

# How to Define Faith

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I simply want to read two verses to you today out of Hebrews 11. In my estimation... these are the most theological verses in this whole chapter. By theological I just simply mean, they are more doctrinal in essence rather than historical. That's all I mean by that. It's not like you can't find God in the rest of this. But, but there's two verses here that break away from historical realities and would seek to somewhat define faith for us. I'm not saying it's a perfect idea of definition, but it shows us something of the nature of faith. I'm talking about verses 1 and verse 6.

So let's read those, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Verse 6: part way through... We'll get to the idea that it pleases God but today I want you to dive in midway, midstream into verse 6: "...whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him." My sermon title, is "How to Define Faith". If there's anything fundamental to Christianity, it's this. It's faith. I mean, think about some of the most often recited, well known, familiar biblical passages among Christians. What are they? What are some of them? If they don't use the word faith, they use the word belief, or believe, or believed. John 3:16 You have: "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation", to who? To those who believe. "We walk by faith, not by sight." Or how about the very often quoted verses from Ephesians 2. What do they say? "We're saved by grace through faith." And again and again: "fight the good fight of the faith"; "the righteous shall live by faith."; "Faith, if it's by itself, if it does not have works it's dead." We get this reality. Romans 5:1, "Since we have been justified by faith." "Examine yourselves", right? What's it say there? "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith." "Faith comes by hearing, hearing through the word of Christ."

We have these realities. Just look there at the last two verses of chapter 10. If there's anything to convince us that the topic of faith is important, look, this is what the writer of Hebrews has been driving at through this whole book: faith, faith, faith. Steadfastness, confidence, assurance. Don't let go of it: Faith! He's been telling us all about the priesthood of

Christ, and the sacrifice of Christ, and the superiority of Christ, and the majesty of Christ. because he wants us to hold fast to it, not let it go, not drift away from it for the sake of anything at all, why? Your life depends on it. You can see that in those last two verses. Look at Hebrews 10:38, "My righteous one shall live by faith." That's always been the case. "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness." This is not new with the New Testament. David said so. And in fact the author of Hebrews is going to tell us all the way back to the very first saint that went to glory was who? Abel, and it was by faith. By faith. It's always been by faith. "The righteous one shall live by faith." This is from Habakkuk. It's always been the case. Even when laws were given. Even when the law of Moses was given. Even when the 10 commandments was given. You never wanna go wrong here. Those were never given to put men into heaven a different way. Ever. The promise ... is to those ... who believe in Jesus Christ. The law says, "Do it and live." If you don't do everything written in the book of the law to do them, you're under curse. It's always been the way.

"The righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him" Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed." See, you shrink back in unbelief: destruction. Lay it down. If you are in unbelief there's no way to hide. Destruction is certain. What he says back a few verses in chapter 10, "For if we go on sinning," back in 10:26, "if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth," you receive a knowledge of the truth... you treat it with contempt... you spurn the Son of God... you go back to your sin, you go deliberately back in that way. You're going to be destroyed. It will not be well, there's no shelter. You hear about Christ, you turn your back from it, it's all over. Don't shrink back from that, that's what he's saying. "But of those who have faith and preserve their souls." There's soul preserving faith. I might have called my message that: "Soul Preserving Faith" There is a faith that preserves the soul. There is a way to destruction. There is a way to soul preservation. He's telling us about this. It depends on faith. It's a life-and-death issue. This is serious stuff. I mean, if there's anything that's basic and essential to Christianity, and to your well-being and my well being, it's faith. I mean, would you agree? If it is difference between self-preservation, the preservation of my soul, and destruction, that has to do with my well being. This impacts me.

Nobody here wants to say, "Well, this is just irrelevant. You know, I wish you would have preached a message today that had relevance into my life." If you don't think being destroyed or being preserved have relevancy to your life then nothing does. These are the most

important matters that you and I have to deal with. The epistle of Romans says, "Whatsoever does not flow from faith is sin." And right here this Hebrew writer says that "Without faith it's impossible please God." Sort of two different ways of saying the same thing. But whatever else may or may not be true of us it's faith God looks for. And if He doesn't find it, it's sin. If he doesn't find it, He's not pleased. You know what? The reality is: we better understand what this faith is.

