

I. My Notes ... WWC message 1/3

II. Series: Practicing What We Believe

- Title: Faith Defined
- Text: Hebrews 11:1-16
- Quote: "Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. It is the belief that God will do what is right." Max Lucado (Pastor, Author)

III. Introduction

- We're starting this year with a simple but life-shaping conviction: faith is not just something we believe — it's something we live. Scripture never treats faith as a static idea or a private feeling. Faith is trust in motion. It shapes our choices, strengthens our endurance, deepens our love, and anchors our hope.
- Over the next several weeks, we'll explore what faith really is, how it grows, and how it shows up in the everyday moments of our lives. We'll explore Scripture to see what it says about living faith. Looking at the heroes of Hebrews 11, the wisdom of James, the endurance of the early church, and the hope that only Christ can give. And each week, I will try to point out one simple, doable step that helps us walk by faith in real time — not just on Sundays, but in the rhythms of our daily lives.
- This is a journey for anyone who wants to trust God more deeply, follow Him more consistently, and step into the new year with courage, clarity, and expectation. Let's learn to live a faith that breathes, moves, loves, endures, and hopes. A faith that lives.

IV. Fresh Choice

- The Apostle Paul makes a powerful statement in the midst of his letter encouraging the church what to focus on ... "*We live by what we believe, not by what we can see.*" (**2 Corinthians 5:7 NCV**). The beginning of a New Year is frequently a time for fresh starts, for change, for a different approach to what might not have worked in the last year. In short, we have an opportunity to "choose wisely" and find clarity in our journey.
- Think about it for a moment, how do you define faith?
- Many would tell you, in response to that question, that faith is trusting God. Believing in His character, nature, and promises. Some will tell you that faith is believing in something where there is no tangible proof (and they call that absurd).

- Let me be clear right now ... faith is not a vague optimism, it isn't trust in nothing. It is a deep confidence in who we know to be Truth, Mercy, and Compassion.
- Faith is the foundation for our relationship with God. This trust, this belief shapes our actions, decisions, and the way that we deal with others. This same faith is our source of strength and hope. By faith we receive salvation. And all this happens because of the gift of faith that comes to us from the Lord God (see Ephesians 2:8).
- Our choice is how we are going to walk, by faith or by self.
- Have you ever been in fog? It can inhibit your ability to see more than a couple of feet in front of you. The San Joaquin Valley in California has some of the worst fog I have ever been in. Driving in it is extremely dangerous, walking in it is a challenge. Here is something I learned driving through some treacherous fog. As I continued forward the road kept appearing. Even though I could only see a few feet in front of me, as I moved forward the road continued to appear. I trusted that with each moment that the road would continue to appear, that I would be able to progress along the path to get where I needed to be. But it meant that I would have to move as the road revealed itself. Eventually, after hours of creeping along slowly, the fog disappeared and my destination was clear. Here's the thing, I prayed and prayed. God never removed the fog; He just kept helping me see the next step to be clear. And I trusted that. It's the way our faith walk is at times ... we might never see more than one step ahead, but our Lord knows the destination and how to get us there.

V. Seeing the Unseen

- **Hebrews 11:1-6 CSB**

11 Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. 2 For by this our ancestors were approved.

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

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was approved as a righteous man, because God approved his gifts, and even though he is dead, he still speaks through his faith.

5 By faith Enoch was taken away, and so he did not experience death. He was not to be found because God took him away. For before he was taken away, he was approved as one who pleased God.

6 Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

- Faith is more than just intellectual agreement in some things. There is a link between faith, obedience, hope, and perseverance. The writer of Hebrews begins with this explanation. He uses the terms “reality” and “proof” in defining faith.
- I see faith as the confidence of who God is and the certainty that He is trustworthy. It is much more than the “wishful thinking” that others use to explain their thoughts of what faith is.
- Faith is not leaning on our own strength, our own clarity, or our own emotions. Faith is leaning the full weight of our lives — our fears, our hopes, our decisions, our future — on a God who does not move.
- Many today are looking for that soundbite, that social media moment. They need the hype that accompanies it so they can feel valuable and significant. Faith says, “Trust in someone bigger than the moment” ... live in a way that is dependent on the nature of the One you believe in. The circumstance isn’t significant; the depth of the relationship is. People looking for hype will be left searching for it repeatedly as the moment passes.

