

# 1 - “The Great Hall of Faith” // Hebrews

## 11:1–6 // *Hebrews 11 #1*<sup>1</sup>

### Announcements

Good morning Summit Church, I am speaking to you live this morning from our brand new Alamance County Campus, who are having their first services in their new facility, right there off of I-40 in Mebane at exit 154, behind the Sheets, of course.

We are one church that meets in many locations throughout the Triangle, and for the last **9 years** our Alamance County Campus has been setting up and tearing down each week at a middle school here, which we’re thankful for, but this week, our new campus opened up. **(PIC of Campus)** It’s an exciting new milestone in our mission to reach people in this part of our region, here in the extended Triangle area (hundreds of hours, I set up the Fun Fort Castle in the preschool area)--so could all of us here at The Summit Church put our hands together and celebrate this together?

### Introduction

**Alright... Open your Bibles, if you will, to Hebrews 11...**

---

<sup>1</sup> Works consulted: Tim Keller, [“Abel and the Salvation of Faith: Conviction, the Way to God”](#), October 2, 1994, Redeemer Presbyterian; Tim Keller, [“Enoch and the Purpose of Faith: Commitment, the Way to Intimacy”](#), October 9, 1994, Redeemer Presbyterian; John MacArthur, “Abel: A Primitive Faith,” preached with Grace to You, April 3, 2017; John MacArthur, “Enoch: The Walk of Faith,” preached with Grace to

I love Sports Halls of Fame (love going to them when I’m visiting a city, even random ones), and I particularly love watching good Hall of Fame induction speeches.

One of my favorites was from this guy: **(Pic)**. This is Walter Payton, who played running back for 13 seasons with the Chicago Bears in the 1980’s, when all the greatest athletes lived. His nickname was... (anybody remember?) Sweetness, because the way he could move and glide was just *sweet*. The best part of his speech was his explanation of how he developed all his crazy moves. He said, and I quote,

**“My mom went to work on Saturdays and she made my older brother and sister clean the house, but because I was the baby of the family, she didn’t make me help them, and I got to watch cartoons instead all morning. So these guys routinely beat me up. That’s the reason why I had the moves that I did, because when you have an angry sister and angry brother chasing you with a broom and a wet dish rag, you develop moves no one’s ever seen before. So I wanna thank them for this reward.”**

We’re starting a new series today through one of my favorite chapters in the Bible, Hebrews 11, sometimes called **“The Great Hall of Faith.”**

I say, “Great Hall of Faith,” but please don’t think of Hebrews 11 as some kind of catalog of Spiritual SuperHeroes, Angelic Avengers or whatnot. These are ordinary men and women with struggles, faults, and spiritual warts. Sometimes they stumbled; sometimes they

You, April 3, 2017; Jen Wilkin, “Hebrews 11: Consider The Faithful,” published by Lifeway Press, 2019; Dr. Tony Evans, [“What is Faith and How does it Work?”](#), 2018, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship; Dr. David Jeremiah, [“What is Faith?”](#), February 25, 2022, Shadow Mountain Community Church; Andy Stanley, [“What it Means to Have Faith,”](#) December 18, 2017, North Point Community Church. And others as noted throughout.

doubted; some did truly embarrassing things. Many of them you'd struggle to call "saints" in any sense of that word.

But each of them, you're going to see, held onto a 3-fold conviction, no matter how faint and weak, that God was real, that he would keep his promises, and that seeking him was worth the effort.

Here's the key verse of **Hebrews 11**: But 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. **(11:6)**

We're going to return to that verse again and again in this series. In it you see the 3-fold conviction of biblical faith:

1. God is real
2. He will keep his promises
3. Seeking him is worth the effort

Over the next 11 or so weeks we're going to turn this thing called faith around like a many-sided diamond, with each character in Hebrews 11 showing us a different side of that diamond.