You know, we need to understand what the nature of this faith is because there is a faith out there that doesn't save. There's a faith out there that's counterfeit. What is true saving faith? What distinguishes it from that which is not true but a counterfeit? I want to show you something. You see there in Hebrews 10:38 where it says: "My righteous one will live by faith." You see the word faith? Starting right there, and for 44 verses, this author does not want to move away from faith. In 44 verses he mentions faith 30 times. There is no greater concentration of faith anywhere else in your Bibles. This is a unique portion of Scripture. If there's ever anywhere you want to go, if you try to figure out what faith is, this is it. This place in Holy Scripture is where God intends for us to really catch a hold of what the meaning of it is.

Look, I can remember as a young Christian, pouring over it. As a young Christian I came to the doctrines of grace, reformed theology, and I was buying all the volumes of the Puritans, had the scholarly books on my shelf. And I was trying to figure faith out. I tried to figure faith through the scholars, through the theologians. And if you guys know how they like to divide faith up into these little parts. What is it like "Fiducia" and "Assensus" and "Nova Scotia", it's not that, novicia something. Anyway... I'm looking at that and I'm trying to figure it all out, pouring over those books. And there was a reason, there was a reason! I wanted to know what this was about. You know what happened to me? I got saved and the first thing I thought was "Whoa!" I never saw this before. I been walking around blind. I saw this and I thought the whole world is going to want to know. I went out and I was absolutely amazed that everybody I told about it didn't want it. And my eyes were open to it. It's the greatest thing, this is the greatest treasure, Christ is the greatest thing of anything.

And you know what I could not figure out is when I was lost in my sin, I lived it up. But then I saw there was something better. and I was leaving all that behind because I wanted Him. And what I could not get- I mean it was so bizarre to me; I started to see people who said "Well, I'm a Christian." But I'd look at them and their faith did not affect them the

way this new found thing that I had, affected me. And I was looking at that and I was trying to figure out, "What is going on here?" I mean, Christ was real to me! Far beyond anything that I had ever imagined or thought possible. I mean, what I was seeing of Christ, it gripped me, it changed my life! Everything about the way I lived was impacted by what I saw. But I'm all of a sudden being confronted by family members, by friends, by co-workers. And I'm looking at them and they're saying they're Christian, they're saying they have faith; but then I look at their life and it's not impacting them ANYWHERE like this is impacting me. And I suspected, "There's something not right here, there's something fearfully not right here."

But, you know, the problem was... well, it's kind of like this, like I can look at them and I can say, "Well, you don't have faith." And they would say, "Yes I do. I believe in God. I believe in Jesus Christ. I believe He died on the cross for sinners." And so you try to look at the definition of faith and figure out 'Where... what's the difference, where does this go wrong?' I mean why, what is it that they have -or don't have- that's different than what I have? And I was confronted by this on every side. And the faith of these people seemed strangely different. Now, there were some that I was meeting, they seemed to have the same effect. they seemed to be just as excited about Christ. But there were other people, it just didn't seem like it was there. So I was looking for a way to explain these differences. How was my faith different from what certain others had? How could I explain it? How could I define it? It was confusing to me at first.

I went to Scripture. You know what I saw? I saw what many of you have seen. I see Christ doing miracles and people believed. We heard about it in Sunday school. People believed. The disciples were there. But you know what? You read on in John 6 and suddenly, they were all gone but 12. Here they were, they believed, but when it got hard they left. And then I read somewhere else, here we have these people that believed on Christ, but because of the fear of the Jews and because they sought the glory of man- not the glory of God- they didn't openly profess Him. What's wrong with that? And then there's James: "the demons believe." You know, I start looking at this thing and Paul is talking about people who make shipwreck of the faith, and Jesus in His parables is talking about somebody who believes but it's temporary and then trials come- the sun comes out- and they withered away. And so you know what? I realized that what I am witnessing, Jesus and His followers witnessed 2,000 years ago.

But it still didn't help me exactly define, "Well, what's wrong? Where is the difference?"

