



Lesson Overview

Week of August 8

Suggested Material for As Your Students Arrive:

- White paper, colored markers

1 Life Need:

Discuss what it means to look forward in faith to the heavenly country.

2 Bible Learning:

Study examples of God's people who lived their lives looking forward in faith.

3 Bible Application:

Identify specific ways believers can live a life of forward-looking faith.

Suggested Material:

- *Adult Teacher's Resource Kit*: Reproducible sheet—Called to a New Adventure
- Paper, colored markers

4 Life Response:

Apply principles of forward-looking faith to take the next step in your walk with God.

Suggested Material:

- Words and a video for the hymn, 'This World Is Not My Home'

Church/Home Theme:

We are the Body of Christ.

Lesson Focus:

Look forward in faith to the heavenly country.

Lesson Scripture:

Hebrews 11:1-8, 13-16

A Necessary Faith

True Biblical Faith—When we believe, we are confident in God's Word and choose to obey. This kind of belief doesn't rely on circumstances or outcomes. God speaks; we listen and step out on faith. This kind of belief system says *I'm convinced, period.* For example, looking forward to being home in heaven with God forever seems unbelievable. But by faith, Christians choose to stand on God's promise that one day, all of His children will be with Him forever in heaven.

Hebrews 11 offers a description of faith and outlines several biblical examples. Neither is it an intellectual agreement. The type of faith that God desires in Jesus' disciples is an assurance that confidently says, "I hear God's Word, and I am persuaded to believe it, no matter what." It's not stepping into the unknown, though what we're talking about is not visible to the naked eye.

The first part of Hebrews 11 speaks about faith as having substance, evidence, and witnesses. Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house. It will stand. When a believer has faith, he has God's confidence and assurance.

Some Examples—The writer of Hebrews lined up several biblical characters in chapter 11 to highlight their faith. Abel was a righteous man who obeyed God concerning sacrificing and worship. Enoch walked with God despite the wickedness all around him. Before the flood, he kept his life upright with God. God allowed him to go to heaven without dying. Noah acted by faith and did what God told him to do despite what others said. When Noah built a boat for a coming flood, people laughed at him. Abraham obeyed God, seeking after a country God told him about, but of which he had no foreknowledge. He demonstrated great faith. God commended each of these people listed in Hebrew 11 for believing His Word without great evidence.

Our Eternal Home—God has a place prepared for His family. He also has in mind a specific time when He's going to wrap it all up down here on earth. Christians rest in His promise of this beautiful, permanent home with Him forever.

As Your Students Arrive

As students arrive, ask them to draw a line on their sheet of paper. This line represents their life of faith. Invite them to use different colors to represent significant milestones in their faith journey—for example, the beginning point of their faith (when they first came to faith), a time when they experienced and more fully believed in a particular aspect of God's character (e.g.,

mercy, love, grace), a specific promise from God they trust Him to fulfill in the future, etc.

Link to Last Week

Some of your students may want to share what they heard God telling them this past week and what they did concerning His message.

1 Life Need

Discuss what it means to look forward in faith to the heavenly country.

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A Necessary Faith

Titus pushed the hospital food around on the plate. He didn't feel much like eating. The television was on mute, and he was lying only fairly comfortably in the bed.

The 79 year old had been admitted to the hospital last week and had been diagnosed as being in stage four of prostate cancer. It was not good news.

The cancer had returned—and with a vengeance. His family, friends, and church were praying for him and had been a great support. He was committed to doing what he could to fight the disease. Titus's three daughters were upset. Each one was dealing with the news differently.

Upon his release from the hospital, he would be staying at the home of his middle daughter, Dominique.

Because Dominique could mentally and spiritually handle it the most, Titus talked of his looking forward to being with the Lord and his dear departed wife, Lucinda.

"Everybody talks about heaven, but no one wants to die to get there," Titus had said to Dominique. "I don't want to leave you girls, but I'm not afraid of seeing my Maker. I know as sure as I know myself, that I will see Jesus on the other side."

Heaven. It was as real as anything on this earth, Titus thought. And by faith, one day he would look into the face of his dear, blessed Savior.

