

Leader's Guide

*Sweeter
than* **Chocolate!**

Sweet Words and Real Solutions from God's Book

An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

by

pam gillaspie

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Sweeter than Chocolate

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Sweeter than Chocolate

An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

Leader notes

Sweeter than Chocolate!

Sweet Words and Real Solutions from God's Book

An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

Let me sum up *Sweeter than Chocolate!* Bible studies for you in two words – *flexible* and *joyful!*

This Bible study series is designed to flex with your life and give you the option to go as deep as you desire each week. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think twice about the sidebar assignments. But if you're looking for a challenge, take the sidebar prompts, roll up your sleeves, and dig to your heart's content! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and *Digging Deeper* boxes as the elastic that will help this study fit you perfectly.

Did you know that a little flexibility can bring a lot of joy? When a study has the ability to flex to the level you want an amazing thing happens. Guilt melts away and pursuing God through His Word takes on a new sense of joy. A hard obligation becomes a sweet opportunity to commune with God.

So whether you're new to the Book or have been studying it for years, this joy-based study will flex to meet you where you are and push you as far as you care to go . . . and maybe even one step further!

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

Enjoy!

Class pages

Inductive Focus: Key Words

While Hebrews 11 gives us a concise look at the story line of redemption, it also provides a perfect hands-on inductive laboratory. Certainly we can use any text of Scripture to teach or practice inductive skills, but some texts are more user-friendly than others. Hebrews 11 will give your new students confidence as they find *faith* splattered over the page, but it will also challenge your more advanced students to find key word groupings that look different in English.

Key words “unlock” meanings of texts. They are vital to understanding and often repeated.

One obvious key word for the whole of Hebrews 11 is *pistis*, Greek for *faith*.

As we zero in on Hebrews 11:1-7, another key word group is based on the Greek verb *martyreo*, which is translated variously as *gained approval*, *obtained the testimony*, *testifying*, and *obtained the witness*.

There are also a variety of sight words from different Greek roots that are used as synonyms.

Help your students learn to explore key words paying particular attention to the Greek roots in the New Testament and Hebrew roots in the Old Testament, keeping them aware also of synonyms in passages.

Leader notes

Week One

The Secret to Pleasing God

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

How can I please God? There is, perhaps, no weightier question we can ask than this. The first verses of Hebrews 11 lock in on the issue of approval. While the heroes of the faith gained God's approval, whose approval are we seeking today? Does our behavior indicate that we are seeking God's approval or man's?

What about the creation debate? Does Hebrews 11 give us information that bears on this discussion?

Finally (and we'll be asking this question throughout the class), what does *walk by eyes of faith* mean?

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	30 min.	10 min.	Class Basics • Introductions • Ground Rules • How to Use this Study
Segment 2:	20 min.	10 min.	Get Them Talking
Segment 3:	10 min.	10 min.	Inductive Study Basics
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Background Information
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Key Words
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Creation, Abel, Enoch, Noah

Leader notes

BEFORE YOU START

HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:

The Basics

Well here you are! You've either been invited, appointed, or dragged into leading a Bible study. Regardless, here is some good news – *Sweeter than Chocolate!* is designed to be flexible to students and teachers alike, to give newer teachers the help they need, and to give more seasoned teachers wings to grow their gifts. With this in mind, please use the Leader's Guide to prepare to lead a *Sweeter than Chocolate!* group. Always remember that it's a guide, not a strict set of step-by-step rules.

Although it's a six-week study with weekly homework, *Sweeter than Chocolate!* can be extended over a longer period with homework sections done either at home or during class time. If class time is limited, as is often the case for Sunday School, leaders may choose to work through smaller portions of a lesson together. Thus, it is possible to expand this six-week Bible study to fill a twelve-week session or more depending how deep you and your students decide to go.

If you have ample time and are running a six-week study, consider adding an additional week or two for a technology day or a guest speaker on a topic of interest. That person could be a pastor, local Bible professor, or someone well-versed on a particular topic in the text. With the advance of technology, it's now possible to bring in people from other parts of the country or the world to talk to your class via tools like Skype. This is a way to mix things up and keep the class on their toes by bringing in additional material. It also gives you the flexibility to match the class length to the needs of things like, say, the church calendar. Hey, it's reality!

Some of you who are reading this Leader Guide are thrilled to be leading, because you have the spiritual gift of teaching. You may find that you don't even use this guide – that's fine! If God has gifted you to teach and you like doing your own research and prep, that is great!! Praise God! Go entrust to the faithful who will be able to teach others also! Others of you, undoubtedly, have been dragged in kicking and screaming. (That was me for a few years while I was still resisting my gifting!) Somebody had to lead and you were drafted. It is my deep hope that you will find help in this guide to make your leading experience not only less traumatic but also filled with great joy!

Small groups and Sunday school classes may decide to simply talk through the questions that are in the lesson, but study groups will benefit by bringing in additional talk points and materials.

* Skype is a free service that allows you use the internet to video conference in guest speakers or those who just want to listen in to class. Learn more at www.skype.com.

