



THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

WIRE RISK-TAKING: FAITH OVER FEAR



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INTRODUCTION

“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.” Hebrews 10:39

I have no interest in the idea of walking across a tightrope that’s suspended high in the air. In fact, ascending the average step ladder for projects around the house tests my limits. Approaching the edge of a mountain overlook is near impossible? Forget about it. My heart races more than enough just watching someone else near the rim for a better view or the perfect picture.

The fear of heights is real, and it reminds us how easily a spirit of fear can take hold of our senses. This makes stories like the unique life of Jean-Francois Gravelet seem almost otherworldly. He used the stage name Charles Blondin. Other titles included “The Great Blondin,” “The Daredevil Wire Walker,” and “The Prince of Manila.” He became interested in high wire acrobatics at a young age after a circus troupe came near where he grew up in France in the early 1800’s. Gravelet was mesmerized by the tightrope walker and immediately set out to duplicate the stunt in his backyard.

His most famous feat came in 1859 when he was the first to tightrope across Niagara Falls. Subsequent trips across the falls had to be more audacious than the previous ones. Some of the passages included going across blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow, carrying his manager on his back, taking a small stove and cooking an omelet on the way, turning somersaults, and crossing on stilts.

Blondin’s flair for the dramatic continued into his seventies with performances all over the world. The risks he took were more than dangerous; they were breathtaking enough to capture the attention of thousands at any given time. He was one of many Biblical examples of risk takers in a secular sense, showing what does the Bible say about being bold in the face of physical peril. Yet, for all those who were willing to watch his

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death-defying acts, it did not translate into nearly that many following in his footsteps to perform similar exploits.

In contrast, our lives are full of different types of risks. Some are relatively minor, and others are much larger steps of faith. When we are stepping out of your comfort zone for God, we often wonder how to trust God when you are afraid of the future. How can we discern when our fears are warranted and supplied by God as a warning to steer clear of impending danger? This involves understanding the difference between faith and foolishness and the importance of seeking Godly counsel before taking risks. And how can we sense when He is leading us to exercise faith in Him to overcome fear and accomplish what otherwise would be impossible?

Thankfully, God's Word has plenty to say about both faith and fear. If you are looking for how to deal with fear, you will find that what the Bible says about faith provides a solid foundation. This life skill guide will use Hebrews 11 as a framework to learn from the faith of Old Testament saints. We will look at the actions they took to obey God's commands and follow His leading, along with their potential coinciding fears. We will explore what does the Bible say about fear and look at specific Bible verses about faith to guide our journey.

In doing so, I pray the Lord would help us see that the risks He is calling us to take are far surpassed by His commendation and His certain promises to come. We will learn how to stop being afraid by clinging to the truth that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.

1

FAITH DEFINED AND COMMENDED

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

Who among us wouldn't want to walk around each day with full assurance and conviction? We have moments when we are ready to take on the world. There are times when whatever the Lord has put before us to do for His glory is accompanied by certainty. Then life happens, and other things compete for our time and attention. And we realize faith involves risk and fear and daily reminders of our dependence on the Lord.

How Faith is Demonstrated

If we take the well-known verse above and disconnect it from its context, there's a chance for it to come across as another version of manifesting our destiny—you know, the belief that we can become whatever we put our minds to and stuff like that? With enough focus, visualization, and positive energy, we can bring about what we desire and make it a reality in our lives. This sounds quite appealing, especially when we hear someone describe their version of it after they accomplished a remarkable feat

Yet, we can also recognize the catastrophic outcomes of a life lived primarily through this paradigm. What happens when a person has manifested something in their mind without recognizing its impossibility in reality? What happens when a person's desires for themselves don't end up fulfilling them as they originally thought? What happens with larger questions about God and His plans for their life now and hereafter?

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Thankfully, Hebrews 11:1 is surrounded by God's perspective on faith, not ours. This assurance of things hoped for is not blind faith lacking historical evidence. In fact, the basis for our faith is firmly grounded in trusting God and His faithfulness to us since the beginning of creation through His Word. It has also been extended to us, century after century, through His faithfulness evident in the people of God. And ultimately, it has been clearly witnessed and attested to through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

So, what is true faith? The Biblical definition of faith is beautifully articulated in the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 21: "True faith is not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true all that God has revealed to us in Scripture; it is also a wholehearted trust, which the Holy Spirit creates in me by the gospel, that God has freely granted, not only to others but to me also, forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, and salvation. These are gifts of sheer grace, granted solely by Christ's merit."¹

The biblical understanding of faith is infinitely greater than personal agreement to what we can envision on our own. Faith contains both holding to the truth that "God has revealed to us in Scripture" and "wholehearted trust" in what the Holy Spirit has done in us, based solely on the grace of God through Christ. This belief allows us to live by faith, not in ourselves but in Him, by living according to His Word. This is what the Bible says about faith.