How can I explain this? How can I define it?" You know Jesus in one place -you remember- He said to a man: "You are not far from the kingdom." Remember that? Did he believe in Jesus? Did he believe in God? I mean in Their existence. He's saying "you're not far from the kingdom." What I'm looking at is: okay, if I was going to break it down and give a definition to what that man had, and he's coming up, he's not far from the kingdom. Jesus is identifying the kingdom as something that has to be entered. Okay, you've got somebody and they're out here, they're close -not way out there- they're close. Certainly they believe lots of truth, they believe lots of good things, they believe that there is a God who exists. They believe all these things. What changes about their faith the moment they they cross over? What is it? How do I explain that? That's what I'm looking for.

Well, I believe if there ever is an attempt made in Scripture to actually give a definition to faith -or at least to help us out with the nature of faith- it can be found in verse 1 and verse 6 of Hebrews 10. There are 4 truths in these 2 verses that I believe if we take them and try to weave them together it may help us at least get some sort of verbal definition. Notice: The first thing I want you to do is look at verse 6, "Whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists." That's how the English Standard Version reads. All the other translations -well not all of them- there are some others that follow the ESV there, but it is the word 'is'. And a lot of the translations have that. You must believe that God is. Remember the name that God called Himself there at the burning bush? What did He call Himself? I AM. That's the idea. God is the ever and self-existed One. He is the I AM. You must believe that God is.

And this doesn't just -listen- this is not just saying that you believe that there is a supreme being. I was just on an airplane coming back from India; there's a woman, I asked her, "Are you Hindu?" She said, "Yes I'm Hindu, but I believe there's only one God." As if that's okay. She was okay as long as we agreed on that. As soon as I brought in Christ, the Only Way, it was apparent she got really upset. Well, somewhat upset. It was obvious she didn't want to talk anymore. Look, this is not just about believing that there's a supreme being. This is about believing that He exists. You must believe that He is what He is. You must believe that He is how He reveals Himself. That's the reality here.

If you say you believe in Allah, or you believe that there is a god and that God is Allah, that's not the same as believing that God is. Because you're not really believing that God is; you're believing that Allah is. And if you say, "Well, what I believe is that God is, and

God is Allah." I mean, you're missing the fact that that isn't how God is, because God isn't Allah. I mean look, the reality is there is a way God is, there is a way God exists, there is a way God reveals Himself. And we know -listen- those Jews -Paul is writing to the Romans- he said those Jews have a zeal for God, but they are ignorant. They didn't know and it cost them their life. Brandon was hinting at, in the Sunday School, this reality: you deny the true Christ, you deny Christ. There are false Christs. There are false gods. You've gotta believe in Him the way He is, the way He reveals Himself. The way He reveals Himself is through His Son. In fact, so much so that the Son said, "you deny Me, you deny Him." This is not just about believing that there is one God. Not just being monotheistic. The Jews were that and they went to hell. The devils believe that. It don't help them out.

So, you know what we're going to be doing in the weeks ahead? We're gonna be looking at the nature of God- not today though. But we're going to be looking at that, because I recognize this: if we want a passionate faith here, we have to know our God. That's just the reality. I'll tell you this, Faith gets its very substance from the character of God. You'd never want to go wrong on that. Faith is not based on your character; it's based on the character of God. It is eyes not focused on me and my belief. Faith looks away at who God is. We got to have a vision of God. If we're going to have a great faith, we've got to know our God. So that's that's where I want to go. Before we even launch into all these historical accounts, I want to look at some of the attributes of God, I want us to get to know our God. How does God reveal Himself? Because faith is built on this. Faith has its substance, saving faith gets its nature from who God is. It derives its substance from God.

So, look at verse 1. This is the first thing that you get from these 2 verses: faith gets its nature from who God is. That's key. Tozer said -in his book on the attributes of God "The Knowledge of the Holy"- he said the most important thing about you is how you conceive of God. And you know it as well as I do. Out there, where faith isn't strong; out there, where the gospel is not preached plainly and powerfully; out there, where there's heresy and false religion. What's the problem? It's always they don't have a correct understanding of God and how He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ. It's like Brandon said: 'the person and work of Jesus Christ'. And Jesus Himself said: 'you got My Father wrong if you've got Me wrong'. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He's the exact imprint of His nature. Don't go wrong on the Son. Where has God revealed Himself? Nature, the Word and MOST CLEARLY in His Son; which is revealed back in the word.