Leader notes

About the Leader Guide

This leader guide is a basic outline, a road map of one way to go in a class discussion. Just as there are different ways from Chicago to Chattanooga, there are different ways to run a class.

Student pages on the left will orient you to where you are in the lesson. Some post-40s like me won't be able to read them, but they give us visual clues nonetheless. Each week we'll suggest a time frame for running the class one or two hours. You'll find additional background information and suggested discussion questions on each stanza as well as illustration and application material worked in along the way. While you may choose to use some of the illustrations in the leader guide, the best illustrations for your class will come from you! Watch for key points in the illustrations and see how you can weave in personal examples for your students.

For the sake of space, typically only suggested discussion questions are listed. Occasionally we'll fill in an answer if it's not self-evident. Also, when possible we'll leave space for you to fill in your own thoughts so you don't have to go flipping back and forth between the student book and the leader guide. Finally, you may look at the material and think, "There is no way I can cover all this in the allotted time!" If that's the case, you can pick and choose from the elements to craft your lesson.

Inductive Focus

This section is a new feature to *Sweeter than Chocolate!* Leader Guides. Since Hebrews 11 lends itself so well to teaching specific inductive study tools, we'll focus on one facet of inductive study each week to help students build skills and confidence in the inductive process.

Additional Teaching Segments

If you have the spiritual gift of teaching, this is a segment you'll want to pay special attention to. Here is where you start honing your gift. We'll suggest several directions to take the teaching, but the choice is yours. Remember that your class will *learn* more when they are given the opportunity to *discuss* more. So as you weave in these segments, the more you draw them into reasoning through the Scriptures with you, the better off they will be! One other caution. Given the amount of time most classes need, you will probably want to weave in just one or at the most two additional teaching segments per class. You'll get the feel of it, but never lose sight of the need to engage your class and **GET THEM TALKING** about what they're learning!

One more thought. This is also an area where you can start bringing potential leaders along. Give them the chance to work on the supplemental teaching from time to time or set them loose to share with the class what they've learned in a **Digging Deeper** section. Always be looking for tomorrow's teachers from among today's students!

CROWD BREAKER

We're told that Abraham "when he was called . . . went out, not knowing where he was going."

Where is the most interesting place God has had you live so far?

Leader notes

Starting on Time

One way to start on time every week is to read through Hebrews 11 at the beginning of class. It will take between 5 and 10 minutes. In doing this you will reinforce the importance of continually being in the text of Scripture itself. As odd as it may seem, when we study deeply the temptation to stray from the text and toward commentaries can be intense. By reading the text every week and starting promptly (even if it is just you and your most prompt student!), you will reinforce the importance of the text and gain the added bonus of training stragglers to arrive on time.

This week you'll be reading the text later in class during your **Inductive Focus** section, so for today start with introductions and making your students feel loved and welcomed.

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: CLASS BASICS

Introductions and Ground Rules

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Have class introduce themselves**
- **Set boundaries**

Make sure to allocate adequate time the first week of class for general introductions and ground rules. If you're teaching men or a mixed group, estimate based on the size of your class. If you're teaching women, take the time you think this will require and double it. Asking people to share their names and respond to a specific question will help keep things moving. If you ask for "a little bit about yourself," you're sure to get more than a little bit! Start out by introducing yourself in a concise manner to set the tone. Feel free to use an icebreaker game or other ideas you have to help people connect.

You'll also want to establish ground rules during Week One. Psychologists say the time to set boundaries in any relationship is the first meeting. A boundary can always be relaxed, but it is very difficult to establish or strengthen one if you do not set it properly at the start. This applies both to how you will lead your class discussions as well as to how you will allow your class to interact with you throughout the week. Depending on your situation, you may ask students to contact you primarily by e-mail and make certain times of the day off-limits. My classes know I rarely answer the phone when my kids are home from school. That is my boundary. When they are home, my primary job is being their mom. Your class will respect this and perhaps even learn the importance of proper boundaries in their own lives from your example.

Let your class know that it is your job as the teacher/facilitator to keep the discussion on track and that you may from time to time have to reel a person in, stop a rabbit trail, or discontinue until after class an interesting, but off-topic discussion. Also let them know that you do not have all the answers. This will be critical for this

Leader notes

class in particular as Hebrews 11 will have you spanning the entire expanse of Scripture. No one has all the answers, even those who have studied a lifetime. While acknowledging your limitations may seem uncomfortable at first, you'll find it is freeing for everyone! If someone asks a question you can't answer, either look into it further yourself or (preferably) assign it to the questioner for further study. This will draw out future teachers – who come back with it answered and prepared to share. Assigning questions also helps people begin discerning what makes a germane question.

Encouraging your class to ask questions and helping them to learn how to ask questions is a huge part of your job as a teacher. Still, as important as questions are, more questions can be asked than we have biblical answers for. Sometimes you will simply have to answer with an honest, "I don't know."