Faith Through Sacrifice

We are not told explicitly why Abel's sacrifice was more acceptable than Cain's. However, he is commended by God for being righteous based on his faith in God accepting his gift. In contrast, Cain becomes very angry, and God responds by asking why and saying, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it" (Gen. 4:7).

Living by faith requires sacrifice on God's terms, not on ours. Have you ever given up something for the Lord that you thought was an acceptable sacrifice, only to feel angry when it seemed it wasn't accepted? We've all been there at times to varying degrees.

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When we struggle with these feelings, we often need Bible verses about worry and fear to redirect our hearts. Robert came from a legalistic church background that, in his mind, involved sacrificing many things based on what others deemed appropriate. After years of living this way, he led his family to follow suit, and the negative effects became more apparent. The binding of his conscience and of those around him to what was acceptable beyond Scripture had taken a serious toll. He and I started meeting periodically for coffee to discuss why his life wasn't turning out like he thought he deserved.

We waded through plenty of resentment and anger toward God, his family, and the church. What he had deprived himself of had not equated to the Lord blessing Him with an abundant life. He was disillusioned, and he found it nearly impossible to trust the Lord, let alone anyone from a church who was attempting to walk alongside him to imitate Christ.

In his struggle, he needed to know how to overcome fear of being controlled by rules rather than grace. As you may have already guessed, he was quick to blame others for the downfalls in his life and family. Taking responsibility for his past actions and being willing to reconsider how the Lord was leading him to live by faith moving forward were out of the question. More than enough anger had built up, which led to his feeling justified in his hard-heartedness toward others.

I wish I could say repentance had come sooner, so ongoing destruction could have been avoided. Unfortunately, that was not the case for Robert, and it came with a steep cost in the loss of his family and several other close friends. Overcoming the spirit of fear regarding his own failures and reputation proved to be a hurdle he wasn't yet ready to clear.

At times, all of us can fall prey to Cain's approach of trying to live by faith on our terms. May the Lord help each of us learn from Abel's example. Let us begin with offering to God what He has called us to sacrifice by faith in Him and not in what we or others have come up with on our own.

Faith Through Pleasing God

When life is put in terms of a choice between pleasing God, pleasing man, or pleasing ourselves, there's only one option that doesn't seem severely short-sighted and self-serving. Yet, the temptation to toggle between

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these in any given moment is always there. On the surface, we wonder, how can this be?

For all who have been forgiven of their sins through Jesus's cross work, it seems like pleasing God would be fixed as our default. So, why are we and others so prone to choose otherwise?

Often, it is because we lack the faith over fear mentality required to stand alone for the truth. The next person of interest from Hebrews 11 is Enoch. What we know about him from Genesis 5:21-24 is minimal. Though one phrase is repeated twice to summarize his life – “Enoch walked with God.” And to do so takes faith, trusting God that He will take care of you. It takes believing that God will provide for your needs, even when your circumstances say otherwise. It's in those times, among others, that we are tempted to take matters into our own hands and fend for ourselves.

Hebrews 11:6 states this plainly. “And 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.” If you're anything like me, you can easily know this in your head and yet fail to rest on it in your heart. Let me ask you, where have you drifted from walking with Him and drawing near to Him? How is He calling you to return to Him today?

If you are struggling, meditation on Bible verses about faith can help re-center your focus. If these questions are assuming too much, we certainly don't want to take for granted that the second half of the verse is firmly in place in your life. If there is any question in your mind or any doubt in your heart that Christ died for you, to pay for your sins so that you can have everlasting peace with God, please let someone know today. It can be the person you're reading this with or another faithful Christian you know. What a joy it would be for them to see the day of salvation come for you as well.

Faith Through Reverent Fear

Like Enoch, Genesis 6:9 says that Noah “walked with God” as well. Though the path he traveled with the Lord was unlike any other. God warned him that the world would be destroyed by a flood because of sin. Noah was then called to believe God and build an ark in order that he and his family may survive.