But now the second thing. Look at verse 1: "Faith is... (jump to the second thing it says) ...the conviction of things not seen." Now, the word conviction... it has a range of meaning here; I mean, different words could be used here: evidence, proof, argument. It's the idea that faith is an argument, it's a proof. That is speaking about the mind! Faith appeals to the mind, it gives proof to the mind. There's something real about this. But notice what it gives us a conviction or evidence of: things that are not seen; which goes hand in hand with the first thing right? God is... but God is an unseen God. Christ is now an unseen Christ. We love Him, but we have not seen Him, Peter says. He's unseen. The Kingdom is not seen. These patriarchs that we're going to look at- there was a city, there was a country, but it was unseen. It gives us an attachment to what's invisible. Everybody that has a human eyeball can see what's visible, if it is working correctly. But only faith makes an attachment to the unseen. And you see that verse 3 right? "By 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."

You know what? Faith is, literally, like a sixth sense. With your eyeball, you can see a beautiful mountain scenery; with our ears we hear; with my fingers I can touch, I can feel the grain- -probably artificial wood- but I can feel. There is actually a grain there. We have an organ, or a member, that is capable of this. I can smell a rose, and you know what it is? If somebody said, "How do you know that portion of the room is yellow?" I can say, "Because my eyes have seen it and it's delivered proof, it's delivered an argument to my brain." But in the same way, faith is an organ, and it's real. God gives it to people and suddenly- just like some of these people that Jesus healed of blindness- suddenly, they have an ability that they didn't have before. They can see where they couldn't before. Their eyes have been opened. I mean, in the same way that an eye can take in the sunset, faith is that sense that has the ability to see through the veil, and perceive what is invisible, in a way that actually brings evidence, and proof and conviction, back to our minds.

In Ephesians 2 we're told about faith. If you're wondering, "Well, how does all this work?" In Ephesians 2, we are told that faith is a gift of God, right? God gives faith! Do you remember what Jesus told Peter? "Who do you guys say I am?" What did Peter say? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What did Jesus tell Peter? "Flesh-and-blood has not revealed that to you." "You, Peter," you know what He's saying? "You have had a revelation from my Father." Which means: 'God has given you a perception, a sense to see and understand, which if God didn't give it to you, you wouldn't have.' God gave us the ability to

feel; He gave us the ability to see, to hear, to smell. And in the same way, He gives some the ability to peer through the veil into the unseen. It's God-given. That's how it happens! God breaks into our darkness and pours out a revelation of Himself. And you know what? To deny that it's so... you get an atheist coming along, a skeptic comes along and they say, "You know, I don't believe that!" That's just as foolish as a blind man saying that there isn't a sunset to see. And I would just say to some of you, the fact is, if you don't see these things, if you don't see through it to the other side, that doesn't mean that it's not there, anymore than it means that the sky isn't there if you can't see. or that birds don't sing if you can't hear it. You got a problem with your ear. It's there. Listen, I know some of you here you have never seen the preciousness of Christ, the cross, the power of God demonstrated in this gospel in the way some others here have. But don't walk out the door and go back to your sin just because you haven't seen it. The reality is that it's there. And if you will seek the Lord while He may be found, He promises you He will open up this veil to you as well. You call upon Him! He's there. Just because you don't perceive it, or see it yet, don't throw this away. It's life and death. Remember that! Life and death! Listen, you don't go to heaven without faith. You're destroyed if you don't have it. That's just the reality.