You ready? First 6 verses today. The first 3 verses are the writer's "introduction" to faith, and then vv 4–5 are his first 2 illustrations of faith. Let's just move through them one at a time: **1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**

Faith is having an awareness that a world you can't see with your physical eyes is still very real.

- You say, "**Well, Pastor, let me stop you right there. I don't believe in anything I can't see with my eyes.**" Sure you do. Right now there are literally billions of bits of data floating through the air around you, even passing through you. Digitized pictures and conversations and all kinds of information. You just have to have something to pick it up, like a radio antenna or a phone.

- You say, "**Well, ok, ok, I spoke too soon. You got me, maybe I can't see everything with my eyes**, but we can still prove those things physically exist." Sure, it was just an analogy. My point is that for years these radio waves existed, we just didn't have the sensors to pick them up.
- Is it possible that spiritual realities exist, and that faith is the sensor that picks them up? That's what the author is saying: "*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" It's a different kind of sensor for a different kind of data.

**2 For by it the people of old received their commendation.**

- '*People of old*' refers to those people in the Old Testament who took God at his word and bet their lives on it, the people whose stories he's about to tell us.
- "*Commendation*": Commendation means "affirmation," or "validation." The proof they'd made the right choice. Sometimes they experienced that commendation in the form of miracles-- they walked through fire unharmed; slept through the night next to hungry lions, knocked down giants with slingshots and parted oceans down the middle.
- But other times, they didn't get earthly validation. The lions ate them up or the fire burned them up, and they went to their graves with little earthly validation that they'd made the right choice.

But all of them held onto the conviction that **a) God was real, that b) his promises are true, and c) that seeking him was worth the effort.**

Vs 3 **By faith we understand that the universe was framed by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**

One of the first places we exercise faith is in regards to the existence of our universe.

We can't prove, scientifically, that God exists. Science and reason can create space for belief in God, but they can't create it. Science, for example, teaches us that the physical world can't be infinite: you can't keep pushing the physical causes for things backwards in an infinite regress. Or, to say it more plainly, it's logically impossible for **Nothing x nobody ≠ everything**. Something can't come from nothing, so *something* back there has to be eternal, and that eternal thing is the cause of everything else. That's as far as science and reason can take you.

And that's where faith comes in. Faith is the antenna that picks up on spiritual realities behind the physical ones. **All science can do is get you to a point where you realize the need to look beyond it.** Faith hears the voice from beyond the physical world speaking through the physical world. **And where do we hear that voice? The word.**

BTW, notice already that the author already introduces the concept of the *word* of God here. **(v 3): By faith we understand the world was framed by THE WORD of God.**

The Word is the primary instrument of faith. "*Faith comes by hearing, (Paul says, Romans 10) and hearing by the Word of God.*" **That word comes to us in various forms:**

- It speaks through the beauty and magnificence of creation (Psalm 19);
- It whispers to us in the quietness of our conscience, **beckoning** us in moments of joy and **screaming** at us in moments of pain (Romans 1).
- The word speaks infallibly in the words of this book. We read this book and we hear a divine voice in it.
- **Most of all, that Word is Jesus:** Jesus, the very Word of God.

Faith recognizes the divine voice in these various manifestations of the Word. It senses a divine reality and hears God speaking.

Now, vs 4–5, he's going to give us his first two examples of faith; the **1st 2 sides of our faith diamond**.

(ABEL)

**4: By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.**

**Abel was Adam and Eve's 2nd son**, famously murdered by his brother Cain. Here's the story, it's in Genesis 4:

God had commanded Adam and Eve, right from the beginning, to offer him the first and best of their provisions as a way of declaring their dependence on him.

Cain was a farmer, so he brought an offering of grain; and Abel was a shepherd, so he brought a lamb from his flock.