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I bet there were times when Noah felt alone. We, too, may think we are the lone voice in the wilderness, trying to live by faith at work, in our neighborhood, or in our civic engagement. But Noah's example of living righteously in the midst of a hostile world is on a whole other level. He had to learn how to trust God when you are afraid of the future while the world around him mocked his obedience.

Nonetheless, there is much we can take away from Noah's example. One key attribute is how reverent fear is required in order to walk by faith.

This is the difference between faith and foolishness; Noah wasn't reckless, he was obedient to a divine warning. This is a reminder of the classic way that the book of Ecclesiastes ends. After Solomon has known what it's like to live with unparalleled wisdom, he surveys the world and what it's like trying to find fulfillment solely through work, pleasure, and wealth. He finds that each of these avenues leads only to vanity.

Thus, the book concludes with these infamous words from Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. "The end of the matter, all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil." This is what the Bible says about fear in its most productive, holy form—a reverence that leads to life.

Reflection Questions:

1. What has the Lord led you to offer Him recently that you were reluctant to give to Him?
2. Describe what it's been like for you to please God rather than man or yourself.
3. What examples from Scripture have helped you cultivate a reverent fear of the Lord?

2

FAITH OF ABRAHAM AND THE PATRIARCHS

“But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.” Hebrews 11:16

Earlier in the book of Hebrews, the concept of faith is addressed in terms of the Israelites' disobedience. Hebrews 4:2 says, “For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” They heard the message of the gospel, but they didn't combine it with faith. Thankfully, others heard God's promises and believed. This highlights the difference between faith and foolishness; the former is rooted in God's Word, while the latter ignores His counsel.

The Promised Land

There's a small group of guys from my church who enjoy backpacking. We typically map out a new section of the mountains we haven't traversed before. Then we plan to spend a few days and nights together, taking in the sights. One of the guys is the apparent ringleader of the group. He's typically responsible for sending out the group text that alerts the rest of us that it's about time to start planning for our next adventure.

He's also the guy who has all the stuff. The latest hiking gadget, the new and improved menu for each trip, and the trail routes with multiple options to consider. Yet, even with every well-thought-out plan and every conceivable satellite aid along the way, there are still moments of

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uncertainty. Times when we have to rely on the good old-fashioned trail markers to find our way. And even then, there have been plenty of scenarios where we just had to admit we were lost. These are the moments when we search for Bible verses about fear to steady our nerves.

Now, imagine being in Abraham's shoes and hearing God say to leave your country, your people, and your father's household to go to an unknown land (Gen. 12:1). By faith, Abraham left everything and everyone that he knew. He was stepping out of your comfort zone for God, having nothing on which to base this trip other than the promises of God.

His actions were not based on anything that he could see, or look to, or that he had known before. Instead, in faith, he left, not knowing where God would lead, but trusting God to keep His promises. Abraham is one of the greatest Biblical examples of risk takers, demonstrating what does the Bible says about being bold when called by the Creator.

How often are you and I unable to see where faith in God will lead? How often do we need to be reminded of the past promises of God in order to gain confidence in present calls for obedience to His Word? How often do we need to lift our eyes to see where our help comes from? Our "help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:2). The same Lord who saw Abraham through the risks he was commanded to take will surely see us through the risks He calls us to take, showing us how to overcome fear through total reliance on Him.

The Promised Son

The Lord not only promised Abraham land, but He also promised him "descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore" (Heb. 11:12). In this journey of faith, Abraham was obviously not alone. Sarah, his wife, also lived by faith, though she and her husband were "as good as dead" (Heb. 11:12), which means that they were old and without children. With such a description, we can only imagine how they must have felt their longing for children go unmet for so long.

If you or a couple you know has struggled with infertility, you get the despair that can come with the inability to conceive. Such a trial often brings a heavy spirit of fear regarding the future. Having children is one of

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the great desires of life in this world. Hence, the proliferation of ways science has attempted to step in and engineer this dream for people desiring to have kids. Though Hebrews 11:11 tells us that it was only by the power of God that Sarah conceived.