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

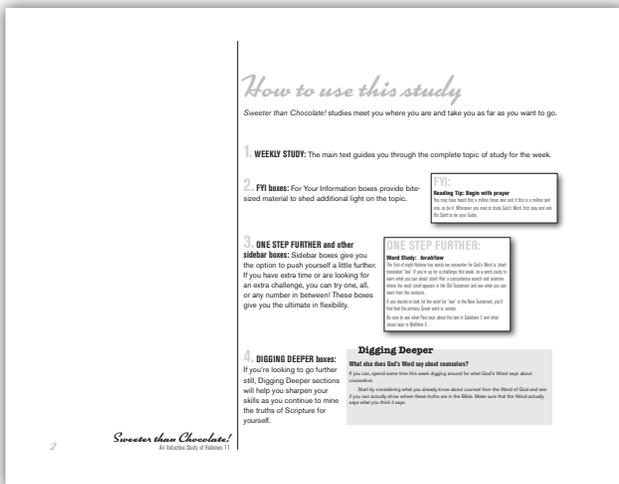
[page 2]

Basics of the *Chocolate* study guide and philosophy

- **WEEKLY STUDY** material
- **FYI** boxes
- **ONE STEP FURTHER** and other sidebar boxes
- **DIGGING DEEPER** boxes

While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility with your students. Direct them to the "How to Use This Study" page and encourage them to find a level of study that encourages. They can do more one week, less the next; they can mix and match and find a fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on and guiltting them with a ton of homework will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God's Word and ask Him to begin healing through the power of the Word. Take time to review student page 2 with them and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

Take special care in stressing the flexibility to those long-time Precept-Upon-Precept students who have a finish-every-question-at-all-cost mentality. Such discipline in studying God's Word is beautiful. The every-last-question mind set, however, can throw people off with the *Chocolate* series. Because the material is designed to flex to very advanced students, the volume of material can overwhelm people who force themselves through every question and sidebar. Assure your class that most students won't finish every question every week by design. Some weeks they will, but probably not every week. If every student finished every week, the study would not be flexing to meet the needs of the most advanced students. The goal of flexible material is not to have people study less; it is to have each person take the next appropriate step from where they currently are and to study and apply more as they are continually drawn into deeper relationship with Jesus.



page 2

Classpages

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

Week One
The Secret to Pleasing God

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
—Hebrews 11:1*

There is nothing quite like the sinking feeling of being lost. Think for a moment how the GPS is changing the way people drive. Sure we love them because they make our lives easier than maps do, but they also give us that insurance against getting lost. Lost wears many faces—a toddler in a grocery store, a person behind the wheel of a small car in a big city, a teenager facing final exams only two weeks along in his reading for a 16-week class.

Lost is also the condition of many people who sit in pews around the world on any given Sunday. We're not talking theologically lost here, although some are that too; we're talking lost in regard to understanding the entire Bible. Many endure this lossiness in silence not knowing quite how to correct the situation. After all, how do you "catch up" on one Book that contains 66 smaller books? A book that very few of even the most committed read through in a year. The question can be overwhelming, especially when you find yourself surrounded by others who seem to have a grip on everything you don't!

And let's be candid here: if you don't have a working knowledge of the whole Scripture, studying the parts becomes tougher—a lot tougher! But how do you acquire that working knowledge of the whole when the Bible is such a big book? It can be like trying to jump into the middle of LCST four years in. Have you ever wished God would publish a set of *Cliff's Notes* or *Spark Notes* for His Word? Something to get us up to speed on the overall message?

Well, Hebrews 11 is it! It's not the only summary God gives us in the Bible, but it is the most comprehensive and it can bring us into the flow of the story of the Bible and up to speed quickly. Does it replace reading the whole story? Of course not! But it sure will help you feel more comfortable as you gain your bearings in this epic revelation of the love of God!

FYI:
If You're in a Class
Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

Sweeter than Chocolate!
An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God
Notes

FYI:
The Lord of the Rings . . .
A few years back a dear missionary family lived with us for several months. We were one big happy family of four adults, six kids, three dogs, and two and a half lathrooms. The Meyers love Jesus, they love people, and they love *The Lord of the Rings* books, movies, and everything else. One weekend they decided it was time to introduce our family to this epic series. I'll never forget how lost I felt for the first hour of the movie, especially as the Meyers kids kept trying to bring me up to speed on who everyone was and how they were all interrelated. I thought my brain was going to explode. The only thing I was mildly connected with in the early going was the opening setting in the Shire which struck me as bearing a curious resemblance to Hobbiton land. By the end of the first movie I had enough context to enjoy the second one, but it was a hard go.

This is very similar to what happens with many of us when we try to study the Bible. We jump in with little or no context and try to figure out how everything fits into the story. More often than not, we feel like we're coming up short, and without all of the special effects scenery we often give up quicker than we do with a movie or a television show.

Hebrews 11 is a quickstart summary, if you will, to at least bring you up to speed on many of the major players in the Bible and it is so much more worthy of your time investment than *The Lord of the Rings* (or good as it is to watch) or perhaps the hard-to-follow mystery television shows that are coming into your mind right about now!

CONSIDER THE WAY YOU THINK
How well do you know the overall story of the Bible?

What kind of success or failure have you had in trying to read the Bible?

How have you gone about reading and/or studying?