**And the writer of Genesis says this:** "**And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard.**" (4:4)

Why was Abel's sacrifice accepted, and Cain's rejected? There's no indication that God preferred the substance of Abel's offering, as if God was revealing he was a meat-eater, not a vegetarian, and that's why he preferred Abel's leg of lamb to Cain's vegetable medley. I'd love for that to be what was going on here, but it's not.

No--God wanted them to make an offering from whatever their livelihood was, so it made sense for Cain to bring grain and Abel to bring a lamb.

**So, what was the difference? According to** Hebrews, Abel's was offered *by faith* and Cain's was *not*. How so, you ask? **Where do we see faith in Abel's offering but not Cain's?**

**Two things:**

### **1. Abel gave his offering in response to God's promise**

Let's back up from the story of **Cain and Abel just a little bit**. Genesis 3:

- **Abel's parents, Adam and Eve, had sinned**, and the first thing they did after sinning was make for themselves fig leaves to cover up their nakedness and hide in their bushes.
- This is important: The first emotion human beings felt after sinning was a sense of shame about their nakedness. Gen 2, of course, tells us that they had been naked before they sinned but says explicitly that they *were not ashamed*. You ever wonder what made them suddenly FEEL naked now?
- One of the early church fathers, **Augustine**, said that it was because up to this point Adam and Eve had been "clothed in the love and acceptance and glory of God," but now, having stripped themselves of that covering, they felt naked. And ashamed.
- So what did they do with this new feeling of nakedness? Well, what does a normal human do when they feel naked? How many of you have that recurring dream where you find yourself walking around somewhere in only your tighty-whites? I do. In your dream, what do you do when you discover that? Or, what would you do if you had a problem sleep-walking and suddenly woke up one night at 2:30 am in aisle 6 of a 24-hr Walmart, in just your skivvies? Well, I can tell you what you wouldn't do, if you're normal: you wouldn't say, "Well, while I'm here I'll pick up a few

odds and ends for the house." **No, you'd hide (TV)** and head for the clothing sections where you could slip some clothes on.

- Adam and Eve did something similar: they hid and made clothes for themselves.
- **Well, later that evening**, Gen 3 says, God came down for his typical evening walk with them, and when he called out to them, for the first time, there was no response. So he went looking for them and when he found them, he said, "What are you doing? You can't hide from me. It's pointless to try to cover yourselves; you can never do it; you'll have to let me do it." And then he took a lamb and killed it in front of their eyes, and took that lamb's skin and made for them clothing.
- **And then God made a promise to them, Gen 3:15**, the first explicit gospel promise in the Bible. God said, "One day, through one of your offspring, I'm going to send a deliverer, who will do more than just cover your sin, he'll take it away by suffering and dying for you."
- **Basically, what he was saying to them was this: You don't have to try and cover your nakedness.** You could never do it anyway. Trust me, and I'll provide that for you. I'll cover your sin and shame."

**Abel believed that promise and gave his offering in response to it. Through his offering, Abel was basically saying,** "This offering is not an attempt to cover my sin or earn your favor; you've already promised that to me in your deliverer. This sacrifice is a way of saying I believe that promise and I belong to you."

**Cain, by contrast, hoped that through his offering** he could earn God's favor. "God, look at me," he was saying, "look at all I've accomplished. I'm good enough to earn your favor. This grain offering should buy your good will."

Do you see the difference? The main point is not that Abel offered a lamb and Cain offered grain. The point is the heart behind their

offerings. One was given as an act of faith, in gratitude for having received God's favor; the other was an attempt to earn God's favor.

**Listen: Many of you here have gotten religiously active of recent.** You've come to a point—something happened in your life—where you realized you need God in your life, or you want him in your family, or whatever, and so you've cleaned up your life and now you've come to church.

Hear me, I'm glad you're here. But you're still Cain. You're hoping through some activity, some offering, to make yourself acceptable to God. Maybe you're bringing an offering of church activity. Or the offering of a morally cleaned up life--“look at how well I'm obeying the rules now, God.” You've resolved to cuss less and go to church more. You're going to put some of your money into the offering. And you're always wondering if it's enough. (You see, the thing about Cain is he's always wondering if he's done enough to earn God's favor. “Is this enough, God? Are you ok with me, now?” And that makes you resentful of people like Abel who seem to have the assurance of God's favor.)