1. How would you describe the key components of faith in your own words?

2. What does it mean to say we are "strangers and pilgrims" in this world?

3. How can you develop a closer relationship with God by walking in faith?

LESSON FOCUS: Look forward in faith to the heavenly country.

Invite students to read the opening anecdote and then form small groups to respond to **Questions 1, 2, and 3.**

Question 1 encourages class members to describe their understanding of a life of faith. The first key component of faith is belief—acceptance and trust that God is who He says He is. When we fully embrace the truth that God is loving and merciful, we realize He will indeed keep the promises He has given in His Word.

Question 2 provides students the opportunity to talk about what it means to look forward to a heavenly country. Earth is not our final home; God has planned a better, eternal home for His people. As we follow God more closely, things of this world will seem more strange—or foreign—to us. We are pilgrims, not merely foreigners, because we are on a journey. We travel in this world as we go through life, on our way to the heavenly country God has promised to those who live by faith.

Question 3 asks students to think about their own life of faith. We're all nomads on this earth as we journey toward God's heavenly country. Because our relationship with God is personal, experiences that build our faith will differ for each of us. When we seek God, He rewards us with His intimate presence and our relationship with Him becomes an exciting adventure of faith.

2 Bible Learning

Study examples of God's people who lived their lives looking forward in faith.

Hebrews 11:1 is the famous definition of faith, and faith reminds us, as the old hymn says, that "This world is not my home; I'm just a-passing through."

FAITH PERCEIVES THE IMPERCEPTIBLE

Read Hebrews 11:1-4 and note these ideas:

- The author of Hebrews said that faith is necessary for the child of God.
- With our physical senses, we cannot

perceive things that have not yet happened or God and His spiritual realm.

- Faith gives us hope in God's promises regarding future events.
- By faith we can trust Him to keep every single promise that has yet to be fulfilled.
- Faith enables us to see and acknowledge the evidence in creation for God's existence.
- By faith we believe in God's existence, although we cannot see Him.

BIBLE EXTRA

The Just Shall Live by Faith

The prophet Habakkuk admonished his readers that "the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4b, KJV). And three times the New Testament repeats this admonition—Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38—with the last reference introducing God's "Hall of Faith," our lesson's Scripture passage.

BIBLE EXTRA

God's Creative Work

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God is the Creator of all things, with Genesis 1 and 2 giving the beautiful account of God's creative work. Chapter 1 gives details of the six days that God spoke His creation into existence. Whereas chapter 2 gives an overview of God's creation of the man and woman, chapter 1 fills in the details. God made the man from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him (2:7). Then, after giving the man work to do, forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and bringing all the animals to him to name, God created the woman from the man's side (vss. 8-22). Adam then joyfully received her as his wife, and the chapter ends with God's institution of the first marriage, which Jesus pointed to as the model for His people (vss. 23-25; Mark 10:5-9).

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Faith Perceives the Imperceptible

Hebrews 11:1-4, KJV

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Hebrews 11:1-4, NIV

¹Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

³By 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.

⁴By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

Faith is absolutely necessary to Christians. First, faith is absolutely necessary to become saved from sin and its penalty. Second, faith is absolutely necessary to walk rightly with our Savior, Jesus Christ. In the first four verses of chapter 11, we see that faith is necessary for at least three very important aspects of our walk with the Lord: 1) to perceive the imperceptible, 2) to trust that God is our Creator, and 3) to approach and worship Him rightly.

There are two fundamental aspects of reality that our five senses cannot perceive. One has to do with events that have not yet happened—"things hoped for"—and the other is in regard to God and His spiritual realm—"things not seen." People have no way of knowing with certainty what will happen in the next hour, much less the next year or decade. Similarly, Scripture says that God is spirit (John 4:24), and as such, we cannot perceive Him with our



Further commentary on this Scripture passage can be found on pp. 834-836 in *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*.

• By faith we accept God’s creative work and worship Him as the Lord of all creation.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 4

Faith allows God’s people to perceive the imperceptible, namely the future things we hope for that will come as God promised, as well as the things that we cannot see, namely our invisible God and the spiritual realm. Faith makes the things we hope for real in the here and now, and it also helps us know that God is real even though we cannot see Him directly.