Have you ever gotten confused by an epic or involved story anywhere else? (Think *The Lord of the Rings*, *LCST*, etc.) If so, how did you clear things up?

How much affect does context have on understanding a story?

Sweeter than Chocolate!
An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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SEGMENT #2: GET THEM TALKING

[page 3]

Discussion Question:

How well do you know the overall story of the Bible?

Talking through the Story

I've found that most people know both more and less about the Bible than they think! In this segment take your class through the basic story of the Bible. This interactive and collaborative time will pool everyone's knowledge of God's story. You will prompt them and gently correct as needed, but essentially you'll help them piece together the main characters and events of the Bible from the beginning up to the time of Christ. If you have a white board, jot down the main characters and events as you go. This is one of my favorite exercises to do with a group. It gets people talking and tends to give those who need confidence a little boost in that direction. Weave in as much teaching as you are comfortable with, but be aware that if you let the train jump the tracks, this could take a good two hours.

Here are the high points you'll want to make sure they don't miss. Do what you can to draw knowledge out of them!

- God
- Creation
- Adam/Eve
- Cain/Abel
- Seth
- Enoch
- Noah
- Shem, Ham, Japheth
- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Twelve Tribes
- Joseph into Egypt
- Moses out of Egypt
- Exodus

Leader notes

Red Sea
Sinai and the Law
Twelve Spies into the Promised Land
Wilderness
Promised Land
Judges
Kings

United Kingdom
Saul
David
Solomon

Divided Kingdom
Israel Judah

Israel conquered by Assyria – 722 B.C.
Judah taken captive by Babylon; Jerusalem falls – 586 B.C.
Daniel
Return to Jerusalem
400 Silent Years
New Testament

SEGMENT #3: INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS

Observation | Interpretation | Application

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take time to give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as we go, but an overview will put them in context! You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study simply means the Bible is our main source of truth. Before looking for insights from people and commentaries about the Bible, we get into the Word of God itself. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study has three basic components: observation, interpretation, and application.

1 Observation

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover for yourself will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking five W and H questions.

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*Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? Who is the author speaking to?
What subjects and/or events are covered in the chapter? What do you learn about
the people, the events, and the teachings from the text? What instructions are given?
When did or will the events recorded occur?
Where did or will this happen? Where was it said?
Why is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?
How will it happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?*

Careful observation leads to interpretation – discovering what the text means.

One important part of observing is identifying key words. Key words “unlock” meanings of texts. They are vital to understanding texts and often repeated. People are obviously keys in Hebrews 11, but nothing in this chapter stands out in bolder relief than the phrase “by faith.” *Faith* a key word, *by faith* is a key phrase. We’ll look at this more in a little bit as we practice identifying key words.

2 Interpretation

The more you observe, the greater you’ll understand God’s Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we’ll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand of the meaning of God’s message to His original audience. Observation and interpretation lead to application.

Hebrews 11 provides ample cross-references to people whose faith it highlights. While Hebrews 11 summarizes, we’ll dig for story details in the respective cross-references.

3 Application

After we’ve observed a text and discovered its meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although a text of Scripture will have one interpretation – what the author intended to say to his original hearers – there can be numerous applications. The result is a transformed life – the more you and I are in the Word of God, adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!

It is exciting to learn and know about the faith of others. It is transforming to live what we have learned!

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

Classpages

Notes

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

FVI:

Think Civil War!

In the next P77 box, I'm going to explain three dates you need to know in biblical history. Before that though, I want to give you a little more information to help them stick.

In America we associate two directional words very strongly with the Civil War... the North and the South. In the history of Israel, these same directional terms carry tremendous weight.

Although Israel broke apart for different reasons than America did, the short-term result was the same—two separate countries. Unlike Civil War, and Solomon's Israel was a United Kingdom, not unlike the United States prior to the Civil War. After that, they were a Divided Kingdom, the North and the South, again, not unlike the U.S. during the Civil War. The big difference? Although the North and South did fight from time to time in Israel, they coexisted as separate countries and never made up, both eventually being taken captive by foreign nations. More on this later!

Sweeter than Chocolate!
An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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Notes

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

SO WHO WROTE HEBREWS?

Maybe only God knows who wrote Hebrews. But God does know and God sovereignly saw to it that it became a part of the Bible we use today.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Hebrews 11 and **MARK** every occurrence of the word faith. Watch for other repeated words and word groups.

Hebrews 11

- Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- For by it the men of old gained approval.
- By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.
- By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.
- By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.
- And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.
- By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.
- By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.

FVI:

Three Dates You Need to Know

There are three critical dates you need to know as you begin to build your knowledge of biblical history. I won't bat and switch or add more later. We'll review these throughout the course, so you can relax. Next time you see these dates in a sidebar, they will be a little more familiar and by the time we're done, they'll be old friends.

722 BC - Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Don't know much about Assyria? The capital is associated with a famous fish story.

586 BC - Babylon captured Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern Kingdom, and deported its people.

70 AD - This destroyed both the temple and Jerusalem. Hebrews was most likely written prior to this event.

BC and AD

BC = Before Christ. These are not included in these sometimes use BCE (meaning Before the Common Era (i.e. Before Christ)).