This speaks not only of the desires we have for generations to come after us, it can also instruct us in how we are to handle desiring and not receiving. Periodically, it's helpful to take time to spend with the Lord, prayerfully considering what we are longing for most in any given season. This is part of how to deal with fear and disappointment—bringing those raw emotions before the throne of grace. I highly encourage you to hit pause now or at the end of this section to ask the Lord for help discerning what you are desiring most right now and what he means for you in withholding that thing, at least for now.

Is it a deep longing to be married? For a godly, believing spouse to share your life with as you follow Christ together? Is it the salvation of a close family member or friend? Someone for whom you have been praying and pleading with God to rescue? Is it to be used by God profoundly, one that would bring Him greater glory? Or is it to see you through a particularly difficult season of anxiety or depression? A stretch that has left you feeling isolated and alone? If so, look to Bible verses for fear and anxiety to find comfort in His presence.

These are all good things to desire. How should you go about waiting for the Lord when it comes to good desires? You should continue to pray. By praying, you demonstrate to your own heart and to others that God is reliable and he does what is right even when we don't understand his ways. This is the essence of faith over fear.

The Promised Life

If this life were all there is, Hebrews 11:13 would be one of the most depressing verses in the Bible. To think that “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar,” leaves a lot to be desired. Praise God, all of them realized they were passing through, and this world was not their ultimate home. If they had only been thinking about this world, they might have returned to what they had left behind.

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Oh, where would you and I be without the promised life to come? It brings to mind the refrain and repeated question throughout the following hymn:

“Oh, where shall I be, when the first trumpet sounds?

Oh, where shall I be when it sounds so loud,

When it sounds so loud as to wake up the dead?

Oh, where shall I be when it sounds?”²

As a result of God’s grace to live by faith, He “is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb. 11:16). Oh, how the promise of heaven plays such a vital role in sustaining us and strengthening us along our journey to the Celestial City.

This perspective helps in overcoming fear of death and the unknown. Knowing this, it’s helpful to ask how often you and I allow ourselves to be reminded of this ultimate result of our salvation. I, for one, am regularly guilty of not reflecting enough on this certain hope and of not encouraging others to do the same. How much more could we be encouraged in our faith and take risks for God if we remembered that he has promised us life in the world to come? This is how to trust God when you are afraid of the future.

This may very well be an excellent question for you and the person you are reading this with to discuss together. Consider how each of you can learn from how the other dwells on heaven. What help can you be to one another in reflecting on our promised life to come in more fulfilling ways?

The Promises Tested

It’s one thing to walk with God and trust in His promises. It’s another thing to walk with God and obey Him when the way doesn’t make sense to us. Who knows what all went through Abraham’s mind when God tested him by telling him to sacrifice his only beloved son, Isaac.

We wonder how Abraham was able to obey God to that degree. We wonder what the conversation was like between him and Isaac when Isaac asked about the lamb for the burnt offering. We wonder what went through Abraham’s mind as he picked up the knife, thinking that his faith would

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lead him to kill his own son. In this moment, Abraham had to decide how to stop being afraid of losing what he loved most.

And we wonder how faith like Abraham's is possible when we read how Paul describes it in Romans 4:20-22: "No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.'"

Oh, to grow strong in our faith as we glorify God, being fully convinced that He is able to do what He has promised to you and me. Oh, to fear God to that degree and hold nothing back from Him (Gen. 22:12). Oh, to believe that He can even raise people from the dead if He so desires (Heb. 11:19). This is the definition of overcoming the fear of failure as a christian—realizing that even if everything seems lost, God is in control.

My friend, if you struggle to trust that God is able to do for you what he has promised you in Christ, then recall that He meets you where you are right now. You may not be tasked with something as extraordinary as Abraham. But that doesn't mean he isn't calling you to continue growing stronger in your faith as you travel the road He has marked out for us. Remember, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.

How is your faith in God's promises being tested currently? Who has the Lord brought into your life to pray for you and to talk about this testing? Perhaps you are seeking Godly counsel before taking risks that the Lord is placing before you. What has God provided in the past to strengthen your faith? Where is He leading you to grow in your faith now? May these questions make for fruitful talks to come.

The Promises Passed On

There is certainly something to seeing the baton of faith passed from one generation to another. Following Abraham, Isaac is commended for blessing Jacob and Esau for the future. Jacob is commended for blessing the sons of Joseph. And Joseph is commended for reiterating God's promise to rescue His people and bring them to the promised land.