And you know we're just like Peter. Somebody can come along to us and they can say, "God doesn't exist." They can look at us and say, "Show me proof." Well, God has shown us proof! Look, there is a God who really does break into the darkness of people's lives and give them an understanding that Christ is the Son of God. He does that! He opens our eyes to the reality that there are things out there! It's real! And when it happens to us and then you go to Scripture and you see that that is exactly what the Scripture says God does... For somebody come along and tell us, "That's not true. You guys just take these blind leaps of faith as Christians." It's not blind! There's evidence! That's what's being said here! True faith has positive evidence. Just like when my eye has seen something, my faith has seen something. And you've seen it so clearly -not as clearly as we will see it- but you've seen it clear enough to sell out everything else to have it. And the reason that some of you are not sold out for Christ is because you haven't seen it. You have an idea that there is a God. You have an idea that there is a Christ. You don't deny that. But you haven't seen these things.

Look at the third thing. Again, verse 1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." Now, what's interesting about this is the second thing here, and what's said as the first thing down in Hebrews 11:6 -that I pointed out- is this, The first you have to do with this: there is a



God, and we have this conviction about the unseen. There is a way God is NOW. There is an unseen, NOW. There is a country that's there now; we don't see it. There's a Kingdom that is there now; we don't see it. There's a God who is there now; we don't see Him. There's a Christ who is there, we don't see Him. But now, the first part here has to do with our hope. And hope has to do with what? The future. Hope is future. And if you go back down to verse 6 you'll find that the third thing said there: "God is a rewarder of them who seek Him"; The reward that he's been talking about is back in Hebrews chapter 10, you will see there is the reward at the end of verse 35: "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised." How does God reward us? He rewards us with the things that He promises. What are the promises? The unsearchable riches of Christ. We have an inheritance. We have God himself. God is our God. Christ is going to take us for His bride. We will have Him. We will have righteousness. We'll be without sin. We'll be in Paradise. I mean, this is what is promised.

So if you break out these these four things, you have this: there is this substance; there is this assurance. Not only where I'm able to see through the veil and see what's there now, I'm able to lay hold on God's promises for the future and see that they are real and trust Him. I see who He is. I see He is faithful. And I see His word and I bank my soul, my life, my all on this reality. That He is going to reward me. He is going to do what He has promised. He's going to fulfill these things. If we took these and we combine them all together and we came up with a definition, it might be like this -obviously there could be other ways but- "Faith is the firm assurance and conviction that the invisible God is who says He is and will do what He has promised to do." That's my definition based on these 4 verses: 'Faith is the firm assurance and conviction -you see both those words in verse 1- that the invisible God is who He says He is -the invisible is from verse 1- God says that God IS who He says He is. God is -that comes from verse 6- and will do what He has promised to do: He'll give the reward He has promised to give -that comes from the hope of verse 1- and the rewarder, of verse 6.

But here's the thing. Here's what I find interesting. After all that, what I find interesting is that if the Lord is trying to give us some definition here, His words, at best, are extremely brief. Verse 1 is short. The part of verse 6 is short. Do you know that for these 44 verses that He's talking about faith? You know what he does the vast majority of the time? It's like the Lord takes us by the hand and says, -and this is all through the Bible- "I'm not so

concerned that you get caught up with a definition of what this is. I want to show you faith in real people... living, burning. I want to show you what happens in the lives, the actions, the adventures of people whose hearts I lay a hold of and give this faith to. That's what I want. I want you to see the living thing."

And it's almost that way all through Scripture. You will hardly ever get attempts by Scripture to give you a definition of faith; rather, time and again, over and over. Jesus didn't say, "Well boys let me explain to you what faith is." He would look at somebody and say, "Do you see what they just did? Did you hear that guy? I have never found such great faith, not even in Israel!" See that's that's how Scripture does it. This is what God's doing here. He comes along and He says, "My people, I WANT TO SHOW YOU THIS CLOUD OF WITNESSES! I want to show you what this faith does in people. I want to show you!"

