

FAITH IS ASSURANCE

BIBLE BASIS: Hebrews 11:1–3, 6; Psalm 46:1–3, 8–11

BIBLE TRUTH: God invites us to have real faith in Him.

MEMORY VERSE: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, KJV).

LESSON AIM: By the end of the lesson, we will: **KNOW** the meaning of faith and its implication for our lives; **FEEL** God’s constant presence; and **DEVELOP** a practice of relying on God for positive change.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Hebrews 11:1–7; PSALM 46:1–11 — Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

TEACHER PREPARATION

MATERIALS NEEDED: Bibles, (several different versions), Quarterly Commentary/Teacher Manual, Adult Quarterly, teaching resources such as charts, worksheets/handouts, paper, pens, and pencils.

OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED / TEACHER’S NOTES:

LESSON OVERVIEW

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY’S LESSON

To develop a practice of relying on God for positive change.

BIBLE LEARNING

To learn that creation witnesses to God’s ability to care for us.

BIBLE APPLICATION

To know that even in the darkest storms God is faithfully caring for us.

STUDENTS’ RESPONSES

Students will have faith in God even in times of great difficulty.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

HEBREWS 11:1–3, 6;
PSALM 46:1–3, 8–11, KJV

11:1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2. For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

11:6. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must

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believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Psalm 46:1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. *Selah.*

46:8. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

10. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

11. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah.*

BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

A. Faith (Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6) *pistis* (Gk.)—Belief with the predominant idea of trust (or confidence); assurance.

B. Refuge (Psalm 46:1) *machaceh* (Heb.)—A shelter from rain, storm, or danger; hope.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The Book of Psalms is a series of five collections: Book I (Psalms 1–41), Book II (Psalms 42–72), Book III (Psalms 73–89), Book IV (Psalms 90–106), and Book V (Psalms 107–150). Several authors wrote the collections, and some are anonymous. David wrote at least 73 psalms and Asaph, the sons of Korah, Moses, Solomon,

Ethan, and Heman and the Ezrahites were responsible for two others. Psalms were written over a period of more than 1,000 years, which spanned from the time of Moses (around 1440 B.C.) to the time of captivity in Babylon (around 586 B.C.). The majority of the books were written during Israel's wilderness experience, but Psalms also reflects life in Israel, Judah, and Babylon.

Psalm 46 was written by the sons of Korah, who were temple musicians and assistants. The Korahites were among the chief Levitical families; they were listed as “gatekeepers.” Korah was a Levite who led a rebellion against Moses. Although Korah was killed, his family remained faithful to God and continued to serve God in His temple. King David appointed men from the clan of Korah to serve as choir leaders. Later, the choir leaders continued to serve as temple musicians for hundreds of years.

TEACHING THE BIBLE LESSON

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: That your students will learn that faith requires an attitude of trust in God despite the circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

Faith in God in a Chaotic World

When positive change seems nonexistent, we must not lose hope. God is ever-present. If we trust God, we will be rescued, and change will occur through God's strength. Although our faith will be tested, we can rely on God for positive change.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: That your students will learn that faith gives them confidence even when the circumstances do not promise anything.

I. FAITH IS CONFIDENCE AND CERTAINTY (Hebrews 11:1–3)

The readers of the Book of Hebrews knew the ancient Hebrew Scriptures and professed faith in Christ. Because of doubt, persecution, and false teaching, these Jewish Christians considered giving up Christianity and returning to Judaism. The Jewish Christians had grown up believing that keeping the Mosaic Law was the way to please God. The New Covenant showed that this was insufficient. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a necessity for pleasing God. The writer of Hebrews emphasized the superiority of God's Promises through Christ and encouraged the Christians of the first century to stand by their faith.

Definition of Faith (verses 1–3)

1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2. For by it the elders obtained a good report. 3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

The writer of Hebrews begins chapter 11 with a description of faith. The reality of faith is what is “hoped for.” Our prayers and hopes are based upon the promises of God. For believers, faith is an actuality. It “makes real” the things that are hoped for as if they were already present. With a firm persuasion and expectation, the writer encouraged the believers to trust that God will perform what He has promised through Christ. We cannot see the future, nor do we know what will happen tomorrow, but our confidence is based upon the certainty of God's trustworthiness.

During the first century, Christianity was difficult because believers were demoralized and discouraged by Jews who felt that their centuries of tradition were being replaced with spiritual

freedom based upon faith in Christ. As a result, the believers experienced the wrath of the Jewish religious establishment because of their belief in God's greatest promise—Jesus Christ—the Messiah, who fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament.