That's some of you this morning. You've gotten religious, but you still have the heart of Cain. That's the bad news. Please don't murder someone on the way out.

**The good news is that you can be Abel**, right now. Just believe what Abel believed. That's all it takes--that God has sent a Deliverer to take away your sin just like he promised, and that he fully accepts you now because of what this Deliverer has done. God didn't accept Abel's offering because he'd lived a better life than Cain. That's kind of the whole point. **He accepted Abel's offering** because Abel believed that God would do what he'd promised, and he made his offering trusting in that promise.

Listen: God has provided the deliverer he promised in Gen 3:15; his name is Jesus, and he paid for your sin and covered it over through his death, just like he promised to Adam and Eve. The Deliverer who would cover our sin debt and crush the head of the serpent has come. All you have to do is believe it, and then make your offerings in response to God's favor, not as an attempt to earn it.

**Cain makes his offering to earn the approval of God; Abel makes his because he's assured that he has it--he's received it as a gift.**

*Which leads me to the second thing about Abel's offering that demonstrated faith that was distinct from Cain's.*

## **2. Abel gave his offering trusting in God's provision**

**Abel's faith extended beyond just a belief that God would cover his sin debt**; he also believed God would provide for his future. How did Abel's offering demonstrate this in a way Cain's did not?

Well, Genesis 4 explicitly says that Abel gave the firstborn of his flock (4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock...) What that means is that before any other animals had been born, Abel gave the first one to God.

**Abel had to have been a little apprehensive**: surely he would have asked when that first little baby lamb was born, “What if no more animals are born? What if this is the one and only? If I give this one to God, I'll have nothing left.” But Instead, he declared, “God, I'll just trust you with that.” Giving the firstborn was his way of saying, “God, I trust you to provide whatever I need. You get the first and the best, and I'll trust you to bring in the rest.”

**Cain, by contrast, didn't trust God**. You see, Genesis 4 doesn't use the word “first fruits” with Cain's offerings, which is a distinct omission. It means Cain waited to see if he had enough, after the

whole crop came in, and only then did he give some to God, out of the overflow--once he made sure he had all he needed and wanted.

Abel gave the first, trusting God to provide the rest. Cain gave out of the overflow, after he was sure he'd have enough to take care of himself.

***Here's the question: Which one better describes your approach to offering?***

*Are you the kind who says, "After I've paid my bills, and gotten what I really want to get, I'll give some of the leftover to God." Or do you say, "God, you get the first and the best, and I'll trust you to bring in whatever else I need"?*

**Abel believed that if God would keep his promise** to take care of his sin, he could surely also trust God to provide for his needs. *I mean, that's a really simple logical syllogism, right?*

- If God cares enough for you to take care of your sins, of course he'll take care of your physical needs too, right.
- **Why would he take care of the greater need, that cost his Son his life and then not be willing to do the lesser one, that won't cost him really anything at all?**
- *He who did not spare his own Son, will he not also with him freely give us all things? Romans 8*
- **It reminds me of when I'd take my kids to Disney World when they were younger.** Y'all know that Disney is absurdly expensive. And I know some of y'all LOVE IT and think it's worth every dime but I would sometimes (and by 'sometimes' I mean 'all the time') find myself saying, *"I'm not sure the fun we're getting out of this is proportionate to the money I'm putting into it."* (And, btw, I know you're about to say, "Oh, Pastor, if you just used my genie pass strategy you'd feel differently..." I did all that. I hired the expert agent and did my homework and I beat the lines (I think) about as well as they could be beaten. And still, I found myself thinking in

