

# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 19



# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 19  
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CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.




# WEEK 19

## HEBREWS 11:1-12



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# DAY 1 FAITH IS SEEING THE UNSEEN

## First read Hebrews 11:1-3.

Faith goes by many names. To the young, faith is childlike trust and dependency. To the mature, faith is a tested ground, proven reliable through suffering, doubt, celebration, and change. But no matter the season or generation, biblical faith is a holy blend of assurance and conviction. Faith is not merely a blind belief in God's existence, it's the foundation for life in this age and also in the age to come. More specifically, faith is about learning to build our lives with the eternal wisdom of **"things hoped for"** (v.1a). We live with **"conviction of things not seen,"** trusting that one day Jesus will return to complete his work of restoration (v.1b, see Revelation 21:1-8). In other words, **"Now I know in part; then I shall know fully"** (1 Corinthians 13:12). Faith is seeing the unseen.

This is how a host of saints lived before us. And it's costly (as we'll read). After all, when we live in light of what is not yet apparent, those who can't see what we see have questions and, likely, criticism ... even oppression. We can all feel a bit like Noah likely felt, building a massive boat in the middle of the desert—crazy.

Yet we can take solace knowing **"that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible"** (v.3). Daily we are beholding a visible universe that was previously unseen. God spoke everything into existence *ex nihilo*—out of nothing (see Genesis 1:1-2). Not only so, but Christ himself **"is the image of the invisible God"** (Colossians 1:15). Therefore in Christ, we are encouraged to live with faith, trusting that one day justice will rule where now there's only oppression, mercy will manifest in spaces of sorrow, and love will overwhelm wherever there is fear.



# DAY 1 FAITH IS SEEING THE UNSEEN

1. What is faith?
2. What unseen reality are you struggling to 'see' right now?
3. How does Jesus bring us comfort and peace amidst our doubts and fears?



*Heavenly Father ...*

*Help me trust that what is seen is not all there is to see.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 2

## FAITH IS OFFERING FROM THE HEART

### First read Hebrews 11:4.

One of the blessings of our faith is that we're part of a spiritual heritage, a family of faith. Having established key characteristics of faith—assurance and conviction—the writer of Hebrews now reflects on how ***“the people of old received their commendation”*** (v.2). He begins with a man named Abel.

Abel was our first parents', Adam and Eve, younger son. One day he and his brother, Cain, brought an offering to God. Cain was ***“a worker of the ground”*** and Abel was ***“a keeper of sheep”*** (Genesis 4:2). Keeping with their respective vocations, Cain brought ***“an offering of the fruit of the ground”*** and Abel ***“brought of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portion”*** (Genesis 4:3-4). God had *regard* for Abel's offering but not for his brother's. Cain got angry with jealousy and kills his brother.

Because of Abel's righteousness ... ***“he still speaks”*** (v.4). His life continues to bear witness to what faith looks like in the flesh. You see, Abel's gift was ***“a more acceptable sacrifice”*** because he wasn't really offering an animal. He was giving himself. That's the only sacrifice the Lord finds acceptable. By giving the first and best portion, Abel was demonstrating surrender and trust. That's faith. Faith is offering from the heart. No matter our vocation or resources, God desires that we offer ourselves as ***“living sacrifice, holy and acceptable”*** to him (Romans 12:2). After all, Jesus doesn't merely surrender heavenly resources on the cross. He offers himself.

# DAY 2

## FAITH IS OFFERING FROM THE HEART

1. Why is God worthy of a completely surrendered heart?
2. What do you think it looks like to give your “first and best” to the Lord like Abel? How is this connected to your heart?
3. How does the death of Christ demonstrate and empower you to offer your whole self?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*I'm afraid. I'm worried that if I give you my whole self there will be nothing left for me. Meet me in my fear. Comfort me in my anxiety. Help me to live with faith.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



# DAY 3

## FAITH IS DRAWING NEAR

### First read Hebrews 11:5-6.

We're relational beings. Togetherness is a key component of a healthy and meaningful life. However, in Western culture we're faced with an ever-increasing crisis of social isolation. The U.S. Surgeon General has described loneliness as a "public health concern," elevating the risk of premature death in many Americans equivalent to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day (*Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*, 8). Something is telling us not to draw near even though we're desperate for intimacy.

How much truer this is with God. We were made to be in relationship with him. Yet sin and shame teach us to separate and hide from our Creator (see Genesis 3:8). We believe the lie that getting close to God will hurt us; he'll judge us, limit pleasure, and stifle our freedom. But we read that Enoch **"walked with God"** (Genesis 5:25). He enjoyed intimacy, fellowship, and relationship with the Heavenly Father. Divine closeness not only didn't harm Enoch, but he **"was taken up so that he should not see death"** (v.5). Drawing near God gave him life.