AD = Anno Domini Latin for "in the year of our Lord"

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SEGMENT #4: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[pages 6-7]

- General structure
- Authorship and date

Review the basic background information on the Hebrews covered in the student book on page 6. Don't let your students get flustered that we don't know who wrote Hebrews. The God who sovereignly gave His Word sovereignly determined the canonization of the Bible as well.

What genre is the book of Hebrews?

What is a "general epistle"?

Who was Hebrews written to? Explain.

Who are some of the possible authors?

What clues do we have regarding the date of writing?

HEBREWS 11 as a SUMMARY of GOD'S STORY

While there is no way to glean the overall message of the Bible without reading the whole Bible, the book of Hebrews is about as close as it gets. We've already talked about Hebrews 11 as a chapter that gives us a quick overview of the Bible. Beyond this though, the author shows his audience the supremacy of Jesus Christ and how the entire Bible relates to Him. Hebrews 11 traces a great deal of Old Testament history, but the rest of Hebrews shows how the Old Covenant's ritual and worship relate to Jesus.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The epistle (letter) to the Hebrews is included in a section of the New Testament typically referred to as the General Epistles. The General Epistles were not written to specific churches but rather to the Church in the general sense. Although grouped differently by various scholars, they usually include Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude. Based on the content of the letter, Hebrews was probably written to a more specifically Jewish Christian audience, but because no recipient is listed much about Hebrews remains a mystery.

QUESTIONS of AUTHORSHIP and DATE

The real rub with this letter, however, comes not so much in regard to audience as to authorship. Why so? Because when the church fathers decided the canonicity of books that became parts of our Bible, one of the leading criteria was authorship. Hebrews is in the Bible largely because the church fathers thought Paul wrote it. Today, though, the prevailing view is that Paul did not write it. These scholars justify their view from both the style of writing and the fact that the author does not claim to have first-hand revelation. According to Hebrews 2:1-4, the author appears to have heard the message from those who heard it directly from the Lord. Paul always claimed to have first-hand information. Hebrews could be Paul's message without being his direct authorship. Some other names floated about in the discussion are Luke the physician, Apollon, Barnabas, and Priscilla either with or without Aquila. There are tempting reasons to include each of these people in the discussion, but we need to end this with words from third-century theologian Origen: "But as to who actually wrote the Letter, God alone knows."

Mystery also surrounds the date of Hebrews, again because the author gives us no direct information. Indirect information from the book, however, strongly suggests a date prior to 70 AD. This date is critical in biblical history as it marks the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple under Titus (not Paul's Titus!). Because of extensive references to temple worship rituals it is hard to imagine its being written after 70 AD without any mention of the destruction.

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

Class pages

SO WHO WROTE HEBREWS?
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Hebrews 11

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- By *faith* Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through *faith*, though he is dead, he still speaks.
- By *faith* Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death, **AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP**; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.
- And without *faith* it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- By *faith* Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to *faith*.
- By *faith* Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going.
- By *faith* he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.

Notes
 Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

FVI:
 Three Dates You Need to Know
 There are three critical dates you need to know as you begin to build your knowledge of biblical history. I won't list and explain so add more later. We'll review these throughout the course, so you can relax. Next time you see these dates in a chapter they will be a little more familiar and by the time we're done, they'll be old friends.

722 BC - Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Don't know much about Assyria? The capital is associated with a famous folk story.

586 BC - Babylon captured Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern Kingdom, and deported its people.

70 AD - This destroyed both the temple and Jerusalem. Hebrews was most likely written prior to this event.

BC and AD
 BC = Before Christ. Those not so inclined to Jesus sometimes use BCE meaning Before the Common Era (a Roman Christ).

AD = Anno Domini, Latin for "In the year of our Lord"

Sweeter than Chocolate!
 An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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Notes
 Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

OBSERVE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE
READ Hebrews 11:1-7 and **MARK** the name of every person that occurs in the text. Also **MARK** any words that refer to sight or seeing.

CREATION, ABEL, ENOCH, NOAH
Hebrews 11:1-7

- Now *faith* is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
- For by it the men of old gained approval.
- By *faith* we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.
- By *faith* Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through *faith*, though he is dead, he still speaks.
- By *faith* Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death, **AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP**, for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.
- And without *faith* it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- By *faith* Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to *faith*.

DISCUSS with your **GROUP** or **PONDER** on your own . . .
 How does the author of Hebrews define *faith*?

What is the first event referred to in this chapter? How did the things we see come into being? What evidence does he give?

Asking Questions of the Text
 The key to exegesis (that's the fancy word meaning to draw out) is a question-asking tool. The basic investigative questions *What? What? What? Why? Why? and How?* will be your framework. Not every question can be addressed to every verse, and some verses require several variations of the same question. Although we're only focusing on one chapter of Hebrews, realize that we will not exhaust the questions that can be asked. Don't let that stop you from asking other questions and exploring further on your own. We will meet on our next questions to ask and answers to glean from God! Word! And that's good news! There will always be more to discover, apply, and live out!