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physical senses. In both cases—future events and the spiritual realm—it is by faith that we perceive the imperceptible. Faith makes our hope in God’s promises regarding the future events certain. Considering all the promises God has already kept, by faith we can trust Him to keep every single promise that has yet to be fulfilled.

Faith also gives us the assurance of what we cannot see, namely God and His spiritual domain. By faith, we believe in the existence of the God of the Bible, even though we cannot see Him. But it is not blind faith—evidence is everywhere in creation that our Creator God exists.

Faith leads us to worship our Creator. Both Abel and Cain brought the Lord sacrifices, but because of Abel’s faith, his sacrifice was more pleasing than Cain’s to God, who then commended Abel for being a righteous man.

4. *What does faith allow God’s people to perceive?*

5. *What does faith allow God’s people to know about Him?*

6. *How then should we approach our Creator God in worship?*

Faith Pleases God

Hebrews 11:5-8, KJV

⁵ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that

Hebrews 11:5-8, NIV

⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience 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. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 5

By faith God’s people know that He is the Creator of all things. The beauty and glory of the created universe that we can see point us to the beauty and glory of the Creator whom we cannot see.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 6

As Abel did, God’s people should approach Him in worship in faith by offering the first and best we have. As the apostle Paul stated, this should include offering ourselves, which is our “true and proper worship” (Rom. 12:1).

FAITH PLEASES GOD

Read Hebrews 11:5-8 and highlight these important ideas:

- True faith leads people to believe God exists. True faith recognizes that God is an active participant for good in the lives of those who earnestly seek Him.
- Enoch pleased God, and by faith he was spared from death because God took him to heaven.
- Noah believed God and built the ark in faith.
- Noah’s obedience provided salvation from the waters of judgment for him and his family.
- Abraham trusted and obeyed God in faith, so God guided Abraham to the promised land, the place He wanted Abraham to be.
- It takes true faith to please God.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 7

To please God, people must accept by faith that He exists and that there is great reward for those who earnestly seek Him. There is indeed abundant reward for those who trust in the God of the Bible.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 8

Enoch pleased God and was spared from death when God took him to

heaven. Noah obeyed God and built the ark, thereby saving himself and his family and condemning the world's wickedness. And Abraham answered God's call to leave his homeland and family and go to a place of God's choosing.

BIBLE EXTRA

Heaven, Our Eternal Hope

Often when we consider heaven, we think of it as the dwelling place of God and His glorious throne room. Indeed, the Lord has given us a few brief glimpses into His heavenly abode via visions given to some of His prophets (i.e., Isa. 6:1-4; Ezek. 1:26-28; Dan. 7:9-14; Rev. 4:1-5:14). Paul also saw the throne room of God, which the apostle referred to more specifically as the third heaven, a true paradise (2 Cor. 12:1-4). That he called it the third heaven indicates that there are two other heavens, as well—a first and a second. These are likely the physical heavens that God created, namely the atmosphere where the birds fly above the earth and the vast reaches of outer space where the sun, moon, and stars are (see Gen. 1:14-18, 20). People do not need faith to believe that the first and second heavens exist, because we can see them with our own eyes.

However, we cannot see with our physical eyes the paradise that is that third heaven where God abides. When Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure, He told them that they should not let their hearts be troubled and that if they believed in God they should also believe in Him (John 14:1). Then He made them a wonderful promise: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (vss. 2, 3, KJV). By faith, our spiritual eyes can "see" the glorious abode of our heavenly Father. And by faith, we can know that one day our Lord Jesus Christ will return for us and take us home to heaven to be with Him forever.

FAITH PROVIDES HOPE

Finally, read Hebrews 11:13-16 and emphasize these key points:

- Faithful people in the Bible not only lived by faith, but they also died in faith.
- They didn't see the fulfillment of all God's promises in their lifetime.
- They trusted in God and looked forward to their heavenly home with Him.
- He is not ashamed to be called the God of faithful saints.
- God calls us to live in faith and trust in His promise that we will have an eternal home with Him.

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diligently seek him.

