

SCRIPTURES FOR 3/5/06 LIFEGROUP LESSON

Hebrews 11:1 (Message)

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living.

Hebrews 11:6 (Message)

It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that He exists and that He cares enough to respond to those who seek Him.

Hebrews 11:1-3 (NIV)

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. 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.

Hebrews 10:35-39

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

Ephesians 2:8 & 11-13

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...

...remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Hebrews 12:2

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

<p>NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed</p>

NOTE TO LEADERS: All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

INTRODUCTION:

This week, we learned about the critical, foundational importance of faith to our Christian walk.

Read The Message translation of Hebrews 11:1 & 6, as shown above.

So, in order for life to be worth living, we must believe that God exists and that He cares about us.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Have someone read Hebrews 10:35-39.

The Jews, to whom the writer of Hebrews is speaking, still see righteousness tied directly to works, so he explains faithfulness in terms they can understand, but that the righteous will live by faith and faith will be rewarded...

Have someone read Hebrews 11:1-3.

...but also that faith is not so tangible as works but, if our faith is in God, it can be relied upon. He goes on to explain how the great Bible characters all relied on faith.

Do you ever need to be reminded that faith is important or do you ever find yourself relying too much on what can be seen?

Jeff described three categories of faith:

SAVING FAITH

Faith is so important, it saves us and without it we are without hope.

Have someone read Ephesians 2:8, 11-13.

So if our lack of faith and our sin separate us from God and only God's grace can atone for our sin what is our part (*hint: atonement requires grace, lack of faith requires _____*)?

DOCTRINAL FAITH

Have someone read Philippians 1:27.

How can we contend for the faith as "one man" and how do we normally fail to do that?

PRACTICAL FAITH

2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "We live by faith, not by sight"...

...what is the difference?

Jeff makes five observations about faith:

FAITH INVOLVES ASSURANCE AND CONVICTION.

If we can be assured of our salvation and God's provision, what should we do about it?

Is it enough just to act on faith, or do we have to commit to something more?

FAITH ALWAYS RELATES TO THINGS IN THE FUTURE.

What separates our faith from wishful thinking?

FAITH HAS ITS OBJECT IN "THINGS NOT SEEN".

Have someone read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 and Hebrews 12:2.

How can our faith in unseen things be bolstered by faith in an unseen person? Do you ever struggle with this?

FAITH IS BASIC TO PLEASING GOD.

FAITH'S FOCUS IS FULLY ON GOD.

If God is pleased when we walk with Him, would you say He is probably pleased with you at the moment?

Does your life reflect God as much as it should? In other words, what can you do so people would better notice if you stopped your walk with God?

CONCLUSION

Like worship, faith is a matter of attitude. If we exercise it and take God at His word, our faith will. As Jeff pointed out, you can have a big problem or a big God, but you can't have both. Trust in a big God and He will sustain you to serve and He will never let you down. But you gotta have faith.