

Bible Study on Faith *4 lessons with questions*

This Bible study on faith asks four questions in four lessons: What is faith? (Hebrews 11), What does faith rest on? (Abraham in Romans 4), What happens to faith when life gets frightening? (the storm in Mark 4), and What does living faith look like? (James 2). It fits a small group, a youth group, a class or your own quiet time.

Every lesson prints the passage in full from the Berean Standard Bible, then gives the big idea, notes for the leader, questions to observe, understand and apply, a memory verse and a prayer. Lesson 4 sets James beside Paul, so it is worth reading Ephesians 2:8-9 together before you start it.

And without faith it is impossible to please God. For anyone who approaches Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

– Hebrews 11:6 (BSB)

LESSON 1 OF 4

What faith is

Read Hebrews 11:1-10

The big idea: Faith is trusting God enough to act on what He has said before we can see the outcome, as Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham did.

Read

¹ Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see. ² This is why the ancients were commended. ³ By faith we understand that the

universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous when God gave approval to his gifts. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he did not see death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God. For anyone who approaches Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. ⁷ By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in godly fear built an ark to save his family. By faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, without knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the promised land as a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

— Hebrews 11:1-10 (BSB)

Notes

The writer of Hebrews defines faith before describing it: "the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see." Faith is not a feeling or a guess. It is confidence that rests on God and what He has promised.

Then come the examples, each beginning "By faith." Noah, warned about things not yet seen, built an ark. Abraham obeyed and went "without knowing where he was going." Verse 6 explains why faith matters so much: "without faith it is impossible to please God," because coming to God means believing that He exists and rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. How does verse 1 define faith?
2. What did each person in verses 4–10 do ‘by faith’?
3. What two things must anyone who approaches God believe (v. 6)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why does faith always involve something not yet seen?
2. What was Abraham ‘looking forward to’ (v. 10), and how did that help him obey?
3. Why is it impossible to please God without faith?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Where is God asking you to obey before you can see how it will turn out?
2. Which person in this passage is most like your situation right now?
3. What does it look like for you to ‘earnestly seek’ God this week?

Memory verse

And without faith it is impossible to please God. For anyone who approaches Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

— Hebrews 11:6 (BSB)

Pray

Lord God, I believe that You exist and that You reward those who earnestly seek You. Give me faith like Noah’s and Abraham’s, to act on Your word before I can see the outcome. Where I am holding back, help me obey and go. Amen.

Faith that rests on God's promise

Read Romans 4:18-25

The big idea: Abraham's faith did not ignore the facts; it looked at them honestly and trusted that God was able to do what He had promised.

Read

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he acknowledged the decrepitness of his body (since he was about a hundred years old) and the lifelessness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through disbelief in the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised. ²² This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." ²³ Now the words "it was credited to him" were written not only for Abraham, ²⁴ but also for us, to whom righteousness will be credited—for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our trespasses and was raised to life for our justification.

— Romans 4:18-25 (BSB)

Notes

Abraham was about a hundred years old and Sarah had never borne a child, yet God promised him offspring as many as the stars. Paul says Abraham faced those facts squarely: he "acknowledged the decrepitness of his body." Faith is not pretending.

What held him was not the strength of his faith but the strength of the One he trusted: he was "fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised." Then Paul applies it to us. Righteousness is credited to everyone who believes in God, who raised Jesus from the dead, who "was delivered over to death for our trespasses and was raised to life for our justification."

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. What did God promise Abraham, and what facts stood against it (vv. 18–19)?
2. What did Abraham do instead of wavering (vv. 20–21)?
3. According to verses 23–25, for whom were these words written?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. What is the difference between ignoring hard facts and facing them in faith?
2. Where did Abraham's confidence come from: his faith, or God?
3. How is our faith in the risen Jesus like Abraham's faith?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Which promise of God do you find hardest to believe right now?
2. How could giving glory to God (v. 20) strengthen your faith this week?
3. Thank God that righteousness is credited to you through faith in Jesus, not earned.

Memory verse

Yet he did not waver through disbelief in the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised.

— Romans 4:20–21 (BSB)

Pray

Father, You are able to do what You have promised. I bring You the facts that make me waver, and I give You glory anyway. Thank You that Jesus was delivered over for my trespasses and raised for my justification. Strengthen my faith. Amen.

LESSON 3 OF 4

Faith in the storm

Read Mark 4:35-41

The big idea: In the storm, Jesus asks why His disciples are afraid; faith means trusting who He is when the waves are high.