We choose loneliness when we think intimacy is more costly. We isolate when we don't think God is pleased with us. In other words, when we don't have faith that Christ has made peace with God (see Romans 5:1).

On the cross an exchange takes place. By grace, Jesus endures the isolation and loneliness caused by our sin and he gives us the intimacy he always enjoyed with his Heavenly Father. Trusting in this exchange is what draws us close to the Lord ... it heals us ... and brings us together.

# DAY 3

## FAITH IS DRAWING NEAR

1. What do you think it means to be close to God?
2. Do you think you're close to him now? Why or why not?
3. How does Jesus ensure our eternal intimacy with the Heavenly Father? Why does this bring us life, not death?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*May the intimacy Christ has purchased for us embolden us to become a people who flourish in fellowship.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 4 FAITH IS FEARING GOD, NOT PEOPLE

## First read Hebrews 11:7.

Noah was asked to do something really difficult—and it wasn't build an ark. The real challenge was social and spiritual. Noah had to endure the social complexity of constructing a boat while living in a desert community. *What would people say? What would they think? What would happen to his reputation?* To be sure, society wasn't too respectable at the time (see Genesis 6:13). But our desire to be loved and accepted by our peers has little to do with their virtue. It has much more to do with our desire for glory.

Spiritually Noah had to trust that God was right **“concerning events as yet unseen”** (v.7). Think about it. The social discomfort he was likely experiencing would be completely justified if and when a flood came. But, *what if it didn't? What if God was wrong? What if the water never came?* Noah didn't have the benefit of reading the book of Genesis and skipping ahead to see rain start falling. And so his story is meant to strengthen our faith so we see the value of fearing God more than people.

People-pleasing is a challenge for all of us. *Isn't it?* It's natural to worry about what people may say or think, or what will happen to our reputations if we obey and love God in a pluralistic society and fractured world. That's why “Pleasing and glorifying God by serving others [can take] a backseat to serving others to promote and glorify self” (*People Pleasing*). The social pressure ultimately comes down to our spiritual assurance. Jesus shows us a better way. He constantly refused to cower to the wishes, timelines, and desires of people (see John 7:6). He was constantly about his Father's glory, not his earthly reputation (see Luke 2:49). He was even willing to die in the face of ridicule and disbelief, trusting that his Father's will is always best (see Luke 22:42).

# DAY 4 FAITH IS FEARING GOD, NOT PEOPLE

1. What does Noah's life teach us about God?
2. What social pressures cause your faith or obedience to waver?
3. How does the gospel bring you comfort and joy amidst the daily challenges you face to live with faith like Noah?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Daily I feel the pressure of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . Give me faith today to trust you in the midst of these doubts, pains, challenges, and uncertainties in my community. I long to fear you and not people.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 5

## FAITH IS OBEYING WITHOUT ALL THE INFORMATION

### First read Hebrews 11:8-12.

Many people find religion to be a discipline of ignorance. Belief in an all-powerful being like the God of the Bible, some say, requires adherents to turn a blind eye to the insufficiencies and even contradictions of faith in the modern world. But faith in general and Christianity, in particular, has never promised to satisfy every curiosity this side of eternity. Instead, faith provides a framework for flourishing, wholeness, and wisdom when questions remain unanswered. Faith is about obeying without all the information. That's precisely what Abraham and Sarah learned.

Abraham was ***"called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance ... not knowing where he was going"*** (v.8). He didn't have all the information. Sarah was called to motherhood ***"even when she was past the age"*** (v.11). She still had questions. And yet Abraham ***"obeyed"*** God and ***"went to live in the land of promise"*** (vv.8,9). Sarah ***"received power"*** because she ***"considered him faithful who had promised"*** (v.11). That's faith.

Their land didn't exist. Their children were yet to be born. What's more, they had many reasons to believe that home and family would never be a reality. That's where faith gave them sight. By seeing God and trusting him, they were able to obey without all the information.

When Jesus was moments away from the cross, he was still wrestling. ***"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me,"*** Jesus asked (Luke 22:42a). To be sure he wasn't limited in the same ways we are, however, his greatness didn't cause him to turn a blind eye to reality nor prevented him from trusting his Father with his very life. He says, ***"not my will, but yours, be done"*** (Luke 22:42b).

# DAY 5


## FAITH IS OBEYING WITHOUT ALL THE INFORMATION

1. In what ways are you struggling to trust the Lord this week, month, or year?
2. What important questions have you asked the Lord that yet seem unanswered?
3. How do the examples of Abraham and Sarah, and the power of Jesus enable you to obey without all the information in this season?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Help me to obey you even when I have questions ... even when I feel undone ... even when I don't have all the information.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



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