those dark, hot moments--*"You know, this might be a huge money-making scheme and maybe, just maybe, I'm the willing victim..."*) But I did it because I thought that's what a good dad does at least once or twice with his kids, if he can. And so we're down there, and I'm hot and miserable and it's 11:30 am and Veronica and I have been there since 7am for "extra Magic hours!" And I make the spontaneous decision that instead of eating lunch in the park, which will cost me approximately \$442 we'll run back to our hotel, which is on property, take a little break, have a swim and eat some lunch, but the result is that we're about 30 minutes behind when we usually eat lunch--and one of my kids, I won't say which one, but his name rhymes with...Maddon... cries out in despair, "Dad, are you just gonna let us starve?" And I think, "Kid, I'm down here, out several thousand dollars so we can ride Dumbo and the bumper cars (because when your kids are young you can't even ride the cool rides), and you think I brought you down here to let you STARVE?" I would think that all this money and all this inconvenience would show you I have your best interests at heart, and that I'm worthy of at least a little bit of trust, at least a half-hour's worth..."

**How does God feel when we say we believe** he has taken care of our sin debt--meaning, we believe he loved us so much he'd die in our place for our sin--but then we refuse to trust him for our daily provisions? I imagine he feels the same as I did in Disney World.

**Abel's offering was given from the firstfruits**, and that proved he really trusted God. Cain didn't. He gave only out of the excess, out of the leftovers.

**I'll just say it straight:** Whether or not you tithe, giving the firstfruit, determines (in part) whether you have the heart of a Cain or an Abel.



**You see, the Bible teaches that the first tithe of all that we get**, the first 10%, at a minimum, should be given to God as a declaration of our dependence on him.

**And here's the deal.** In our last church survey--where we pass out a sheet with some questions, and we ask you to leave it anonymous so you can be completely candid--only 24% of you say that you tithe. Again, this is self-reported. This is not my guess about you; this is what you say about yourself. Thank you for being honest, but **only 24% of you say that you tithe. Now, I'm not your judge, but what does that say about whether or not you have the heart of Cain or Abel?**

**What if you saw tithing as a fairly reliable indicator of whether you actually believe the gospel**--that God will keep his promises to you--whether it's his promise to absorb your sin debt or take care of your daily provision?

**Cain and Abel were both religious.** They both brought offerings. Abel's was accepted, because it was given in faith. Cain's was rejected, because it was not.

Because **(Heb 11:6) without faith it is impossible to please him** (it doesn't matter how much you give. Without faith), **for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**

**Listen**, the Bible teaches that there is an eternal dividing line that runs right down the middle of families, small groups, and local churches. It runs right through this audience. This is a recurring Biblical theme. Two people, sitting side by side: Your outside activities look exactly the same: you both carry your Bibles, you both put an offering into the bucket, you both raise your hands in worship. But inside you are polar opposites.

- Cain and Abel.

- The 10 foolish bridesmaids and then 10 wise ones.
- Judas and the rest of the disciples.
- The group in Matthew 7 who at the last judgment say to Jesus, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we do many wonderful works in your name' but Jesus responds with, "Depart from me, I never knew you."
- The sheep and the goats.

**That dividing line runs through this audience this morning.** There are people sitting side by side. Both of you are 'making an offering' to God.

- **One offers in faith**, believing God has already paid for his sin and this offering is an act of loving gratitude. The other makes their offering hoping it will earn God's acceptance.
- **One gives his tithe**, giving the first and the best, trusting God to take care of him. The other says, "God, after I'm sure I'm taken care of, I'll see what I have leftover for you."

Everybody in here is either Cain or Abel. That dividing line runs right through this church. Which one are you?

## ENOCH

**OK, I promised you two examples**, and we have a few minutes left, so let's briefly consider our second example, **Enoch**. Vs. **5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.**

Full disclosure: We aren't told a lot about Enoch. His story comes right after Cain and Abel's in Genesis 5, and it takes up a grand total of 7 verses--and 5.5 of those 7 verses are about how long he lived and who his relatives were! That means what he did in his life is encapsulated in just 1 and half verses: **Gen 5:22 Enoch walked with God...** and **24 Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.** That's it!