Hopefully, this brings to mind those the Lord used to pass the baton of faith to you. Was it the prayers and Christlike example of godly

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grandparents? Was it faithful parents who diligently, though imperfectly, taught you about the Lord? Or was it the obedience of others that God brought into your life in His perfect timing to lead you to Him?

Praise God for each of the people He used to help you learn and see what it means to live by faith in Christ. Praise Him also for the people He has allowed you to cross paths with to help you follow Him. And if you have kids of your own, praise Him for the incredible gift they are and for the privilege of teaching and leading them to faith in Christ.

This legacy is a powerful antidote to Bible verses about worry and fear. As you survey the relationships in your life currently, who is God leading you to help live by faith in His Son? It could be that you have all the people you can handle right now. And your focus is more on praying for wisdom to help them pass the baton of faith to someone else.

The Lord may also be leading you to pray for those you know who need the Lord or who need help from others to follow Him, but haven't been open to it yet. In whatever way the Lord is directing you to see faith passed from one generation to another, may you do so knowing you are involved in the most important work on the planet.

Reflection Questions:

1. What aspect of eternal life in heaven captures your attention the most? How does this promise spur you on in your day-to-day?
2. Have you had an "Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac" moment with the Lord? If so, what was it like, and how did He see you through?
3. Are you content with who the Lord has called you to pass the baton of faith off to currently? If so, praise God! If not, how is your heart being stirred for others?

3

THE FAITH OF MOSES AND ISRAEL

“He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.” Hebrews 11:26

Taking risks that involve trading rewards in this life for the reward of the life to come is sometimes easier said than done. Every day... scratch that... every moment, we are tempted to do otherwise. In this, we see why Jesus says to “count the cost” before following Him. Moses is commended for such faith, as he serves as an imperfect example of what it looks like to follow God’s calling and lead others to do so as well. This is the heart of what the Bible says about faith: looking past the immediate to the eternal.

Childlike Faith

Hebrews 11:23 is the first time we see fear or being afraid acknowledged for the role it plays in living by faith. The book of Exodus opens with Pharaoh’s cruel command to kill all the Hebrew male children at birth. In the New Testament, Stephen picks up on this in his famous speech that indicts God’s people for rejecting Him and His work. Acts 7:20 says that Moses was a “beautiful child in God’s sight.”

Seeing this as a sign of God’s favor, Moses’s family chose faith over fear and did not live in a spirit of fear regarding what might happen to them as a result of circumventing the king’s edict. We can only imagine how this translated into Moses forsaking the comforts and conveniences of being raised by Pharaoh’s daughter in the king’s palace. Instead, he chose to be “mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward” (Heb. 11:25-26)

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What an example for us to be inspired by and to emulate in our lives. Praying for God's help not to be lured and swayed by the short-term gains of living for this world involves overcoming fear of missing out on worldly status. At times, this looks like not automatically accepting what looks best on paper, but instead taking sufficient time to pray and seeking Godly counsel before taking risks before assuming what is truly best. Often, God's way can look a bit different than what we were expecting or what others expected for us.

This can come with mistreatment from others who don't understand why we would forsake what seems so clear and evident to them. It can happen in subtle ways as they question our wisdom and our thought process. It can also occur in more overt ways, as some may say we are just plain wrong or that we are going to ruin our chances of a better life in the future. In these moments, we must remember that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.

Yet, as a mentor of mine used to reiterate to me over and over, "There's nothing in the world like being where God wants you to be and doing what God wants you to be doing." This is the ultimate goal when stepping out of your comfort zone for God.

If you have questioned whether your past decisions to follow Christ were worth it, be encouraged to know the answer is absolutely! And if you are currently questioning a pending decision to follow Him or what may bring immediate rewards, heed Moses' example, who ultimately followed Christ's example of trusting God above all else.

Faith as an Adult

Two chapters of Scripture that the Lord has used significantly in my life, among others, are Exodus 3 and 4. When Moses turns aside to behold the burning bush, the dialogue that ensues between him and the Lord is priceless. The fact that he tells God "no" five times and that, by God's grace, God still uses Moses to lead His people, never ceases to amaze me. I can't imagine being that direct with the Lord, yet I have more subtly rejected His leading on plenty of occasions due to overcoming the fear of failure as a christian.