You know what it does when people suddenly can see through the veil? It's just like what I experienced when I first got saved! He wants us to see it! When you're gripped by this kind of reality, when you can see the unseen, and you can believe the promises and the reward of God, He says it frees you from the preoccupation with this world! Do you not read what it says? They had the opportunity to go back, but they didn't because they desired a better country. They had seen 'this' country with these eyes; but they saw 'that' country with the organ of faith that God had given to them. And it was stronger; and they knew it was real. And Moses, he said: 'I will not identify with Egypt and with its riches! I want the reproach of Christ, because that reward is better.' And that's what it does to people. You know this has everything to do with what he said in chapter 10. He said, 'You do not wanted to be exposed to the truth and go on in your sin.' Rather do what you used to do. You see, when they were so worked up that they said, "We don't care if our stuff gets plundered; we're gonna identify with the people of God, because Christ is real and because these are His little ones. He's real and as much as we do it to them, we do it to Him. We love Him, we love the unseen Christ and it's gripped us! And so we're going to the prison and we're gonna visit them, even if the the soldiers come and pillage all of our stuff."

That has everything to do with what's being said here all throughout chapter 11. Why? Because just this. When Moses turns his back on the riches of Egypt, it's the same thing they were doing in their earlier life. They turned their back to their possessions Why? Because they were free! When you fall in love with Christ; when the things of this world grow strangely dim; When Christ becomes everything and precious and you see Him and you know

that salvation is real and heaven is out there and a few more rolling suns at most, I'm on Canaan's coast and I'm gonna behold Him as He is. Brethren, when that's real and it grips you, it changes your life. And that's what He's doing here. He's setting these people before us because he wants to show us how it is when faith really grips somebody's life. It isn't just something you come along and say, "Well, I believe in Jesus." If you believe in Jesus, you will turn your back on the riches of this world. That's what He's showing. When you truly believe what is real and unseen and promised in the future it will grip you. Look, it's so fantastic. It's so... it's so much... it's so great... that when you look around this world you just laugh. These people were freed from the preoccupation with pleasure... and safety. Do you ever read they were sawn asunder? Why? Because they identified with the truth, with the true God, with the people of God. And if you do that there's a cost.

But you know what it's so great? It's like Paul comes along and he says, momentary light affliction versus eternal weight of glory. Let's see... put them in the balances: Light. Weight. BOOM! When you can look through the veil, the scales just go, BANG! I mean, it's not... [teeters hands] The scales just fall. The thing breaks! There's so much weight on this side that it just crushes the whole thing. Now this side goes up in the air, it's light, it's nothing, it's trivial, it's passing! People who truly can see through, they break free of the preoccupation with sex, drugs, money, greed and fame in this world.

Brothers and sisters, I do not wanna pastor a people... I want to pastor people who are willing to have all of their stuff plundered to go identify with people that are in jail. I want to pastor a people who are willing to turn their eyes from the safety and security of this world to identify with the reproached people of Christ, and to give up the riches of Egypt. I want people so gripped by this! Don't you feel that this is exactly the kind of people that the author of Hebrews wants? This is what he wants filling the churches. This is why he has set down these truths. Christ, in His majesty, chapter 1. Christ, in His humanity, chapter 2. And on he goes. The Melchizedek king-priesthood. It's more, it's superior, it's better. Christ is abundantly better at every point. Why? why? Why so much of Christ? So much of Christ! Because he wants us to have our eyes on Him and to see: this is glorious! This is altogether worth sacrificing everything else to have. I'm willing to throw it all away to have Him. This is better. My sins are forgiven. He's seated on that throne. He's made purification for my sins. I am perfect in my standing in Him. There's no claim on me. There's no condemnation for me. I'm a free man. And I can live free. And the Spirit of God is in me, and He lives with me, and He abides

with me, and the Father loves me. And my prayers are heard, and He's taking me swiftly on the way to heaven. And He's for us brethren. The Scripture says He's not against us if we have trusted in Christ.

And the things you do here matter. They follow you. Revelation 14 says they follow you out into eternity. His workmanship unto good works. They matter, our lives matter. Righteousness! He saved us to offer us up without blemish, without spot before Him as a bride. Purity in this life. We need people gripped by these realities to where it changes your life. to where some of you piddling around with the extent of your Christian liberty, get all caught up in the sensuality, in the stuff of this world, in movies, in garbage. Listen, this isn't about whether you have liberties or not; this is about what your heart is consumed with.

