

Journey Into Pleasing God, Revised

LESSON 1 . . . How To Please God (Hebrews 11:1-3, 6)



NOTES

Hebrews eleven has correctly been called “Faith’s Hall of Fame.” In this chapter God tells us about some of the great heroes of our faith—men and women who pleased Him. They all have at least one thing in common with you and me—they had problems, at times really BIG problems. By studying these great heroes of faith, we will discover everything God did in their lives, He did through faith. The same is true for us. The word *faith* is found twenty-five times in this chapter. A study of these heroes reveals that the only thing limiting God’s power in our lives is our faith. How does Jesus declare this fact in Matthew 9:29b?

Everything God does in and through us is determined by our *faith* because *without faith it is impossible to please God* (11:6). In this passage we find **three** requirements for pleasing God . . .

Remember what faith is (11:1-2).

There is no **definition** of faith in the Bible, but there is a **description**: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for* (11:1a). The word translated *assurance*, or “substance,” (HYPOSTASIS, hoo-pos’-tuh-sis) means “that which stands under.” Here it refers to “confidence.” *Faith* gives us confidence, something to stand on, regarding *things hoped for*. *Faith* gives us confidence that what we hope for will happen. *Faith* hopes when there is nothing tangible to support our hope. For example, what do we read in Romans 4:18a-b?



Faith that pleases God causes us to believe His promises, even when what He promises seems impossible. This is because faith is *the conviction of things not seen* (11:1b). Non-believers only have five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. However, Christians have a “sixth sense”—*faith*—that gives us *assurance* and *conviction of things not seen*. Through faith we perceive the invisible. This is the kind of faith by which *the people of old received their commendation* (11:2). Therefore, the Old Testament saints listed in Hebrews eleven are not included because of their great deeds, but because of their faith. When we fully believe God’s promises, we gain God’s *commendation*, or approval.

Pleasing God requires we **remember what faith is** and . . .

Recognize God as Creator (11:3).

Faith that pleases God not only gives us *assurance* and *conviction* about God's promises but also about the origin of our universe. This is because *by faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God*, or God's command (11:3a). Faith not only lets us know where we are going in the future but also where we came from in the past. God's awesome power is unleashed by His spoken word. He simply speaks, and what He desires happens. For example, what does Genesis 1:1 tell us?



The Hebrew word translated *created* (BĀRĀ, baw-raw´) means “to create from nothing.” To do that, you must speak it into being. The story is told of three scientists who approach God and say, “Hey, we can create human life from the dust of the ground just like You did.” When they reach down to pick up a handful of dust, God says, “No! Get your own dust.”

In the natural realm, something cannot come from nothing. However, God is **supernatural**. He simply spoke and all that exists came into being from nothing. How does Psalm 33:6 express this fact?

When God spoke, He not only created matter, but age as well. Under scientific examination, the universe He spoke into being the previous day could legitimately appear to be billions of years old. For example, how old was Adam when God created him? We don't know, but he did have age, because he could not have survived in the Garden as a newborn baby.

We should never be intimidated by those who question our intelligence because we have faith in a Creator. Whatever a person believes about the origin of the universe, they believe by faith. The issue is not “faith versus knowledge.” It is “faith versus faith”— faith in a Creator versus faith in chance. It is really faith in one of two equations: “nothing times nothing equals everything” or “God times nothing equals everything.” Which of these two requires the most faith? Believing the first one takes a lot more faith! But their faith is most definitely misplaced!!

God created the universe *so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible* (11:3b). There is no way the writer of *Hebrews*, more than 2,000 years ago, could have known that all matter consists of atoms and molecules. Atoms were first discovered by English chemist John Dalton in the early 1800's. Atoms are made up of particles called protons, neu-

trons, and electrons. A molecule is formed when two or more atoms join together to form different elements, or compounds. Atoms are so small they cannot be seen with the naked eye or even with an optical microscope, which can only magnify up to 2,000 times. Seeing atoms requires an electron microscope, which can magnify 300,000 times. Faith is our “spiritual electron microscope” that enables us to see and understand what is otherwise invisible. How does 2 Corinthians 5:7 express this truth?

To please God, we must **remember what faith is, recognize God as Creator**, and . . .

Realize the rewards of faith (11:6b).

Faith that pleases God doesn’t simply believe in God or His creative powers. It is much more, *for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him* (11:6b). It is not enough to believe in a cosmic Creator; we must have a conviction about God’s moral character. We must believe God is just and *rewards* us for seeking Him. The word translated *seek* (EKZĒTEŌ, ek-zay-teh’-o) refers to carefully, or “diligently,” seeking God. This pursuit is not for scientific information but to have a personal relationship with Him. How does Jeremiah 29:13 describe what it means to truly seek God?

How does God reward us for earnestly seeking Him? He told the sinful house of Israel through the prophet Amos: “*Seek me and live*” (Amos 5:4b). There is a big difference between existing and living. That’s why so many famous, wealthy people die from drug abuse and even suicide. They have everything this world has to offer, but they are miserable because they are just existing—not really living. In John 10:10b, what does Jesus say to people who are just existing?

The word translated *abundantly* (PERISSOS, per-is’-sos) means “super abundant” or “beyond measure.” This means Jesus can give life a whole new meaning through purpose and guidance. Real living is much more than prosperity, possessions, prestige, popularity, or power. Real living requires three things: to be loved, to love someone, and to have a purpose

for our lives. Only when we earnestly *seek* the Lord and find Him can we experience the last phrase of Psalm 23:5. Write it below:

The abundant life Christ promises those who place their faith in Him is not just a “pie in the sky when we die” type of faith. It is a faith that allows us to live *abundantly* here and now. God rewards us in different ways for at least **three** kinds of faith . . .

1. Saving faith. This is a one-time experience. How does Ephesians 2:8a describe it?

The reward of **saving faith** is salvation.

2. Calming faith. One day the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee while Jesus is asleep in the boat. When they reach the middle of the sea, a terrible storm hits and waves begin breaking over the boat. In a panic, the disciples wake up Jesus and ask Him to save them. Then, what penetrating question does Jesus ask (Matthew 8:26b)?

Fear of life’s storms is a result of having *little faith* because fear is the reciprocal, or opposite, of faith. The reward of **calming faith** is the inner peace we experience during the many problems we have throughout our lives.



3. Empowering faith. Experiencing God’s power in our lives requires faith. For example, Jesus did not perform many miracles in His hometown of Nazareth (Mt 13:58a). Why, according to Matthew 13:58b?

When God’s miraculous power is missing from our lives, there is just one reason—*unbelief*, which is lack of faith. The reward of **empowering faith** is experiencing the supernatural things only God can do.

We all need **saving** faith, **calming** faith, and **empowering** faith, if we are to please God. To please God, **remember what faith is, recognize God as Creator, and realize the rewards of faith.**