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 An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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Leader notes

SEGMENT #5: INDUCTIVE STUDY FOCUS: Key Words

[pages 7-10]

I highly recommend you read Hebrews aloud with your class each week. Take turns letting people read as they feel comfortable. If you're nervous about leading, this will also give you a chance to catch your breath and refocus everyone's attention off you and directly on the Word of God. As you read Hebrews 11 the first time, direct them to pages 6-9 in the workbook and encourage them to mark *faith* as it is read in the text. Explain that we can then go back to every occurrence, ask questions, and make a list of everything you learned about *faith* in the chapter.

See what other key words they noticed in the reading and explain that we want to be aware of synonyms (different words with the same or similar meanings), as well as words that come from the same Greek word. As mentioned on page 2, sight words are a grouping of synonyms that run through Hebrews 11 and words translated from the Greek *martyreo* (*gained approval*, etc.) are especially prevalent in the first seven verses of the chapter. Don't press the Greek roots of the words if you have a newer class. The last thing we want to do is blow them out of the water on the first week. With more experienced students, though, encourage them to use their concordances regularly to identify Greek roots and see where and how the words in the text are used in other parts of Hebrews and the New Testament.

SEGMENT #6: CREATION, ABEL, ENOCH, NOAH (verses 1-7)

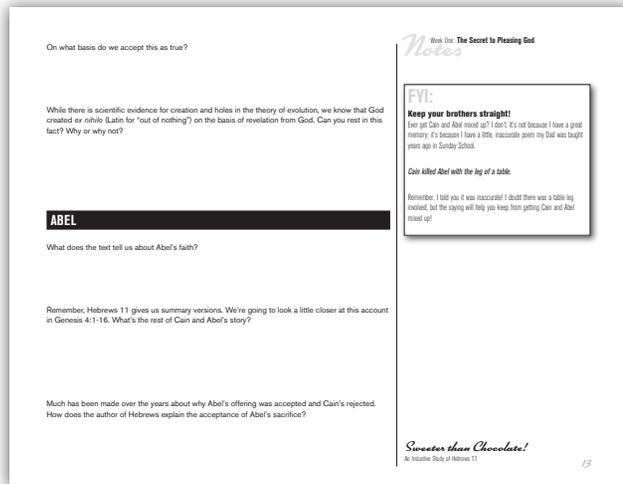
[pages 12-17]

Key Talk Points: Whose approval am I seeking?

How are faith and sight related?

What pleases God?

Context/Comments: As we move through Hebrews 11, encourage your students to think in large time blocks in order to begin ordering the material. Hebrews 11:1-7, for instance, covers the antediluvian period, the time before the flood. Most of the names in this section will be familiar and your class shouldn't have any trouble keeping them clear and in order. Even so, if God is their first marker, creation their second, and Noah their third, they will have the early portion of the Bible framed well from Hebrews 11. Creation calls to mind Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Enoch and Noah as we've seen from our cross-references are both noted as having walked with God (Enoch in Genesis 5 and Noah in Genesis 6). Although we won't discuss it as a key word this week, we see two occurrences of another word group that will be key to the chapter – *dead/death* (Greek *thanatos*).



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Leader notes

Discussion Questions:

How does the author define faith?

CREATION

How far back does he start with his examples?

Does the author try to prove that God created the universe? (No; it's assumed.)

If creation is accepted on the basis of faith (and Hebrews tells us it is), how can we interact with those who believe in evolution? If we can't argue a person to belief, can we enter a productive dialogue?

ABEL

What person does the author talk about first?

What do we learn about Cain and Abel from the Genesis account? Why was Abel's offering accepted?

At this point, you will likely get opinions on why Abel's offering was accepted while Cain's was not. The text of Genesis tells us Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions" while Cain "brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground." Commentators give various explanations for this. Some say Abel brought the best of his flock, "the firstlings," while Cain may have brought only marginal-quality fruit. Others contend based on verses in Leviticus (e.g. Lev. 5:11) that an animal offering was of more value. Still others believe both Cain and Abel knew God demanded animal sacrifices because He provided skins to clothe Adam and Eve after the fall. Bottom line is we don't know for sure. What we do know is this: According to Hebrews 11:4 Abel offered in faith. While you can let your class discuss this briefly, bring them back to the fact that all the text of Hebrews tells us is that Abel offered a superior sacrifice by faith.

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

Class pages

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

Notes

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: Pleasing
If you have some extra time during energy this week, check out the following Greek words related to pleasing, answering / answering: *proskaito* / *proskaito*. The first in each set of words is the verb, the second the noun. Record what you learn below.

How was Abel's sacrifice offered? (This is not a trick question. Go for the obvious answer!)

What tie does the author make between faith and righteousness? Can you think of other places in Scripture where you've seen this connection? If so, record them below.

ENOCH

Okay, I probably shouldn't tip my hand here, but Enoch is one of my favorites in the Bible! So, if you're trying to do this lesson while at all groggy, go get a cup of coffee!

What does Hebrews tell us about Enoch?

Let's take a look. Enoch's story in Genesis 5:18-24 to find out how he pleased God. When you've read the account, record your findings.

