

AUGUST 7, 2022

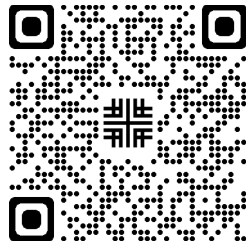
SUMMER SERIES: STORYTELLING

Stories & Faith

HEBREWS 11:1-3, 8-16

CONNECT

- Need Prayer?
- Ask Questions
- Get information
- Make Comments
- Meet with Pastor Shel
- Sign-up for our weekly e-newsletter
- Join a Home Church



Stories have power. The telling of stories opens our imagination, seeds vision, and can empower us to act. A story can reveal what is wrong and spark ideas for solutions. Our capacity to see a vision of what is not yet through a mind open to the Holy Spirit, ties us to a Jesus-centred vision of our story.

We exercise faith when we imaginatively represent, as a substantial reality, something in the future that we believe to be God's will. And just as evidence produces a conviction in a person, our imaginative representation produces in us a confident motivation to do what is necessary to bring this imaginative representation into reality.

This is illustrated by the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11. The author writes, "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance" (vs 13). Note the visual imagery in the faith these heroes exercised. They were "looking for a country of their own" (vs 14), and were "longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (vs 16). They imaginatively envisioned "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (vs. 10), and therefore they lived as foreigners and vagabonds in this world.
-G.A. Boyd

"Faith is a way of knowing that constantly seeks understanding, leading to theological reflection and to faith as "belief" in various doctrines about God, Jesus, creation, sin, salvation, and human destiny. Faith is often presented, rightly as here, as that which enables one to cope with the trials and tribulation of life, but Hebrews 11 reminds us of another paradox: faith is also that which has provoked the hostility and ridicule being heaped upon this Christian community"
-J.C. Shelley, Feasting, 330.

TWO MAIN COMPONENTS OF FAITH:

- Faith as a ...
- Faith as...
 - Greek: pistis often translated “faith” “belief” In the New Testament this means something true or real. But our use of “faith” or “belief” misses the range and depth of New Testament usage: reliability, confidence, assurance, fidelity, faithfulness, commitment, and pledged loyalty (Matthew Bates, SBAA, 3)..

WALK THROUGH THE TEXT

- Super Story/Metanarrative

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see. ² For by it the people of old received God’s commendation. ³ By faith we understand that the worlds were set in order at God’s command, so that the visible has its origin in the invisible.

- **Hebrews 11:1** What faith is NOT. Bates 19
- **Hebrews 11:3** The visible was made from the invisible. NT Wright translates it thus, too.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, and he went out without understanding where he was going. ⁹ By faith he lived as a foreigner in the promised land as though it were a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

- Called to believe in...

¹¹ By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren and he was too old, he received the ability to procreate because he regarded the one who had given the promise to be trustworthy. ¹² So, in fact children were fathered by one man—and this one as good as dead—like the number of stars in the sky and like the innumerable grains of sand on the seashore.

- There was a first stage to these promises - ancient land of Jerusalem, where the temple was built. The birth of a child. “The first stage was the entire history of Israel, from Abraham to the Messiah...”
- But there was also “...the final stage would be the establishment of the final city of God, the ultimate master-work of the creator” (NT Wright, HFE, 134).
- Justification... faith not only is...

Faith enables this standing, this ‘righteousness’, to be affirmed in the present time. Hebrews thus agrees more or less exactly with what Paul means by ‘justification by faith’, one of the New Testament’s most powerful, encouraging and comforting doctrines. -NT Wright (HFE, 134)

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith without receiving the things promised, but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who speak in such a way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵ In fact, if they had been thinking of the land that they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

- Hebrews 11:16 God is not ashamed to be “their god”.
 - Jeremiah 31:33 - New Covenant
- The faith of these early patriarchs and patriarchs points beyond them, beyond the Old Testament itself!

“We’ve got some difficult days ahead,” Martin Luther King, Jr., told an overflowing crowd in Memphis, Tennessee, on 3 April 1968, where the city’s sanitation workers were striking. “But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop ... I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land” (King, “I’ve Been,” 222–223). Less than 24 hours after these prophetic words, King was assassinated by James Earl Ray.

- So then we live differently if we see the world as is, as not all there is. We are better citizens of the world, when we live and work with hope for a better place.

WHAT TO NOTE AND LIVE INTO

- What stories are you telling yourself?
- Practices that cultivate faith
- The better story
- [Prayer of Allegiance to Jesus]