two things in tension: **We have something unexplainable, yet undeniable**. What faith does is bridge the gap between the **unexplainable** and the **undeniable**.

If you want to deny the claims of Christianity, you at least have to be intellectually honest about it. If there is no God—if this world is just a conglomeration of your **feelings paired with molecules** and we're all the **result of a cosmic accident**—then you can't firmly stand on **reason or morality**, even though those things are undeniable.

- If everything I think and feel is just a collection of molecules then **there's no reason to trust my reason**.
- Or when I think about how **morally wrong and horrific** things like **genocide or slavery or sex trafficking** *feel*, if there is no God and we're all just cosmic accidents, then that means all my **thoughts and feelings about moral imperatives hold no weight because we're all just**

² *The Physics of Baseball*, Robert Adair

accidents that have been programmed by physics. So my moral compass itself is an accident and cannot be relied upon and leaves no ability to talk about moral obligation.

- French philosopher **Jean Paul Sartre** admitted this problem in his own thinking ... on the basis of his atheistic view he admitted he had no right to say Nazism and fascism were wrong. He knew they were—it was undeniable—but didn't have a basis for it.

At some point you have to be reasonable enough to NOT opt for the **unexplainable** option over the **undeniable** one.³

- What I'm trying to get you to see is that **to disbelieve takes a TON of faith.**
- Can we explain every last little thing about creation? No. But neither can you.

The Christian looks around at the world and says, *“Even though I can't see God, what I see in the world is **undeniable**—beauty and love, the pursuit of morality and justice—all of this had to come from somewhere. What makes the most sense is that all of creation came from a Creator.”*

- **C.S. Lewis:** *“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”*

Faith is a way of **knowing** that leads to **understanding**.

2) Faith is the conviction that what God has said is true and adjusting your life accordingly. (v. 1)

¹**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**

Faith gives present assurance to a future hope. It's the conviction that God is telling the truth and adjusting our lives accordingly.

“Assurance” in Greek is a great word; it literally means “standing under.” It refers to **the ground on which something is built. Faith is to the Christian what a foundation is to a house.**

- Your translation or what you memorized might say, *“Faith is the substance (sub=beneath, stance=stand) of things hoped for...”* It's the same thing as assurance—it's what your life is built upon; what you're standing on; the convictions that are shaping your life.

If you really had conviction that what God has said is true, then you would adjust your life accordingly. If the gospel is true and Jesus really did all these things for me, then it should convict me of how I'm living today.

- If the gospel is true—if Jesus, God's Son, really put on flesh, broke the barrier between heaven and earth, in humility laid aside his divine power, came to earth as fully man yet still fully God, lived a perfect life, died a prisoner's death to pay the penalty for my sin, was buried for three days but then rose again, proving victory over sin and death and the grave, and now if I place my faith in him I can be restored to God

³ Andy Stanley quote

forever because God sees me through the lens of Christ's righteousness rather than my lack of righteousness—if that is all true then it changes the way I live today.

- And it changes it NOT because my faith is so great, but because the object of my faith is so great. My faith is not in my faith; my faith is in Jesus! That's why Hebrews 10:38 says, [“The righteous one shall live by faith.”](#)
- It's not, “I have great faith so God rewards me.” It's, “My faith is in JESUS who is great.”

If you're building your life on anything other than Jesus you are destined for **instability** and **unhappiness**. Why? Because the foundation of your faith is on unstable and inadequate objects.

- If the foundation of your life is built on a relationship with someone other than Jesus, then what happens when that relationship fails or that person lets you down? You crumble. Everything else in your world is brought down because of it.
- If the foundation of your life is built on your identity through success at work, then what happens when you get demoted? Or lose the job? Or can't close the deal? Your world comes crashing down because it was your foundation.
- If the foundation of your life is built on your kids turning out awesome, always being polite, being the star player, going to the right school, getting the right grades, hanging out with the right crowd, what happens to you when they don't turn out like that?

You can *hope* in these things (that's fine!), but you can't *have faith* in them because they were never meant to sustain the weight of your soul.

We can *hope* certain things happen, but we can only have *faith* in the things that God has promised in his Word.

- Listen: **When your faith is in Jesus, your faith moves from “hope so” to “it will be so.”**

I can *hope* my friend puts his faith in Jesus, but I can have *faith* that if he does, God will save him because whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

I can *hope* my life is filled with happiness and joy, but I can have *faith* that God will sustain me even in the darkest of valleys because he is my Good Shepherd.

