DRY FAITH

A small farming community was experiencing hard times as a result of severe drought. The people determined to gather together in prayer to God until rain fell in answer to their supplications. Finally, the moment came when their prayers were heard and water began to fall from the sky. As showers poured down, drenching all the faithful who had gathered to pray, the most notable person in the crowd was a lone dry child who came to the prayer meeting with an umbrella.

Faith is an essential part of the Christian's life. It is not only needed in life's greatest matters but also in the small things. God becomes real as the Sustainer through a believer's steadfast trust in Him. Through the study of the Bible, the student is led to see the power of God's Word and to expect it to do what it says in their life personally.

The role of faith in education is important because it is not possible for the spiritual life to survive without it. Prayer and faith are closely allied and should be studied together. This week, we will look at this subject and how it relates to the work of education.
Write out Hebrews 11:1–11 from the translation of your choice. You may also re-write the passage in your own words, outline, or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/ phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Hebrews 11:1–11. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Which character of Hebrew 11 do you most resonate with?

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A PARENTHEtical PASSAGE

Hebrews 11 is famously called the faith chapter. The book (some consider it a sermon) addresses four major theological points: (1) Jesus is greater than the angels; (2) Jesus is greater than Moses; (3) high priests have specific characteristics; and (4) Jesus is a better priesthood, sanctuary, covenant, and sacrifice. Intertwined with these four points are four exhortations that the preacher gives to his audience: (1) a call to not drift away; (2) a command to rest; (3) a rebuke for continuing to drink the milk instead of eating the heavy meat of Scripture, and (4) encouragements and warnings as a response to the work of Christ.

Hebrews 11 forms part of the final exhortation delivered in the epistle and follows the appeal: “You have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Heb. 10:36). The promise is that “He who is coming will come and will not tarry” (v. 37). The exhortation continues by challenging believers to live by faith and to not draw back, but instead “believe to the saving of the soul” (v. 39).

The conversation of faith begins in chapter 10, and the discussion ends in chapter 11. Hebrews 12:1, 2 concludes the topic, stating, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

One can look at Hebrews 11 as a parenthetical piece of the homily, where the author pauses his admonition to advocate for a faith fixed on Jesus, taking time to explain what faith is. What the faith chapter is doing is very simple. Essentially, the preacher describes various examples of faithful people and uses the experiences of these individuals to teach lessons on faith. As we read the epistle, we discover that faith is manifested in varied ways. We also see that faith is not stale or limited, but applies to every aspect of life. Finally, we see that the life of faith is experienced by men and by women, by old people as well as the young. In some cases faith is the result of a successful conquest; in other situations, faith is an invisible victory behind outward failure.

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MANIFESTATIONS OF FAITH

One of the first things to note are the varied manifestations of faith. Faith is the foundation by which we obtain a good testimony (Heb. 11:2). Faith is also the means by which we understand the unsearchable actions of God (v. 3). In other words, by faith, a finite individual can commune with God and understand the very acts of an infinite Being.

In Abel's experience, faith looks like offering a more excellent sacrifice to God. In his case, faith was an expression of worship (v. 4). We notice that in the quality of his worship, he obtained witness of his righteousness, with God serving as an expert witness to testify of this fact.

When the word of God came to Noah in the form of a warning regarding things that had never been previously believed to be possibilities, he moved with godly fear and prepared his household (v. 7). His faith condemned the world. His faith made him an heir of righteousness.

When the word of God came to Abraham in the form of a command, faith looked like obedience (v. 8). In Sarah's life, faith was judging God as someone who is faithful, which gave her strength to do the impossible. In a sense, faith is responding to God's word and believing on that word (only) to do what it has said.

So when the word of God comes in the form of a promise, faith is believing that promise. When the word of God comes in form of a command, faith is obeying that command. When the word of God comes in the form of a warning, faith looks like moving with godly fear and preparing to act, even though it seems altogether impossible that what God has said will actually come to pass.

And faith has another dimension. Speaking of Enoch's experience, Paul says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). Faith requires two things: first, it requires the belief that God is, that He is there, that He is able, and that He is knowledgeable; second, it requires the belief that He is a rewarder. This means that He is not only able but also willing. One of the components has to do with God's power, the other component has to do with His character. A person cannot be faithful to God without being convinced of both.
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Hebrews 11:12–22; 32–40
Hebrews 10:32–39
Hebrews 12:1–3
Romans 4:16–22

What other verses come to mind in connecting education and faith?