That's 16 words total, and 4 of those words are repeated, which means 12 whole words about Enoch's life--and yet, that's **enough to get him into the Great Hall of Faith!**

So, what was it about Enoch that made him so special? **Well, we don't know much, but what we do know is significant.**

- **Enoch lived about 400 years before Noah**--Noah was his great-grandson. The Bible describes the days of Noah as exceptionally wicked, a time when virtually no one paid any attention to God, and we have to imagine that was true in the days of Enoch, too.
- **In fact, Jen Wilkin, one of my favorite Bible teachers, says that the fact that Enoch was "set apart" because he walked with God indicates just how rare that must have been in those days. Enoch went entirely against the flow, choosing to walk with God when nobody around him was.** If you're taking notes, write this down:

**Enoch...**

(A) ...was set apart by walking with God

We also know that Enoch:

(B)...testified to coming judgment.

The **New Testament book of Jude** (that little book just before Revelation that you always skip and your pastor has never preached on, shame on him) in vs 14, mentions how boldly Enoch testified to God's coming judgment. IOW, Enoch didn't just walk with God privately and keep to himself, he faithfully testified to people around him that God was in charge and that ultimately they were all going to give an account to him, even in an age where that was wildly unpopular.

**In fact, do you want to hear something fascinating?** Enoch's son was "Methuselah." *You heard that name before?*

- **Methuselah, the guy famous for being old (the Tony Diana of the Old Testament).** According to Genesis, he lived longer than any other human in history, 969 years to be exact.
- **(You say, "Wait, was that a literal 969 years?")** To which I'd say: Honestly, I'm not entirely sure. It seems to be written that way. And it's not like the original author didn't know about average life spans. The point is, he lived a ridiculously long time.)

**And here's where it gets good.** Scholars generally agree that Methuselah's name means "death," and some say **"Methuselah" = (literally means), "When he dies, judgment comes."**

Enoch made his son's name a sermon. **And--this is so awesome--if you put together the timelines in Genesis, you'll see that the flood came the exact year that Methuselah died.**

- Enoch named his son as a warning of coming judgment, and then God let that son live longer than anyone else in history, showing that God is long-suffering, that he doesn't want to send judgment. So he just kept letting this guy live.
- Methuselah must have been like, "Oh, come on, just let me die already!" (I mean, I'm not even sure what you'd do for the 850 or so years. And God was like, "Calm down, buddy. I'm doing something here.")
- **Sadly, Noah's generation didn't listen,** and when Methuselah died, the flood came.<sup>2</sup>

**So we know Enoch...**

(A) ...was set apart by walking with God

(B) ...testified to coming judgment

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur



## Finally, we know that Enoch...

**(C)**...made **walking with God = the defining reality of his life**, so much so that that's all that is said about him. He lived for several hundred years, but these 4 words summed up his whole life: **He walked with God.**

- **What four words would we choose for your life?** Doctor. Businessman. Dad. Grandpa. Mom. Athlete. Success. Friend. One of a kind.
- Those are all great words, but the **greatest 4 words** would be "He (or she) walked with God."
- **What would we use in your Hall of Fame speech?** Would it be about how much you accomplished, or how much you made, or how good of a dad you were, or something like that? Enoch's 4 words were, 'He walked with God.' God, let that define my life.

**We know that Enoch was so close to God that God one day** just took him on to heaven. I heard **Tony Evans** say that Enoch and God were out for a walk one night and God said, "*You know, Enoch, my place is closer to here than yours, so why don't you come on up and stay with me?*" And God walked him right on up into Heaven. That's amazing.