The writer of Hebrews wanted to prevent believers from rejecting Christianity and returning to Judaism. To encourage struggling believers to hold to the superiority of their faith in Christ, the writer refers the believers to the elders of the Old Testament who received a “good report.” Their “good report” was the evidence that they would receive the promise of participating in God's kingdom when it arrives in its fullness. The actions of these heroes of faith revealed their genuine faith in God. Such faithfulness will bring honor to the ancient believers. Through examples in biblical history, faith is revealed through assurance in God's future promises. This inspires believers to persevere. The heroes of faith challenge believers to grow in faith and live in obedience to God.

By faith, we believe that God created everything out of nothing. In verse 3, the writer refers to Moses' detailed story of creation in Genesis chapter 1. In this majestic display of power and purpose, God repeatedly “saw that it was good” (**Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21**). By faith, we believe God spoke and created the entire universe. Our faith is based upon who God is. Our faithful response, therefore, should show confidence and certain hope in God because He is ever-present.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1

How did the writer of Hebrews describe faith?

It is the substance of what we hope for and believe in, even though we cannot see it. Faith is not vain thinking. It is evidence of what will be.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Framed by God

This world is God's world, and faith assures us that God created it. Faith's understanding that the universe is framed or fashioned by the Word of God changes the human perception of all things: "So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Doubtless, this is the most indispensable of all insights, the one that distinguishes believers from atheists. The world is neither self-derived, self-contained, nor self-sufficient.

II. FAITH IS NECESSARY (Hebrews 11:6)

Faith reveals the reality of God. "It is impossible to please God" without faith because faith is necessary to have an active relationship with God; it is necessary to walk with God (Hebrews 11:6, NLT). By faith, we believe in God and trust with certainty the future promises that He has revealed.

The Way to Please God (verse 6)

6. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The author issues a flat denial that anyone can please God apart from faith. He does not say simply that without faith it is difficult to please God; he says that without faith, it is impossible to please Him! There is no substitute for faith. Whoever approaches God must first believe that He exists. This is basic. Without it, there is no possibility of faith at all. But even that is not enough. There must also be a conviction "that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (11:6, NIV). Only God, the all-powerful Creator, can reward those who seek Him. Without that deep conviction, faith is not a possibility.

QUESTION 2

What will happen to those who diligently seek God?

God will reward them.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Steadfast Confidence

The heroes of faith believed and obeyed regardless of the consequences. In the same way, we can believe with a willing trust and please God. Our steadfast confidence is based upon who God is—the Creator of the universe. God will recognize and reward our faith because we "diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). By faith, we realize our own insufficiency and depend on God to work within us and through us. By faith, we have confident trust in the continual promises of God.

III. FAITH IS TRUST IN GOD AS OUR REFUGE (Psalm 46:1–3)

Psalm 46 is an expression of confidence in God. It begins with a confession of faith and presents God in a very personal way. This psalm was a celebration of God's deliverance. As the psalm spoke to its first audience, ancient Israelites, it speaks to believers today. We need not fear if we trust God.

God Is Our Refuge (verses 1–3)

1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

The psalmists recognized God as their Source of help; they realized God's complete power and ability to rescue His children. As believers, we have the assurance that we do not need to fear because God's presence is constant. God is our

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refuge; therefore, we can flee to Him and find security. The “times of trouble,” in which God offers protection, are times when chaos attempts to reassert its primacy over order, both in nature and in the world of nations and human affairs.

Life presents temporary destruction, doubts, and uncertainty; but God’s presence is constant, so we do not need to be afraid. Through faith, we can give thanks for God’s constant presence in our lives. Because God is with us, we can be rescued. We can appreciate God’s constant presence because He is our mighty fortress. We can be fearless because God is our present help. God is not a temporary resource; He is our eternal Refuge. The psalmists remind believers, “Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake,” God’s power is complete and victory in Him is certain. We should not be troubled when the earth is unstable because our confidence is not found in the earth. Our confidence is based upon God, our sound eternal footing.

QUESTION 3

What assurance do Christians have when they are in the midst of terrible circumstances?

Our history with God constantly reminds us of His power to deliver. God is our refuge, strength, and help at the very time that help is needed.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The Response to Beholding God’s Power

In the midst of chaos, believers are called to recognize the presence of God and His ability to save His children. Our Creator cares and is “ever-present” with His people. His presence in protecting the people of God is described by three metaphors: “refuge,” “strength,” and “fortress.” The psalmists acknowledged God as their strength. They acknowledged God as the refuge where one finds rest and asylum. God is a fortress, a stronghold against the enemy. Each of

these metaphors relate to people in need because that is the time when we most appreciate God’s special protection.

IV. FAITH IN OUR VICTORIOUS GOD (Psalm 46:8–11)

Even though war, destruction, and famine are a part of the world, God is still in charge. He is sovereign. The final victory belongs to Him, and He will be exalted.