I can *hope* that my kids grow up to love God, but I can have *faith* that God is faithful even if they grow up faithless.

You can hope that person will forgive you for what you've done, but you can have *faith* that in Christ I'm already forgiven and God has removed my sins as far as the east is from the west.

Faith is your response to the promises of God for your life:

- **God** says, "I will lead you." **Faith** responds, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I will follow."
- **God** says, "I will provide for you." **Faith** says, "The Lord is my Provider; I lack nothing."
- Faith is never a leap into the dark, because it's based on the firmest foundation there is: the Word of God.

What is your faith placed on today? If it's on anything other than Jesus it's unstable ground.

Faith begins with understanding, leads to conviction ... but is ultimately shown in trust.

3) Faith is living in a way that demonstrates trust in God.

(v. 6)

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists (understanding) and that he rewards those who seek him (conviction).

Without faith it is impossible to please God. That's a big statement. But here's the implication: If you DO have faith, you CAN please God.

Faith is not just coming to an understanding of the facts—it's not even understanding them and being convinced they're true—true biblical saving faith is living in a way that demonstrates your TRUST in God.

Pastor Tony Evans says if you wanna know if you truly have faith, don't look to your **thoughts or your feelings**; look at your feet. What direction are they moving? Are you operating in obedience to God? Faith is less about what you say you believe and more about how you behave, how your trust is *shown*. Without faith, you can **have a Christian lifestyle**, but without faith you cannot have a **Christian life**.

Or, as our friend **Joby Martin** likes to say: Faith doesn't just believe that; faith trusts in. We have a lot of ppl that believe *that* ... **before I truly got saved I believed that...**

- But faith means to trust in ... to commit my whole life to ... to go all in with Jesus.

That's why **faith often looks like action**. It often looks like, "Come. Take. Learn. Rest. Cast. Pray. Go. Tell. Give. Surrender."

But you need to know that **trusting in Jesus and living this out** is gonna look crazy to the world. If you say you have faith but nothing in your life looks different from the world, you should question where your faith is placed. Think about a few different areas of your life and ask if you are truly trusting God in these areas:

- **Finances.** You say you have faith in God, but if you're not trusting him in the area of your finances, then you don't really trust him. If you're not regularly giving at least 10 percent of your GROSS income back to him who has richly given us all things, then how can you say you have faith in him? Faith is trust.
- **Sexual purity.** You say you have faith in God, but if you're regularly and purposefully participating in sexual sin, pornography, or immorality then you don't really trust in God. You cannot say you have faith in Jesus while willfully participating in the very things that put him on the cross. Faith is demonstrated by trusting that purity and holiness will bring me far more pleasure than any earthly pleasure ever could.
- Or how about **forgiveness**? Oftentimes, forgiving someone seems irrational and even costly. It can make you seem like a fool to the watching world because you really have been hurt. But trusting God and having faith means forgiveness is a primary mark of a disciple of Jesus, because Jesus himself freed us from sin and death by forgiving us when we didn't deserve it.

Faith looks like active trust in God. You say, *"Wait, everything I've heard at this church is that we can't earn God's approval. But it sounds like you're saying faith is what pleases God ... and faith is seen in my actions ... so aren't you basically saying my actions are what make me pleasing to God?"*

Our faith is not in our own actions or behavior or righteousness ... our faith is in Jesus who acted, behaved, and was perfectly righteous for us ... again, [the righteous one lives by faith](#), not by works.

- However, faith doesn't cast away my **efforts to be good**. Faith casts away my trust that my efforts are what make me good.
- Grace is not opposed to **effort**; grace is opposed to **earning**.

If you say you have faith in Jesus, do your actions line up with that conviction? If your life was put side-by-side with the Scriptures, would we see an intentional effort to live accordingly as you live out your trust in God?

CONCLUSION

A lot of this might have sounded really **philosophical**, but there's nothing more **personal** than faith in Jesus.