Review your memorized verse from Hebrews 11:1–11.
Faith and prayer are tied together in unbreakable bonds. They are the two legs upon which the Christian journey is taken. One of the greatest illustrations of how these two virtues work together is found in the story of the friend in Luke 11:5–8:

‘Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him”; and he will answer from within and say, “Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you”? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.’ ”

In this parable, the man who asks for bread at midnight does so for three reasons: (1) someone is asking him for something to eat; (2) he has absolutely nothing to set before him; and (3) somehow he knows that his neighbor friend has what he needs. The self-awareness of the friend who has nothing to give must not be overlooked. If by chance this man had some small scraps of bread or a few morsels, he might be tempted to offer these to his guest. In so doing, his friend would remain hungry. However, he was aware that he had nothing to set before his surprise visitor. Faith helps us understand the severity of our condition—that we have nothing to give.

Understanding his true condition, the man goes to his friend’s house—even at an unreasonable time. When in faith we understand our true condition, our desperate need becomes our greatest plea. The story then shifts to the man sleeping inside his home with his family. His response is, “Do not trouble me” (v. 7). Here Jesus makes a forceful point: though the man will not open the door for friendship’s sake, because of persistence he will rise and give the one in need as many loaves of bread as he needs. Let’s not miss this critical conclusion: what the man will not do out of love for his friend, he will do out of love for his sleep, his convenience, himself.

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you,” Jesus says (Luke 11:9). He does not say to ask once. He simply encourages us to ask (in persistence). “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone?” (v. 11). The answer is obvious. Jesus is not comparing but rather contrasting Himself with the man who hesitates in answering his friend’s request. At times, His apparent delay in answering our prayers is to test the genuineness of our petition. Persistent prayer is not intended to change the mind of God; it is intended to change the heart of human beings. And finally, if all of our petitions were answered immediately, our nature would never sense a need to commune with Him.

Jesus said, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (v. 13). An evil tree cannot produce good fruit, and a good tree cannot produce evil fruit. It is remarkable, then, that parents, who are evil, give good gifts to their children. The appeal that Jesus makes to us is simultaneously sad and powerful: “At the very least, give Me (a good God) the same credit you would give yourself (a selfish parent). Trust Me.”
**FAITH MADE PRACTICAL**

“Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, have been pointed out as secrets of life’s success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these principles.

“Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency.

“How to exercise faith should be made very plain. To every promise of God there are conditions. If we are willing to do His will, all His strength is ours. Whatever gift He promises, is in the promise itself. ‘The seed is the word of God.’ Luke 8:11. As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise. If we receive the promise, we have the gift.

“Faith that enables us to receive God’s gifts is itself a gift, of which some measure is imparted to every human being. It grows as exercised in appropriating the word of God. In order to strengthen faith, we must often bring it in contact with the word.

“In the study of the Bible the student should be led to see the power of God’s word. In the creation, ‘He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.’ He ‘calleth those things which be not as though they were’ (Psalm 33:9; Romans 4:17); for when He calls them, they are. . . .

“Faith is needed in the smaller no less than in the greater affairs of life. In all our daily interests and occupations the sustaining strength of God becomes real to us through an abiding trust.” . . .

“Through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.

“Prayer and faith are closely allied, and they need to be studied together. In the prayer of faith there is a divine science; it is a science that everyone who would make his lifework a success must understand. Christ says, ‘What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.’ Mark 11:24. He makes it plain that our asking must be according to God’s will; we must ask for the things that He has promised, and whatever we receive must be used in doing His will. The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal.

“For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received.

“We need look for no outward evidence of the blessing. The gift is in the promise, and we may go about our work assured that what God has promised He is able to perform, and that the gift, which we already possess, will be realized when we need it most.

“To live thus by the word of God means the surrender to Him of the whole life. There will be felt a continual sense of need and dependence, a drawing out of the heart after God. Prayer is a necessity; for it is the life of the soul. Family prayer, public prayer, have their place; but it is secret communion with God that sustains the soul life.”

*(Education, 253–255, 257, 258)*
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What are other responses of faith found in the chapter?

Explain the flow of the passage from Hebrews chapter 10 to 11 to 12.

Which is harder to have faith in: the power/ability of God or the character/goodness of God?

How can faith help us see the severity of our sinful and selfish condition?

Why is persistence needed in our prayer life?

How is faith connected ultimately to education?

What are ways to increase and strengthen our faith in God and in His promises?

How do faith, prayer, and the Word all practically interact with each other in our relationship with Christ?