What side of the diamond of faith does Enoch show us? **Enoch represents a life of faith that...** (look at Enoch's 3 things)

- ...is set apart from the world around it;**
- ...testifies boldly to the gospel;** and,
- ...makes walking with God its defining reality.**

Regardless of your profession, or your age, or anything else about you, these 3 phrases should describe your life. Do they?

- **Are you set apart? Distinct?** Do you stand out? *You say that you are a Christian... but do you look any different from your friends around you?*
  - Like my pastor growing up used to say: If you were put on trial for being a Christian, and the only evidence we could submit

was what you were like when you were with your friends, away from the church, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

- You're supposed to be different. You're supposed to stand out.
- **Do you testify boldly to the gospel?**
  - **Is your faith a private thing that you keep to yourself?** Honestly, I'm not trying to beat you up, but how can you say you actually believe the gospel? The real gospel? The gospel says that one day every person we know will give an account to God for their sin, and the only ones who go to heaven are those who trusted God's provision of a Savior. If you believe that, how could you not tell people you care for about it?
  - **Listen, people sometimes hear my stories of sharing Christ** and think that for some of us, this all just comes so naturally. Listen, evangelism rarely feels natural to me.
    - It's often inconvenient, and I have to practice it as a discipline because it doesn't come naturally. A lot of times, in an airplane or in an Uber, I'll tell myself, "I'll use the last 15 mins to bring this up..." And I suppose if I was more Spirit-filled I'd just always be excited to talk about the gospel. And sometimes I am. But sometimes, it is inconvenient and I do it as a discipline.
    - And sometimes it's awkward. I get shot down sometimes. Or after I bring it up, people avoid me or act weird around me.
    - **Sharing the gospel can even be dangerous**. It can get you labeled as a zealot. For some of our missionaries, it's *literally dangerous*. Testifying to the gospel can get them put into prison, or kicked out of their country, or even killed.
  - **So, why do it?** Because, like Enoch, you believe God's judgment is coming even if nobody else does and it feels like you might as well be talking about an alien invasion.

- **Many of you remember the terrible tsunami on December 26, 2004 that took the lives of hundreds of thousands in southeast Asia.** Even more would have been lost were it not for the heroic efforts of a **10 year old English girl named Tilly Smith. She was on vacation with her family in Thailand when she felt the rumble and saw the receding waterline. Well, just 2 weeks prior, in her 5th-grade geography class, she'd learned what happens before a tsunami hits and she was one of the only ones who recognized** what was happening. She went hysterical and began to scream to her parents that they needed to get out of there. Eventually they **believed her and together they convinced the security guards to evacuate the beach. Because of 10-year-old Tilly Smith, over a 100 people were saved that day.** I'm sure some people at first, waved her off as a raving, silly, hysterical girl. I'm sure people looked weird at her parents ("Get your girl under control! Give her her medicine"). But honestly, if you'd been her, and knew what you knew, would you have cared what they thought of you? Not if you understood what was coming. Enoch knew the flood was coming, he didn't care that some thought of him as a madman. Here's the question: *Can you actually say you believe the gospel and not fervently be trying to tell others about it?*
- **Finally, is walking with God the defining reality of your life?** Or is God something you schedule in for a few hours on a Sunday? For Enoch, you don't get the impression that walking with God was one item on a to-do list, walking with God was the list on which every other item went on. God's kingdom was not one of his priorities, God's kingdom was the framework through which every other priority got filtered. **Listen: In the true life of faith, everything--from your job to your relationships to your hobbies--all of it is about pursuing God's kingdom, glorifying him, and walking with him.** (The Apostle Paul says that whether therefore we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, do ALL the glory of God.)