That's why God's taken us by the hand now and is going to launch us off into this chapter and show us person after person, who by their very lives... They are strange people; they don't do what everybody else does. I mean, people here in America are so protective of their stuff. Got live in gated communities; they just have to. A family in our church just had their house broken into after one week. Welcome to the eastside of San Antonio, right? But if you want to come here because you want to be a light in darkness that's the kind of thing that happens. What do you think? You think it might cost you a little more time if you went to India or somewhere? You went over to Indonesia or you went to Cambodia? Or to Serbia, or Kosovo, or Africa? We need people to turn the world upside down. It's not people who are flirting with how worldly they can be. It's people who can see behind the veil, and they are just enthralled and entranced. by this beauty that has been revealed to them of Christ. That's what this is all about. That's where we're headed.

Is God just saying throughout this book, He says, 'I want you to see people that had faith.' back in chapter 6 verse 13 He's saying, "Examples! Examples! Here are these people who lived by faith. I want to show you the exploits of my people; the adventures of my people. I want you to see it." You know what the beauty is of chapter 11? Is this: it's inspired. It says, I think it's around a few verses down, they all died in faith. You know what? I can look around here and I can say: I honestly don't know which of you are true Christians and which are not. I mean, when the last chapter of life is done, I don't know. But you know what we can know? We can know that every single one of these people in chapter 11, they were the real deal. Because we have on God's authority that they were and you can look at them. You know what you want to do, is look at this cloud of witnesses. You want to surround yourself

with people like this. You want to surround yourself with these people in the word. You ought to surround yourself with people like that in real life. You're to surround with people like that, who have biographies written about them. Why? Because who you make your companions is contagious. You have bad companionship, it corrupts good manners. I got that straight from somebody's mouth who is very dependable. Brothers and sisters, God wants us to have heroes. He wants us to have people that we look at, He wants us to see people that were great in the faith and He wants us to imitate them. Be imitators. Follow them. These are real people.

I mean, you ask yourselves. I don't want to pastor a bunch of people that are trying to figure out how to be most happy in this world. "Your best life now." I don't want, I don't want to pastor that church. I want to pastor people that are willing to lay it all down. I mean, it starts one a simple level, very practical. If you really recognize who God is, and you believe what He says, and you believe what He promises; even things like cleaning up after a service. This is real stuff. I can remember in my early days My friend and I painting signs at Pilgrim's Heritage up in Michigan. I can remember coming here and being involved in church plants and having a work party and being the only one to show up. and mowing the lawn and just recognizing: there is a God, there is a Christ, there is salvation, it's all real. We're trying to send the gospel forth here, And you know what? Mowing a lawn actually has a part to do and a place to play in all that. And just being faithful. And moving forward, being faithful. Being faithful in what God gives you to do, not seeing how much you can put off. But investing your life wholly for Christ. Time is short. 1 Corinthians 7 says it's short. You don't have much of it left.

And what I want to do in the days and weeks and months ahead, I want us to keep gripped by the reality of this faith, the reality of what these people saw to be a reality that caused them to do the things that they did. And I'll tell you when we are driven by faith; when we are driven by the reality; we're taking God and His word; and we're trusting His promises; we're trusting in who He is; He's a rewarder; we're putting our confidence in Him; we are seeing Him as the kind of God that he is and the Christ the way He is; and we're selling out for that; this is what God is pleased with, and without this it's impossible to please Him. This must be the driving motivator of our lives! That we see and love what God is, what His Son is, and we want it. We want Him and we want His salvation. That's where we're headed in the weeks ahead.

God help us brethren. God help us. Father we ask You to help us. Lord, I pray that

you would give us Lord, not the most talented, not the most gifted. Lord, we don't want the greatest reputation. We don't need to be big. We don't need to have fancy stuff and great buildings. Lord, give us people with a yearning, burning, fiery faith. That will lay ahold to the realities of the living Christ and not let go though You slay them. Though they'd be cut in half, live in caves, put to death by the sword. Lord, help us to be these kind of people, that You're undoubtedly going to show to us because You want us to be like them. Help us, Lord, by the grace of God may we'd be like them. Amen.