When my wife and I first became Christians we were part of a Sunday School class with other young couples. One of those was a couple named Patrick and Brittany ([PIC1](#)). When I think of what a faith that **trusts** in God looks like, I think of Brittany. Let me let her tell it...⁴

September 28, 2015 ... it was a Monday like many other Mondays in our family, filled with the craziness of having three boys under the age of 3, work and home life, and trying to do it all unto the Lord. [My husband, Patrick, spent the afternoon discipling a young man where] they were

⁴ [Brittany Price Booker testimony](#)

discussing the end times. [Patrick came home and told me about it] and he kind of sat back and as he was crossing his arms he said, "Hey, if God wants to take me, I'm ready." [Patrick was 30 and I was 25, so this was said tongue-in-cheek, of course.]

*The next morning Patrick got off to work early while the boys and I headed out to Bible study, where we were actually talking about Revelation and end times as well. I had just finished sharing about how studying this **gives me eternal eyes and strength to trust God no matter what I face ...** having no idea that I was about to walk through the greatest trial of my life.*

Moments later, sitting in that Bible study, my phone rang. While at work, Patrick got really sick out of nowhere, had fallen, and was at the hospital where I needed to come immediately.

As we drove there I couldn't get a song out of my mind about the peace of God, and I was just praying for the Lord's will to be done. The Lord was near; it was as if I could hear Him say, "Remember all of this, every detail. I'm with you."

When I [arrived at the hospital] and saw everyone's eyes, I immediately knew ... there was shock written all over everyone's faces. They sat me down and told me my Patrick was gone ... my healthy 30-year-old husband who I loved more than life was gone to be in the presence of Jesus. In that moment, I became a widow at the age of 25 with three boys under the age of 3.

I wept and began crying out to God, "God, I cannot do this without you. I cannot even breathe without you. God, just be near and give me strength to make it through today." In that moment, I felt such a peace from God come over me ... I closed my eyes and I whispered, "The Lord gives and takes away, blessed be His name, He is good." Then I began to sing to the Lord under my breath.

If there is anything Patrick would have wanted, it was for people to know this life is temporary and Jesus is all that matters ... so at the hospital I asked one of our mentors if they would preach the gospel at the funeral and that we are praying God uses it to draw many people to Himself.

*Of course, I had to tell my three young boys what happened. I told them, "God is your daddy now." Oh, how I thanked the Lord that my boys are so young. I kept praying, "God, use this pain for Your glory ... because it is SO hard." I kept thinking, "Is this real life?" But God was supernaturally upholding us. That night, my boys kept asking where Daddy was and my 2-year-old wouldn't go to sleep because he was crying for Daddy. As I rocked him, I cried over the thought that my precious boys no longer have an earthly daddy; our world would never be the same. Through my tears, I sang over my kids, "**Because He lives I can face tomorrow, because He lives all fear is gone, because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living just because He lives.**" The only hope we have is Jesus; the only way we could stand was because of Jesus. We were going to make it, but oh, the sorrow. That day my best friend, husband, and father of my boys died and with him died all the dreams we had.*

But oh, how the Lord used death to bring about such life. We have only just begun to see the Lord's work in using Patrick's story for His glory. At Patrick's funeral, hundreds came to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior ... since his death, I've lost count how many people have gone from being lukewarm to burning hot for Christ. God is using this to make His name known. He is using this gut-wrenching, unbearable pain for His glory. And my prayer continues to be, "Use us."

As it rained and poured for weeks to come, the heavens were weeping with us. But through rain, I am reminded, growth comes. With faith your circumstances don't change, but your perspective does and if our perspective is always toward hope, it changes how we live today. I know that one day in eternity I'll be looking out to see all the lives and the people that were changed because of this trial, because my God doesn't waste anything ... he does not waste pain if we allow him and we give it over to him for his glory. I have hope that lives beyond this earth ... how life is not just what this earth offers ... There's eternity, there's hope, and there's glory, and there's forever in the presence of my Savior.

(PIC2) Here was Brittany about 6 months after all of that happened. Friends, that's faith.

She's actually remarried now to a godly man who was also a widower and they have six total kids together. Praise God for that, but the point isn't how her story turned out ... the point is her faith while her story was being written. Standing on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ through unthinkable pain is what made all the difference in her pain, **and it's what can make all the difference in your life too.**

*"On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand..."*

Have you trusted in him? Not just *believed that* about Jesus, but truly trusted in Jesus?

The only quality Jesus is looking for in your faith is that it rests in the right place—the righteous shall live by faith in him.

PRAY