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We can all relate to the questions Moses raises surrounding his identity in the Lord (Exod. 3:11), his intimacy with Him (Exod. 3:13), his intimidation before others (Exod. 4:1), his inadequacy with speaking (Exod. 4:10), and his inferiority in requesting someone else to go (Exod. 4:13).

One of the more memorable occasions of working through these chapters came during a nightly devotion on a short-term mission trip to Zambia. It was the first overseas mission work for most of our group. As we talked through which of Moses' hesitations were most impacting each person, we learned a lot about how to overcome fear together.

Vince shared about how inadequate he felt in coming on the trip. He admitted that he initially signed up because of his wife and how much she felt led him to go. So, his plan was to be used by God for manual labor, and he'd leave talking and everything else to the rest of us. He was essentially struggling with how to deal with fear regarding his own perceived lack of gifts.

All that changed about midway through the trip. Vince was by far the tallest person in our group. This became more obvious as we walked from hut to hut, sharing the gospel and inviting people to the new church that was starting in their village. He was at least a foot taller than anyone we encountered.

Late that afternoon, we all returned to our host site after breaking into small groups of a few people with each interpreter. Vince, the one who vowed not to talk, was beaming from ear to ear and overcome by what God had done. Turns out, in his weakness, he was truly strong in Christ, illustrating what does the Bible says about being bold for the Gospel.

His interpreter talked him into sharing about the Lord at the next hut, and out walked the only guy who remotely matched him in height. After years of rejecting the gospel, the man was overwhelmed that God would send a man of similar stature to him. He was now open to receiving what Christ had done for him.

During their conversation, the two inquired about each other's names, and they almost fell over with God's blessing on their faith. Turns out that Vince was talking to Vince.

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Faith as a Leader

Though Moses' faith was certainly not perfect, the writer of Hebrews describes him as not being afraid of Pharaoh's anger during the exodus (Heb. 11:27). The rest of the verse supplies great insight into the source of his strength. Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." What a picture of how fixing our eyes on Christ, the founder and perfecter of our faith, changes our perspective and provides Bible verses for fear and anxiety that settle the soul.

For example, take a moment to think about what has you most concerned right now. What are you most fearful of currently? If you're anything like me, it doesn't take much time at all to continue dwelling on those fears before despair enters the picture. You might even find yourself looking for Bible verses about anxiety just to keep your head above water.

On the flip side, take a moment to pray for God's help to keep your eyes focused on Christ and to know Him more and more through His Word. Soon, our despair turns into delight. We're reminded that we are not alone. No matter what our current circumstances look like, Christ will never leave us. No matter what may come our way in the future, Christ will never forsake us. This is how to trust God when you are afraid of the future.

Let's make this even more practical, given what is directly before you. Who has the Lord given you to lead in this season of your life? This may include your spouse, kids, people at church, co-workers, other students, and adults or kids in the community.

What is your chief concern about your calling to lead them? How has Christ's faithfulness to you encouraged you in this role in the past? How does God's reminder of this help you endure moving forward? This is part of the the parable of the talents: risk and stewardship—using what God has given us despite our fears. In what way can you more intentionally pray for each of these people on your own and with whom you're reading this field guide?

Now, let's consider what you have been given to lead. Would you put it in terms of an organization, a group, a team, an initiative, a project, or so far simply a personal endeavor? What is most liable to keep you up at night

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regarding your leadership of it? How are you most susceptible to leading out of fear?

Take a moment to read and reflect on Hebrews 12:1-3. Consider what impact the Lord would have on this text for you as a leader right now.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary and fainthearted.

Faith of Others

What a sight it is to see when a group of people unite together for a common mission, to accomplish a common goal. This may bring to mind the last epic run your favorite sports team made or a compelling scene from one of your favorite movies.

Consider what it took for the people of God to cross the Red Sea and to see the walls of Jericho fall, and for Rahab to risk her life to welcome in the spies. These are classic Biblical examples of risk takers. Personal preferences had to be put aside for the greater good of obeying God's commands together. Other ambitions and plans had to be submitted to the risks the Lord was calling them to take.

By faith, the temptation to return to what they knew had to be overcome. By faith, they had to resist going with a different plan that seemed a whole lot safer and made a great deal more sense on paper. This is the difference between faith and foolishness. By faith, Rahab had to dispel all the lies in her mind that kept bringing up her past to discourage her from thinking she could be used by the Lord to help other believers in a significant way. She had to learn how to stop being afraid of her history.