A Meditative View of God’s Sovereign Rule over the World (verses 8–11)

8. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

The psalmist urges the believers to “behold the works of the LORD.” As believers, we can trust in God’s strength and His constant presence. Those who oppose God will experience desolation and God’s judgment. But believers can stand in awe of God’s power.

The God of peace will make “wars cease.” The instruments of warfare described in **Psalm 46:9**, symbolized by the bow, the spear, and the chariot, will become inoperative. The Lord’s very plan for humankind includes the final end and the removal of evil instigators, troublemakers, rebels, and expressions of hostility in whatever form. Yet, to do so, in the end, God must surely cause great destruction—for evil is a serious power to be reckoned with. Consequently, He breaks the bow and shatters the spear, and burns the chariot in the fire.

Verse 10 begins with a phrase that has become common in Christian spirituality: “Be still

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and know.” Israel, like the nations, must stop looking after its own destiny and acknowledge that God is God—therefore, God is its refuge and strength. Yet, the verse speaks to us to learn to cultivate the habit of silence. Second, the psalmist encourages the godly to “know” that the Lord is God. Our confidence is in knowing that God is God. He is Lord over nature and history, and He is our Protector. The God of our ancestors is the God we have today. He is still our refuge and our fortress.

QUESTION 4

What invitation do we have to know God better?

We are told to be still and know that God is God. In the midst of chaos, we are invited to be still and take in His awesome nature and presence.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: That your students will know that faith in God gives them confidence that He is caring for them.

God, Our Refuge and Strength

To remain faithful with steadfast confidence and certainty, we must keep our eyes on God. We must remain hopeful for positive change, as we believe that God is in control. Even in today’s world, we have faith in God’s constant presence because we know He is our refuge in times of trouble. To remain faithful with steadfast confidence and certainty, we must keep our eyes on God and allow God’s presence to be evident in our actions and words.

STUDENTS’ RESPONSES

AIM: That your students will have faith in God for their current circumstances.

The focus of this week’s lesson is on faith in God as our refuge and strength. If we watch the news, listen to the radio, or interact with others, we

hear about the current state of the world. Many are homeless, unemployed, or on the verge of both. Natural disasters occur, and the number of fatalities grows. War and destruction are continually reported by the news. Peace seems impossible. While the positive change seems nonexistent, we must not lose hope. We must always realize that God is ever-present. What circumstances are looming large in your life at this moment? Have you committed yourself and the situation to God? Have you believed that the ever-present God can deliver?

PRAYER

Dear Father, we thank You that You are our refuge, no matter our circumstances. We can always trust in You. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

The Authorship of Hebrews

Hebrews is anonymous. Compared with other writings of the New Testament era, the author does not identify himself.

For example, Paul’s letters typically follow the pattern of identifying himself as the author (with perhaps a co-author, like what we see in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, or 1 and 2 Thessalonians), the identification of the recipient(s), a greeting (“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”), a thanksgiving (e.g., “I thank my God ...”), the body of the letter, and a closing (where he discusses travel plans, gives final exhortations, sends greetings, and a final blessing). However, Hebrews (with the exception of some final greetings in 13:22-25) contain none of these elements. Therefore, New Testament scholars have concluded that for this and several other reasons (for example, the difference in style of writing, the absence of key Pauline themes, etc.), Paul is not the author.

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Nonetheless, there have been several other possibilities offered. Among them are Barnabas, Luke (because of its exalted Greek), Philip, Apollos (because of his eloquence as identified in Acts 18:24), or Clement of Rome. Interestingly, a few scholars have proposed Priscilla or May as the author of Hebrews.

At the end of the day, contemporary scholarship has followed the opinion of the third-century theologian, Origen, who said:

“If I were to give my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle [Paul], but the diction and phraseology are those of someone who remembered the apostle’s teachings and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher.... But who wrote the letter – well, God knows the truth” (Eusebius, Church History 6.25.13).

HOW TO SAY IT

Korah. KOR-uh.

Selah. SEE-luh.

DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY

The Trusting Child
(Mark 10:13–16)

TUESDAY

The Trust of the Weak
(2 Chronicles 14:2–12)

WEDNESDAY

The Prayer of Trust
(Psalm 3)

THURSDAY

The Security of Trust
(Psalm 4)

FRIDAY

The Confidence of Trust
(Psalm 27:1–6)

SATURDAY

The Patience of Trust
(Psalm 27:7–14)

SUNDAY

The Certain Refuge
(Hebrews 11:1–3, 6; Psalm 46:1–3, 8–11)

PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Read **Hebrews 12:1–11**, and study “Faith Is Endurance.”

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