

Making much of Jesus

present-day lessons from the letter to the Hebrews

Although written to Jews who had trusted in Jesus, and although drawing regularly on Old Testament references, the letter to the Hebrews has a very pressing contemporary significance.

This series of studies is intended to stir in our hearts both a deepening delight and a growing confidence in all that Jesus is and has done, imparting to us the fortitude and strength we need to serve Him faithfully in today's world.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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13. By faith (Heb.11.1-12.2a)

[w/b Sunday 24th November 2019]

“.. because he saw Him who is invisible ..”

Having exhorted his readers in the previous section of the letter (10.19-39) to live lives characterized by faith, hope and love, the writer now expands at length on what that biblical faith looks like.

He does so largely through a series of ‘cameos’ drawn from the Old Testament - men and women whose stories illustrate the nature and characteristics of the faith he is keen to foster.

[Before attending your Community Group try to consider all 7 questions - even though your Group may not have time for them all. Key questions in this study are probably 1, 4 and 5. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read Hebrews 10.36-12.2a. It’s worth reading this whole long passage the better to grasp why the writer is exhorting his readers to faith, and how such faith will show itself.

In the context of 10.36-39 what does living by faith entail?

Reading through the whole of chapter with its catalogue of believers, what do you find challenges you most?

2. Read Hebrews 11.1-3. Before illustrating the sort of faith he is exhorting upon his readers, the writer provides a working definition of faith, coupled with an initial application.

How has this 'confidence' and 'assurance' been cultivated in your experience?

In what way(s) does faith come into play in our 'understanding' that "*the universe was formed at God's command*"?

3. Read Hebrews 11.4-16. The writer now starts to illustrate what he means by the exercise of this faith through a series of illustrations drawn from the lives of well-known Bible figures.

Although the individuals highlighted are very different, what are the common characteristics of the faith they were seen to exercise?

In what regards does the faith exercised by these individuals apply to you - and how does it challenge you?

4. Read Hebrews 11.17-31. The list continues, running from the patriarchs right on through to the people of Israel taking possession of the land which had been promised to them.

What was it which characterized the faith of Abraham and Moses (the two individuals to whom most space is given)?

What is the lesson the writer is keen that his readers should take from this list of believers?

What lesson(s) are you applying to your own life as you read through this passage?

5. Read Hebrews 11.32-38. The examples of faith could go on and on - so the writer, with a nod in the direction of some other named individuals, starts speaking in more general terms.

What has been your experience of God working remarkably in your life as a believer (vv.33-35a)?

Faith is evidenced as much in dark trials as in dramatic 'triumphs' (vv.35b-38): why do you think there is this big discrepancy in the experience of different believers?

6. Read Hebrews 11.39-40. Having illustrated what he means by 'faith' from the lives of OT believers, the writer rounds the list off with a summary statement, linking them with us all.

What does the writer allude to as the two parts to the hope we have as Christians, the 'something better' which 'God had planned for us'?

How might the fact that none of the believers mentioned in the chapter "*received what had been promised*" help you cope with your frustrations and impatience with God?

7. Read Hebrews 12.1-2a. Here at last is the practical application of the illustrations the writer has been using through the whole of the previous chapter.

How does the narrative of the Old Testament (with its record of so many different individuals) help you as you seek to follow Jesus?

What do you think is involved in our 'fixing our eyes on Jesus'?