We know the potential of temptations like this because we've either personally battled them or we've heard about them negatively impacting others around us. May you and I, no matter what role the Lord has us

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playing in our church right now, flee from these temptations. Instead, may we pray for God's help to live by faith through our local church and help others do the same. May we faithfully fulfill our part in unity with His body to accomplish the mission Christ has given to His church. This is what does the Bible say about fear: that it is eclipsed by the glory of God's call.

Reflection Questions:

1. Of the five questions Moses has in Exodus 3 and 4 (identity, intimacy, intimidation, inadequacy, inferiority), which do you struggle with the most and why?
2. Do you tend to view yourself as having faith as a leader? If so, how is God calling you to grow in this? If not, what has kept you from it?
3. How is your faith uniting with the faith of others in your church? What steps is the Lord leading you to take to see this increase in the future?

4

FAITH OF CONQUERORS AND SUFFERERS

“And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:39-40

As we head into the final section of Hebrews 11, it is reminiscent of John 21:25, which says, “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” Similarly, if the author of Hebrews went into more detail about the faith of others throughout the Old Testament, the faith chapter would have become a faith book or multiple books!

Herschel Hobbs summarizes this section of Hebrews like this: “Thus, the author concluded his list of the faithful. They achieved each in his own God-given responsibility through faith. They believed in God. They trusted in God. And they committed themselves to God. All of these things are bound up in the word “faith.” The obvious lesson is that the readers of this epistle, then and now, should follow in these saints’ example. Indeed, they must if they are to achieve for God in their own sphere of responsibility.”³

Faith of Those Who Conquered

The men listed initially are not noted for their positions of authority and power. They are mentioned for the great feats they accomplished by faith. What must have seemed like insurmountable risks to be attempted on their own were only possible through believing and trusting God that He

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was with them. Among other things, verse 34 says they “were made strong out of weakness.”

Take Gideon, for example. His story is found in the book of Judges 6-8. When the angel of the Lord came to him, he was working away in seclusion. Judges 6:11 says, “Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.” We can only imagine how he would have described himself and his station in life at the time. Not to mention how he would have portrayed God’s people in contrast to their formidable foe.

Then comes an incredible verse of Scripture that views the situation through God’s eyes. “And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, ‘The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor’” (Judg. 6:12).

Gideon’s reply tells us that he didn’t exactly see things the same way. He responds by asking, if that’s the case, why does it look like God has given up on them? Once again, as we highlighted through Moses before, God’s grace shines through yet again. He blows right through Gideon’s questions and tells him to, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?” (Judg. 6:14).

Then, like Moses, he’s honest about how he sees himself and his family. There’s clearly no way in his mind that what God is calling him to is right for him or those around him. Yet, as you may recall from the more memorable parts of the story, God clearly helps him see otherwise. This is the Biblical definition of faith: relying on God’s strength despite our perceived inadequacy.

If you were honest with yourself and those with whom you’re reading this and discussing faith over fear, how do you see yourself currently? Is it more along the lines of a mighty man or woman of valor? Or is it more akin to feeling weak and unable? Likewise, how is this perspective affecting what you have been called to accomplish by faith in Christ? This is a great time to look for Bible verses about faith to bolster your courage.

Pray for God’s help to see yourself through God’s eyes and your work for Him from His perspective. May He bring whatever change in outlook that you need today as you learn how to overcome fear

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Faith of Those Who Suffered

As a mentor of mine used to say, “my holy hunch,” is that the vast majority of people would rather have their faith tested and proven genuine through conquering as opposed to suffering. Yet, for most of us, the way will include suffering. In fact, the way marked out through Scripture and the life of Christ is weighted toward suffering.

This is the first subject Jesus addresses as soon as Peter makes his confession of Jesus being the Christ. This is one of the main turning points in the gospels. Immediately after Peter confesses rightly, Jesus lets His disciples know that He “must suffer many things and be rejected” (Luke 9:22). Likewise, those who are with Him will follow a similar path. Understanding what the Bible says about faith includes accepting this reality.

There’s no getting around the fact that life as a Christian in this world will be difficult. Even a cursory look at the unnamed faithful sufferers brings images of profound challenges. Everything from children who died and needed to be miraculously brought back to life, to those who were tortured, mocked, flogged, imprisoned, stoned, killed, and severely mistreated. Examples of this sort help put what the average Christian is afflicted by for their faith into proper perspective. When we face such trials, we need Bible verses about anxiety and Bible verses about worry and fear to sustain us.