6 But 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.

\*\* VAMP \*\*

### Faith's 3-fold conviction:

1. God is real
2. He will keep his promises
3. Seeking him is worth the effort (that he's something worth giving your life to pursue)

*The life of faith, a life of total abandonment to God, and trust in his promises.*

Years ago several of our staff took our cars to this great country-boy mechanic in East Durham. I can't even remember how we got connected to him. He had a garage in his backyard and was a genius with a car--he could fix anything and did it at 1/3 of the price the dealer would charge you, your car just smelled like cigarette smoke for about 6 weeks when you got it back. So several of us went there and some of us got a chance to share the gospel with him. He had a lot of questions--it's not just people who went to Ivy League schools who have deep questions about God, everyone does--and we spent, collectively, several hours in conversation with him. It turned out that what he was really afraid of was giving up full control of his life to Jesus. Well, one day he and I really went deep and I was really pressing him on Jesus stuff, and he said, "I know J.D., I know. I still have too many questions." And I said, "Lynn (that was his name--not my dad, this is not a story about my dad, another Lynn), at some point you just have to decide that if Jesus is there, if he's really real, that you can trust him."

Well, the next time I came out to see him, he came walking up with a big ol' grin on his face, seemingly excited my car was having problems again, cigarette still hanging out of his mouth, and he said, 'J.D., you ain't ever gonna believe what happened to me...' and he told me this story about a kid in their neighborhood who had used a ladder to climb up on the roof of his house to retrieve a Frisbee or something, and when he got up there, he looked down realized how high he was and on the slant of the roof he panicked and grabbed hold of the chimney and wouldn't let go. Lynn said, "J.D., I could hear him from 4 houses down. 'Help me... somebody help me!' And so I ran over there and climbed up the ladder and went over to him and said, 'Son, come with me, I'll take you down.' But the kid was so scared he wouldn't let go of the chimney, and I kept urging him to let go but he wouldn't and eventually I got mad, and I said, 'Son, if you don't let go of this chimney, I'm gonna knock you off this roof myself,' at which point he let go and I was able to carry him down."

Lynn then paused, and said, "I reckon that's what you and Pastor Danny and Pastor Chuck are telling me I gotta do with Jesus. Just let go, and go with him." And I said, "Lynn, you are not far from the Kingdom of God." A short time after this, he told Pastor Chuck Reed,

***"He's given me an opportunity. I'm going to get saved and see what the life of the Lord is,"***<sup>3</sup>

...and at the age of 68, Lynn gave his heart to Jesus and we baptized him here at the Summit.

Lynn, sadly, has since gone on to be with the Lord, but I'll never forget his epiphany of faith. Faith is believing that God is there--perceiving his voice inviting you to come to him--and trusting that he'll keep those promises (whether it's the promise to cover your sin debt or

the promise to care for you in the future) and that seeking him is worth the effort.

You say, "Oh, but J.D., how do I know he's real? And how can I hear him speaking?" I don't know what God's voice sounds like. I look at all these people and it feels like they get it. But I just don't hear it." Listen, it doesn't mean that you get overcome with some emotion or flooded with warm fuzzies. Sometimes it is just a firmly growing conviction that he's there, or that there's something unusual about Jesus, or that there's more to the world than blind, accidental forces coming from nowhere and going nowhere and meaning nothing. And maybe you're just starting out on that journey. **If that's you, I want to urge you:** keep coming! Keep listening. Find that Christian friend and start a dialogue with them. Start reading your Bible and discussing it with them. Keep visiting our church. And, in all of this, seriously entertain the idea--what if he's real and what if he really is speaking to me?

**Or maybe, like my friend Lynn, you're ready to let go** and begin this life of faith. If that's you, come on over. *In fact, let's bow our heads...*

**\*\*Prayer of surrender and faith\*\***

**Or maybe there's some area you need to trust God in.** "God, I don't know how you're going to work this situation out. Or when or how you're going to provide this..." Or when or how you're going to keep your promise on this... But Jesus, I trust you: *if you cared enough to die for my sins, I know for sure you'll keep your promises* to me on this lesser thing." Tell him that, and trust him. *Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus...!*

---

<sup>3</sup> July 2016