VI. What Faith Does

- Faith is applicable to daily life. I guess that is my “profound” way of saying that faith does something.
- In the passage we just read, it said, *“Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (11:6 CSB).*
- Faith is belief that God exists, which allows one to draw near to Him. It is a trust that God rewards those who seek Him. This thought echoes the words of Jesus. *“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:33 NLT).*
- Faith is relational and there are tangible results for allowing it to guide your steps.
- Here comes another story. When my children were younger, we lived in a house with a pool. The older children were comfortable in the water but my youngest, let’s just say getting him in the pool was a challenge. To get him to get into the water with us I tried to coax him to jump off the edge to me. After a lot of convincing, he finally jumped and I caught him. We did it a few times and it became easier each time as trust grew. He was sure that Dad would catch him and not allow him to sink. That changed his attitude. In fact, it came to the place where he trusted so much that he would jump off the edge towards me whether I was looking or not.

- When we, as believers, began to trust God, that He cares – that He doesn't fail – that He is able, then we will jump into deeper circumstances with the assurance that God is there for us. And that pleases God.

VII. Let's See an Example

- Let me read one of those passages that inspires me ... *"What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about—but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness." "He believed, hoping against hope, so that he became the father of many nations according to what had been spoken: So will your descendants be. He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body to be already dead (since he was about a hundred years old) and also the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver in unbelief at God's promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to do. Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness."* **(Romans 4:1-3, 18-22 CSB).**
- Abraham believed what God had promised (he would have a son) despite his history and what conventional wisdom might say. His belief (trust), "hoping against hope" (vs. 18), considered the circumstances and weighed them against the promise of the Lord. He chose to trust the Lord God. And that kept Abraham in a proper relationship with God.
- Here's what we need to see, faith is not the absence of doubt but continued trust even when doubts arise. Too often, people see things happen that can be difficult or overwhelming, and because of this – doubt is the response. It's reasonable to have questions, to not understand, to think it doesn't make sense. Every person faces that at one time or another. Abraham and Sarah were told they would have a child. Abraham questioned, Sarah laughed. Yet, Abraham trusted what God told him. Even though it didn't make sense, He believed.
- And because of that Abraham was counted as righteous.
- Is there somewhere in your life that there are struggles, where things don't make sense? Is there place you can live in obedience and trust in God's promises? The choice is yours.

VIII. Faith Lived Out

- I pointed to this verse earlier. *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."* **(2 Corinthians 5:7 CSB).** Let's unpack it a bit.

- This is the key to our journey as believers. Walking by faith is choosing to trust God's principles and promises. This choice we make to believe means that we are invested in our relationship with the Lord and continue to grow in wisdom and understanding.
- Walking in faith gives us the strength to face the challenges of the day (even if we don't fully understand them). On the other side of this coin, we can surrender our worries and fears as we choose to walk by faith.
- Faith is a series of steps that leads to assurance. It is a conviction that God is exactly who He said He is. And His love and purpose will never change. This direction in our walk will help us stay focused on the One who is "the Author and Perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

IX. Bringing It Together

- Faith is taking the next step with confidence in the God who already knows the way.
- Faith is not complicated, but it is costly. It asks us to trust God when the road is foggy, to obey when the next step feels uncertain, and to believe His promises even when our circumstances argue otherwise. Faith is confidence in who God is, certainty in what He has said, and willingness to take the next step because He is already there.
So, as we begin this new year, let me ask you: Where is God inviting you to trust Him? Not in theory. Not in sentiment. But in action. Maybe it's a relationship that needs healing. Maybe it's a decision you've been delaying. Maybe it's a fear you've carried far too long. Maybe it's simply choosing to believe that God is good even when life feels heavy.
- Faith doesn't demand that you see the whole path — only that you take the next step with the One who does. Abraham did. The heroes of Hebrews 11 did. And every believer who has ever walked with God has learned the same truth: God is faithful, and He meets us as we move.
- This week, take one step of faith. One step that says, "Lord, I trust You more than I trust my fear. I trust Your promise more than I trust my perspective." And as you do, you will discover what every follower of Jesus eventually learns — that faith lived is faith strengthened, and the God who calls you forward is the God who walks with you. Let's step into this year with a faith that breathes, moves, loves, endures, and hopes — a faith that lives.
- For this series I am going to attach some daily readings that fit with the message. It is my hope that this reinforces what Our Lord is teaching us throughout the week ...
- Daily Scripture Readings –

- Day 1: Hebrews 11:1–6
- Day 2: Romans 4:18–21
- Day 3: Psalm 27:13–14
- Day 4: Mark 9:14–29
- Day 5: 2 Corinthians 5:7
- Day 6: Isaiah 26:3–4
- Day 7: Psalm 37:3–7

- Each morning, pray this simple prayer: “Lord, show me the next step, and give me the faith to take it.”
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always
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