⁷By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

⁷By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

⁸By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

As we look at the next three examples of faith in action, we will see that it takes true faith to please God. True faith not only leads people to believe that He exists, but also helps us "see" that He is an active participant for good in the lives of those who earnestly seek Him. Genesis 5:22 tells us that "Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years."

By faith, Noah built the ark as God commanded. When we walk in faith we please Him and know that He will always be with us. In trials, those who walk closely with God can trust Him for deliverance.

Abraham is another example of God's grace. He is commended for his faith in responding to God's call and following Him even when his destination was unknown.

7. What must people believe to please God?

8. How was the faith of Enoch, Noah, and Abraham demonstrated?

Faith Provides Hope

Hebrews 11:13-16, KJV

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises,

Hebrews 11:13-16, NIV

¹³All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things

• Such faith pleases God, and He is not ashamed to be called our God.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 9

These Old Testament saints lived by faith, and they died in faith. Even though they died not having received everything that was promised, by faith they trusted that one day all God's promises would be fulfilled.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 10

By faith, these saints of old understood that this world was not their home; rather, they were strangers just passing through and that there was a better place awaiting them, a country of their own.

SUGGESTED ANSWER TO QUESTION 11

Having understood that this world was not their home, they longed for a better place, a heavenly country that God promises to those who love Him and come to Him in faith.

but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Not only did these saints of old live by faith, but they also died in their faith. Though they did not receive everything God had promised in their lifetime, their faith that God would one day fulfill all His promises did not waver. They understood that this world was not their home—they were foreigners and strangers on their way to a better place. Their hearts longed for a future, heavenly country that they could ultimately call home. Because of their future hope and trust that God would keep His promises, they were able to stand in faith and live in a manner that pleased Him. Therefore, as a result of their faith and heaven-mindedness, they received a commendation of hope; God is not ashamed to be called their God. Furthermore, He has prepared a city for them—and for us (see Rev. 21:1-26).

9. How did these Old Testament saints perceive what they could not see with their eyes?

10. What did they understand about this life on earth?

11. What did they sincerely desire, even long for?

promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

WINDOW ON THE WORD

Keep on Keeping On

In this lesson, we've read about people who trusted God, believed and hoped in His promises, and looked forward to their future home in the heavenly country with God. Hebrews 11 lists many of God's faithful people by name as an encouragement for us to follow their example. The very next chapter of the letter begins by looking back at this list: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses . . . let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us (Heb. 12:1-2). God calls us to look to their example of living by faith—even when we don't see the fulfillment of God's promises—to run our own race toward the heavenly country. Enoch walked faithfully with God, and his faith pleased God (Gen. 5:22-24; Heb. 11:5).

What is this faith that pleases God? We learn the principles of such faith as little children when we play peek-a-boo and learn a loved one remains on the other side of the blanket even though we cannot see the other person. We learn faith when we experience the love of someone who wants and brings good into our lives. Faith that pleases God places confident trust in God and God alone for salvation from our sins and eternal life with Him in a place we do not yet see. Faith that believes God is who He says He is embraces and looks forward to our future heavenly home with God.

3 Bible Application

Identify specific ways believers can live a life of forward-looking faith.

Ask class members to participate in one of these activities. If possible, photocopy this page and give instructions to each group. Provide paper and colored markers for members of the group creating the comic strip. Make copies of the handout from the Resource Kit for the group using it.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Discussion Group

Read “Live in Faith” from the student book and respond to **Questions 12, 13, and 14**. Our faith looks forward when we base our hope for the future on our experiential knowledge of God. That is, we look at what we have seen—His fulfillment of promises in His Word and what He has done for us and those we know—and this strengthens our faith in what we do not yet see. We look forward to God’s better place for us in the heavenly city because of the many references in His Word. At the beginning of this lesson, we read in the anecdote that the beginning point of faith is believing that God is who He says He is. The next logical step is that we believe what He says in His Word is absolutely true.

Write a Prayer

Write a prayer to God that focuses on specific aspects of faith from the lesson. Use the suggestions below as a guide to think and pray about what you have learned about forward-looking faith. For example, thank God for the hope you have in one or more of His specific promises, thank Him for His active participation for good in your life, thank Him for the seen or unseen quality that most encourages your faith in His existence, express to Him your willingness to seek Him in faith, ask Him to help you develop forward-looking faith, and thank Him for the heavenly home He has prepared for you.