Read

³⁵ When that evening came, He said to His disciples, “Let us cross to the other side.”
³⁶ After they had dismissed the crowd, they took Jesus with them, since He was already in the boat. And there were other boats with Him. ³⁷ Soon a violent windstorm came up, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was being swamped. ³⁸ But Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke Him and said, “Teacher, don’t You care that we are perishing?” ³⁹ Then Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the sea. “Silence!” He commanded. “Be still!” And the wind died down, and it was perfectly calm. ⁴⁰ “Why are you so afraid?” He asked. “Do you still have no faith?” ⁴¹ Overwhelmed with fear, they asked one another, “Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

— Mark 4:35-41 (BSB)

Notes

The trip across the Sea of Galilee was Jesus’ idea: “Let us cross to the other side.” Even so, a violent windstorm came up and the boat began to fill. Jesus was asleep on a cushion. The disciples woke Him with a question many of us have asked: “Teacher, don’t You care that we are perishing?”

Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea, and it was perfectly calm. “Why are you so afraid?” He asked. “Do you still have no faith?” Their fear changed into a different kind of fear, awe: “Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” Faith in the storm rests on knowing who is in the boat.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. Whose idea was it to cross the lake (v. 35)?
2. What was Jesus doing during the storm, and what did the disciples ask Him (v. 38)?
3. What two questions did Jesus ask after the calm (v. 40)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why might the disciples have thought Jesus did not care?
2. What is the difference between the fear in verse 38 and the fear in verse 41?
3. What does this story show about who Jesus is?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. What storm are you in right now? Have you asked Jesus if He cares?
2. How would remembering who is ‘in the boat’ change how you face it?
3. Who do you know in a storm that you can pray for, and encourage, this week?

Memory verse

Overwhelmed with fear, they asked one another, “Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

— Mark 4:41 (BSB)

Pray

Lord Jesus, even the wind and the sea obey You. When the waves rise in my life, I am tempted to think You do not care. Forgive my fear, and give me faith that rests on who You are. Speak peace into my storm. Amen.

Faith that works

Read James 2:14-26

The big idea: Real faith is never alone: the faith that saves shows itself in what we do, as Abraham's and Rahab's did.

Read

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you tells him, "Go in peace; stay warm and well fed," but does not provide for his physical needs, what good is that? ¹⁷ So too, faith by itself, if it does not result in action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. Good for you! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰ O foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is worthless? ²¹ Was not our father Abraham justified by what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith was working with his actions, and his faith was perfected by what he did. ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ As you can see, a man is justified by his deeds and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute justified by her actions when she welcomed the spies and sent them off on another route? ²⁶ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

— James 2:14-26 (BSB)

Notes

James is writing about someone who "claims to have faith, but has no deeds." His example is painfully practical: telling a hungry, cold brother "Go in peace; stay warm and well fed" and doing nothing. Words without help are worthless, and so is faith that never acts. Even the demons believe that God is one.

James is not teaching that we earn salvation. Paul writes that we are saved by grace through faith, “not by works” (Ephesians 2:8-9). James answers a different question: what does real faith look like? It works. Abraham’s faith was “working with his actions,” and Rahab showed hers by protecting the spies. Faith that saves is never alone.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. What example does James give of faith without deeds (vv. 15–16)?
2. What do the demons believe, and how do they respond (v. 19)?
3. What did Abraham and Rahab each do (vv. 21, 25)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. What kind of ‘faith’ is James saying cannot save?
2. How do James 2 and Ephesians 2:8-9 fit together?
3. What does it mean that Abraham’s faith was ‘perfected by what he did’ (v. 22)?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Is there a need you have answered with words but not with action?
2. Where could your faith ‘work with your actions’ this week?
3. How can you help someone in your church or neighborhood who is without clothes or daily food?

Memory verse

So too, faith by itself, if it does not result in action, is dead.

– James 2:17 (BSB)

Pray

Lord, I do not want a faith that is only words. Thank You that I am saved by Your grace through faith, not by my works. Now let my faith work: open my eyes to the needs around me and give me the courage to act. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tips for leading this study

Begin with stories. Ask the group when they first trusted God with something they could not see. Faith is easier to talk about through stories.

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 before lesson 4. It keeps the group from hearing James as salvation by works.

Make lesson 3 visual. Read Mark 4 with different voices, or watch the Bible Movies film of Mark 4 together.

End with one action. Each person names one step of faith for the week, and the group asks about it next time.

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Questions