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Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

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NOAH

What does Hebrews 11 say about Noah?

If you have time to read the entire account of Noah in Genesis 6 through 10, that's wonderful! If not, read at least Genesis 6:9-22. What did Noah and Enoch have in common?

Was Noah called righteous before building the ark or after and because of building the ark? Cite your reference.

We are inclined to think of Noah's big deal as ark building, and make no mistake, it was a big deal. But the bigger deal that led to the ark opportunity was that Noah, like Enoch, walked with God. God called him to build an ark as a result of faith that he already had. (See Genesis 7:1.)

Take some time to consider how you can more intentionally walk with God moment by moment. Record your thoughts below.

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Leader notes

ENOCH

At what point does Enoch's life change?

Have you seen people more open to the things of God after the birth of a child? How would you know if someone were open to God?

What happens to Enoch as a result of his walking with God?

At this point someone may suggest Enoch will return as one of the prophets in Revelation since he "did not see death" and Hebrews says it's appointed unto every man once to die and then the judgment. While this is not outside the realm of possibility, it is nonetheless beyond the scope of the lesson. Just be aware this curve ball could easily come at you. If you're inclined to do further research, the two prophets come on the scene in Revelation 11.

How do you see people trying to please God? How do YOU try to please God?

According to the text, what pleases God? How does this square with what some Christian subcultures tell us?

NOAH

How did Noah have to trust God? What invisible subject is highlighted? (events as yet unseen)

Week One: The Secret to Pleasing God

Class pages

Digging Deeper

Looking at the sight words

Throughout Hebrews 11, the author uses a variety of sight words. If you have time this week, investigate these words and record your findings below.

How often are words related to sight used in this chapter and where?

According to Hebrews 11, how are faith and sight related?

What's hard to believe because you can't see it?

What actions are hard to take because of limited visibility?

How can this chapter inform your actions?

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Notes

ONE STEP FURTHER:

The No-Guilt Pre-Test

Can you remember back to grade school? The pre-test was always the one you took at the beginning of the week that didn't count. You took the test so you could see your progress. You'd start the week not knowing half the spelling words. But by Friday afternoon, you'd know considerably more. If not all of them. Take a few minutes and list to the best of your ability the major characters from the Bible you learned so far. Consider Hebrews 11 as your cheat sheet. Go!

@ THE END OF THE DAY . . .

Based on what you have learned this week, how are you doing at living a life of faith?

One question we will return to throughout this study is how to walk when we can't see clearly. After all, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Is God calling you to walk when you can't see light all the way down the path? If so can you at least see where the path is lit for your next step? You may not have a clear answer now. If you don't, don't force one, but do keep the question in mind. Tell your witness. It reminds you of it as we continue on!

As you close out your study this week, take some quiet time (30 minutes to an hour) to take a walk with God. When you finish, write down new thoughts God brought to your mind from His Word.

Sweeter than Chocolate!
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Leader notes

How do faith and sight compare? The world says, "Seeing is believing." What does the author of Hebrews say about this? What did you learn about sight and seeing words in the **Digging Deeper** section?

Whom did Abel, Enoch, and Noah gain approval from? Whose approval do you seek? Where do our kids look for it? How can we learn for ourselves and teach others to seek only God's approval?

Additional Teaching:

If you have teaching gifts, you may want to further unpack for your class what *pleasing God* means, what *faith in action* looks like, or another relevant topic from the text.

Live It:

- Consider what it will take for you to seek God's approval and not man's.
- Consider how you will intentionally walk with God this week.
- Consider how much sight God has given us through His Word, and live by faith knowing He is trustworthy.

Summing Up and Looking Ahead

[page 18]

What was the most significant truth you learned this week?

How will your life look different this week if you live in light of it?

Next week: Hebrews 11:8-22

Inductive Focus: Context

Context is the setting in which something dwells. We make sense of words – and many other things – by understanding what is around them. The word *bank*, for instance, has several meanings, but we can't know which is correct until we have context. The bank in "I deposited money in the bank" is very different from the one in "On the way, I got my car stuck in a snow bank." Context helps us understand the meaning of words in sentences, sentences in paragraphs, chapters in books, etc. This week we'll look at how the immediate context of Hebrews 10 and 12 helps frame the content of Hebrews 11. We'll also introduce cross-referencing (which we'll look at more closely next week) to get more context.

Leader notes

Week Two
Our Faithful God Empowers His People

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

How many times have I heard someone say, "If only I lived in Bible times when God spoke through a burning bush, then it would be so much easier to follow"! Hebrews 11 deals head on with the issue of walking forward in faith without being able to physically see. Sure, it's easy to think Noah's call was a slam dunk, but the truth is people of faith have always walked forward seeing the unseen. Bethcha' Abraham would have been thrilled to live by the Book we have today! Instead he walked forward with a promise from a God his fathers hadn't served. So how do we know when it's God who's calling? What does it mean to live as an alien? What makes a promise good and trustworthy? How do we find the strength to obey when God calls us to a hard, long obedience?