Another helpful reminder of how God uses the faith of those who have suffered well is the impact of watching what faithful believers around us have endured in Christ. There is clearly something profound to being around a person whose circumstances give them no reason to glorify God from a temporal perspective. Still, they glorify him anyway because of his grace towards them in Christ. As we’re around people like this, we can’t help but pray for some of their faith to rub off on us. This is how we learn how to deal with fear in a broken world.

Pray for what you are suffering through currently or in the recent past to be used by God. “For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas. 1:3-4). If you are struggling,

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remember that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.

Commendation for Them All

It's human nature to want what we've been promised sooner rather than later. This is especially true after we've been told what we'll receive if we faithfully persevere until it's ours. Yet, this is where God's promises become ever more critical in our journey of overcoming fear and following Him.

This is also one of the ways the Lord helps us guard against the "older brother syndrome." In the parable of the prodigal son, Christians who think of themselves as generally faithful are confronted with having expectations of God. Every believer can have moments when they need God's help to keep from grumbling about the perception that their obedience is being overlooked. Who among us hasn't had similar thoughts regarding what the older brother verbalizes? "Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends (Luke 15:29)."

At times, we can resent the patience the Lord extends to unbelievers and how rich His common grace is to them on earth. There are even moments when their rebellion can seem to be leading to greater temporary blessings. This can lead us to get caught up in being our own arbiter of what the commendation for our faith should mean in this world. If we're not careful, our hearts and minds can run wild with all kinds of things we mistakenly think we deserve. This is why seeking Godly counsel before taking risks or making judgments is so vital.

This is where the vital nature of our time with the Lord in His Word and in prayer can't be overstated. We need regular reminders of who we are and what we really deserve if it weren't for the abundant grace of God. Likewise, how often do we need to lift our eyes toward working for what is to come rather than a better life here and now? Reflecting on what does the Bible say about fear and rewards helps us maintain an eternal perspective.

As you continue trusting God in the unknown, consider the parable of the talents: risk and stewardship. God has given you specific gifts to use for

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His kingdom. Are you stepping out of your comfort zone for God to use them, or are you held back by a spirit of fear? Remember, overcoming the fear of failure as a christian begins with the realization that the result is in God's hands.

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28). This is what does the Bible says about being bold: it is a boldness rooted in the unshakable nature of God's kingdom.

Reflection Questions:

1. What conquering victories has the Lord allowed you to have in your life? How did He make you strong out of your weakness?
2. How has suffering most affected your life? In what ways did God encourage you along the way?
3. How are you tempted to act like the older brother? What has the Lord provided to help you guard against doing so?



CONCLUSION

As this infamous chapter on faith concludes, the writer of Hebrews inserts a “therefore” to mark off the next section. Given the trust, obedience, and risk-taking backed by the faith of the saints of old, we are instructed to put off everything that could keep us from exercising similar faith in our day. Every Christian who has come after them is called to follow in their footsteps, as the great cloud of witnesses continues to grow to the praise of His glory.

Stop and think for a moment about the godly saints you have had the privilege of knowing. Of those who have already finished their race and made it safely to their heavenly home, which of them particularly impacted you through their Hebrews 11 type of faith? What was it about the “wire risk-taking” the Lord called them to exhibit that most affected you? How could you incorporate these attributes into prayer requests for yourself and other believers around you?

Now, let’s consider who you are seeking to pass the baton of faith to moving forward. How can you be persisting in prayer for them and other members of your church as they seek to pass their faith to others and to the next generation?

May you and those around you be more resolved in the future that “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6). Pray about conversations you can have with others and the person you’re reading this with. Conversations about what the Lord has revealed through His Word about your faith needing to be strengthened. Together, may it result in an ever-increasing cloud of witnesses that will one day be made perfect and will revel in glorifying God together and forever.



END NOTES

1. *The Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), Q. 21, A. 21, accessed January 1, 2026, <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism>
2. Where Shall I Be?, accessed January 2, 2026, https://hymnary.org/text/when_judgment_day_is_drawing_nigh.
3. Herschel H. Hobbs, *Hebrews: Challenges to Bold Discipleship* (Fincastle, VA: Broadman Press, 1971), 119.



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