Handout:

‘Called to a New Adventure’

Follow the directions to create a cartoon comic strip to share with others in your class. In our lesson examples, as well as other instances described in Scripture, God often calls His people to step out in faith to experience something new in our walk with Him.

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Live in Faith

How do we live out forward-looking faith in our daily lives? When Enoch first determined to walk faithfully with God, he probably had no idea that he would be taken from life here on earth directly into God’s presence. Jude 14-15 says, “Enoch . . . prophesied about them . . . to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness” (vss. 14-15). Although many believe, considering the context of the letter, that this refers to false teachers preceding Christ’s return, these ungodly men may have lived in the days leading up to the Flood; one can only imagine the trials God’s faithful people might have endured then! When we walk with God through trials, our faith pleases Him when we look forward in hope to a better place in eternity with Him.

Noah believed, trusted, and obeyed God when God called him to build an ark—which made no sense. God considered Noah a righteous man because of his faith. God may call us to do something we don’t understand at the time; we cannot see God’s purpose. Later we might realize our obedience opened the door for another person to see God’s love and mercy and accept His salvation.

Similarly, Abraham believed what God said about the future and followed in obedience to a land he had never seen before. Even when God asks us to walk with Him and we cannot see what lies ahead, our faith is not blind. We see His existence in His creation, and our trust in His character gives us hope and confidence that He has our ultimate best interests at heart.

12. *When has God fulfilled a promise to you that strengthened your faith?*

13. *How can we live out a forward-looking faith in our daily lives?*

14. *What is one reason we can look forward to God’s heavenly city?*

4 Life Response

Apply principles of forward-looking faith to take the next step in your walk with God.

Your class has studied examples from Scripture of people who God commended for their faith and identified principles that describe forward-looking faith.

Ask students to read “Stepping Out in Faith” and answer the questions there. Encourage them to practice forward-looking faith in their own lives as they reflect on what they’ve learned in this lesson. Gently challenge them to honestly consider their next step of faith with these questions: Which

aspect of your personal faith might God commend you for? In what area of your life is God leading you in a new direction? What are you looking forward to experiencing most in God’s heavenly city?

You may want to end class by singing the old hymn, “This World Is Not My Home.” You can find the words and a video online. Or you may want to end with a prayer, something like this: “Lord, thank You for Your creation that gives us evidence of Your existence. Thank You for Your Word that describes Your promises and how You fulfill them. Thank You for the assurance we have that You want only the best for our lives. Please help us to seek You in faith and to follow You in obedience to take the next step in developing a forward-looking faith that pleases You.”

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Stepping Out in Faith

Think about what you have learned about faith in this lesson and how you can apply it to your life today. No matter how long we have been a faithful follower of the Lord, He continues to call us to a deeper relationship as we walk in faith, believing with all our being that He will do what He says He will do.

► Write a personal definition of faith: what do you hope for in confidence? What are you certain of that you cannot see? In which area(s) of your life is it easiest for you to walk in faith? In what way(s) is it most difficult? How might you apply what you have learned in this lesson to the difficult area(s)?

KEY VERSE

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. —Hebrews 11:1, KJV

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. —Hebrews 11:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of August 9 through August 15

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Mark 8:31-37—Save Your Life by Losing It.

Tues. 1 Peter 3:9-19—Respond to Abusers with Blessings.

Wed. Revelation 2:8-11—Be Faithful Until Death.

Thurs. Hebrew 10:1-10—Sanctified by Christ’s Sacrifice.

Fri. Hebrews 10:11-18—The Inner Life of New Believers.

Sat. Hebrews 10:19-22—Approach God with a Pure Heart.

Sun. Hebrews 10:23-36—Act in Ways That Preserve the Faith.



As the class members are leaving, hand out copies of this week’s *Power for Living*. Take or mail copies of *Lesson Leaflet* to those who couldn’t be with you today, or send them to those you would like to join your class.

Before Teaching Next Week’s Lesson

Before next week, read Hebrews 10:23-36. Ask your students to think about what circumstances might shake their faith.