

## Introducing the Hall of Faith



### The “Hall of Faith”

- ❑ A “hall of fame” is “a building or museum established to honor persons judged outstanding in their field.”<sup>1</sup> The term may also refer to “a list of such outstanding persons.” Hebrews 11 provides a list of persons “commended for their faith” (11:2, 39). Thus Hebrews 11 has often been called the “Hall of Faith” chapter. However, the purpose of Hebrews 11 is not to glorify these persons, but to offer them as good examples of faith.
- ❑ In this series, we will consider various examples of faith. From these examples, we will learn valuable and practical lessons concerning genuine biblical faith.

### What is “Faith?”

1. How would you define “faith?”<sup>2</sup>
2. How is “faith” described in Hebrews 11:1?<sup>3</sup>
  - “Now faith is being \_\_\_\_\_ of what we \_\_\_\_\_ for and \_\_\_\_\_ of what we do \_\_\_\_\_” (*Hebrews 1:1, NIV*).

### Faith Involves the Unseen

- ❑ Faith involves the future. “Faith is being sure of what we hope for ...”
- ❑ Faith involves the spiritual.

### Faith is in God

- ❑ God exists (*11:6*).<sup>4</sup>
- ❑ God is the Creator.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> “Halls of fame” are especially common in sports and entertainment. There are over 90 sports halls of fame.

<sup>2</sup> The word translated “faith” in the New Testament is πίστις (*pistis*). The word “believe” (πιστεύω, *pisteuō*) comes from *pistis*. Biblical “faith” is confident belief and trust in God. It should be noted that everyone has some kind of “faith.” Even the naturalist/materialist’s conviction that the supernatural does not exist requires “faith.”

<sup>3</sup> This is not a formal definition of “faith,” but is one description of biblical faith. The NASB says, “Now faith is the assurance (ὑπόστασις, *hupostasis*) of things hoped for, the conviction (ελεγχος, *elenchos*) of things not seen.” Though the Old Testament saints understood that the fulfillment of the promises was future, they acted as if the realization was already present, because they were so convinced that God could, and would, fulfill His promises.

<sup>4</sup> Biblical faith is directed toward God. Thus belief in God’s existence is fundamental! Belief (or disbelief) in the biblical God is more affected by worldview than intellect. A simple definition of “worldview” is “the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world.” Persons with different worldviews can view the same data and see different meanings. For example, while the evidence for God’s existence is clear to the theist, a person with a naturalistic worldview does not see it, because the supernatural is ruled out beforehand. Worldview is largely shaped by one’s culture, subculture and upbringing, and may be formed with little critical thought. Each of us should realize that we view the world with “a particular set of glasses.” And each of us should consider the possibility that our “set of glasses” may be preventing us, or at least hindering us, from “seeing” the real truth.

<sup>5</sup> Some people object to “creation” because they accept “evolution.” However, the real conflict is not between creation and evolution, but between theistic and naturalistic worldviews. Neo-Darwinian evolution, as typically defined, is entirely naturalistic (blind, purposeless) – thus essentially atheistic. Once the existence of God is accepted (or even allowed), the concept of creation is no longer ruled out. At that point, the student is ready to consider the relationship between the biblical and scientific data. See Jay’s *Doesn’t Evolution Contradict Genesis?*

📖 “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.” (11:3, *NIV*)<sup>6</sup>

☐ God is to be trusted (11:1, 39-40).

- God is to be trusted because He is the purposeful Creator, and He is sovereign, all-knowing, loving, righteous, all-powerful, and faithful to His promises.

? How can we know these things about God?<sup>7</sup>

☐ God is to be pursued and obeyed.<sup>8</sup>

📖 “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (11:6, *NIV*)

### **Faith Has Basis**

☐ Faith is based on God’s self-revelation.

☐ Faith is based on God’s promises.

- Some of God’s promises have already been fulfilled. Others will be fulfilled in the future.
- The people in the “Hall of Faith” persevered in faith even though “none of them received what had been promised” (*Hebrews 11:39*).<sup>9</sup>
- God’s promises are ultimately fulfilled “in Christ.” (*Hebrews 11:40*; *Corinthians 1:18-20*)

☐ Faith is reasonable.<sup>10</sup>

### **Why Do We Lack Faith?**

3. Why do people lack biblical faith? Why do some people not believe? As Christians, why do we often lack faith?

4. What are the consequences of a lack of faith?

### **Reflection/Application**

➤ Read Hebrews 11 and review this handout. Ask yourself these questions: In what areas or situations am I lacking faith right now? What can I do about it? Continue in this series.

<sup>6</sup> Humans want to base their beliefs only on the visible. But “the visible came forth from the invisible” (*NEB*) by the will and actions of the unseen God. Invisible reality precedes and transcends the present visible order. Something to consider: The Bible says that God created the universe, including human beings. However, many people say that human beings “evolved” from more simplistic life forms (ultimately from non-living chemicals) through purely naturalistic processes. Does this make any difference concerning “meaning” and “purpose?” Of course, it does.

<sup>7</sup> We can know about God’s nature, characteristics, sayings, and promises because of His self-revelation, especially through the Bible. The Bible is not limited to propositional statements about God, but reveals who He is through the record of redemptive history. We grow in our knowledge of God as we become familiar with His “story” recorded in the Bible. Thus acceptance of the Bible as God’s revelation is fundamental to biblical faith. There are good reasons for accepting the truthfulness and authority of the Bible. Ask Jay for resources on this subject.

<sup>8</sup> Genuine faith is evidenced by response and action (*James 2:14-26*).

<sup>9</sup> Actually, most of them had realized some portion of God’s promises. However, the author of Hebrews is here referring to the ultimate fulfillment – that is, the kingdom of God brought by Jesus Christ. We have an advantage over the Old Testament saints, because Christ and the kingdom have come, and we enjoy the benefits. However, the ultimate realization of the kingdom is still future. So we also must await the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises.

<sup>10</sup> Christian faith is not “blind faith.” It is a faith based on sufficient evidence to be firmly persuaded, even if some of the things believed are future or unseen. Also, this faith is not based on human intellect alone, but is enabled by God’s grace.