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>2 Hour Class</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min. 20 min.	OMIT 10 min.	• Read Hebrews 11 • Review basic concepts • Overview
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Abraham and Sarah: Hebrews 11:8-12
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Seeking a Country: Hebrews 11:13-16
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph: Hebrews 11:17-22
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Context
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Summing Up and Looking Ahead

Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

Class pages

Week Two
Our Faithful God Empowers His People

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful . . ."
—Hebrews 10:23

"By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised."
—Hebrews 11:11

The thought of walking into circumstances and situations we cannot see may stir feelings in our guts that run the gamut from mildly unsettling to absolutely terrifying! However, armed with faith in the promises of a faithful God we can walk not only with confidence but also with His power working through us. Are you tired of shuffling through life wondering what the future holds? As we'll see this week, Abraham didn't know what the future held, but he knew who held it. Here is a guy who by faith went out "not knowing where he was going"! Ever feel like you're not sure where you're going? Take heart! You're in good company.

And while we're talking about company, let me throw out another thought. Because it's so remote, it is easy for us to disengage from biblical history. It is easy to think, "That was then, this is now; that was their story and ours is another one altogether." It's easy to think of the Bible as old news, ancient stories, but in reality it is our family heritage. It is the story of who we are and so much more. While God's revealed truths, facts, and ethics ended with the book of Revelation, redemptive history did not.

The sovereign God who worked by faith in the lives of the men and women of Hebrews 11 is the same God who works in lives today. His people lived by faith then and His people live by faith now. We are part of a grand continuum, we are part of the rest of the story. Our story will never be recorded on the pages of Scripture, but we are nonetheless part of the line of faith and we are called to learn from the examples of those who have gone before. The God who warned Noah and called Abraham is the same God who calls you and me! Based on Hebrews 11, it is far less important to know where you're going than to know Who you're following! Sounds like an adventure to me!

Notes Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Thinking Ahead
What are some important questions to ask regarding the background of the guide to the Hebrews and its context within Scripture? What are good questions to ask along the way? What words should you look at more closely? Obviously, you'll find lots of questions throughout the work book, but instead of just answering them start intentionally thinking for yourself. Always be thinking ahead. Anticipate questions, think about other relevant verses, consider other places in Scripture that might shed light on the passage in front of you. Always be thinking about where you would dig if all you had in front of you was the Bible. As you jot down questions, also be thinking about where you can find the answers.

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An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

Leader notes

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

[pages 19-22]

Read Hebrews 11

Review Basic Concepts

Although review is sometimes bothersome, a little bit each week will cement the basics and give your class the framework for a lifetime of study. Although we will focus on specific inductive tools each week, keeping the basic components of OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, and APPLICATION in front of your class every week will equip them for a lifetime of handling God's Word. And always, always remind them that the goal is transformation! We don't learn for the sake of learning; we learn because God uses His Word to conform us more and more into the image of His Son. Familiarity with the basics will give your students confidence as they work through their homework and begin applying and living the texts.

If your class is working on the Greek alphabet you may want to work through your letters during this time as well, adding each week's letters during your review time.

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is Observation and why is it important? What question does this answer?

How is Interpretation different from Observation?

What do we need for proper Application?

Leader notes

Application needs to be grounded in what God intended to say. Moving from what the text means to how we apply it is always a jump of sorts.

Be aware of two distinct problems:

1. Some people do not want to apply. They bristle at application as if it all were opinion.
2. Others relativize texts: "What this means *to me* . . ." as if their opinion of a text (as opposed to God's) was authoritative.

It is important for you to continually guide your class toward application that comes from the text. When discussions veer toward speculations or discussions that do not produce life-changes, redirect them toward what *is* applicable from the text. We know Cain and Abel sacrificed according to the values that were in their hearts. Abel's superior ("better") sacrifice reflected the higher value he attached to God – we jump toward application from here.

For those who gravitate toward opinion-based comments and ungrounded applications, gently direct them with questions like, "Where do you see that in the text?" Continually point them toward the text and then toward appropriate application. It may take some repetitions, but they will learn.

What genre is the book of Hebrews?

What is a "general epistle"?

Who was Hebrews written to? Explain.

Who are some of the possible authors?

What clues do we have regarding the date of writing?

Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

Class pages

Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

Notes

FVI:

Three Dates You Need to Know

1581 you will be reviewing these dates. You'll have them down cold by the end of this study.

722 BC - Israel the Northern Kingdom, is conquered by Assyria. The famous capital of Assyria? Nineveh!

586 BC - Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, falls to Babylon under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

70 AD - The destroy the temple and city of Jerusalem. Hebrews was most likely written prior to this event.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Hebrews 11:8-22 and **MARK** every occurrence of promise. Continue to **MARK** references to people and sight words.

ABRAHAM through JOSEPH

Hebrews 11:8-22

- 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going
- 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;
- 10 For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
- 11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.
- 12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.
- 13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.
- 14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.
- 15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.
- 16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he has prepared a city for them.
- 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;
- 18 It was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."
- 19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

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- 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.
- 21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.
- 22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

What are your initial observations on the text?

What questions surface in your mind?

What words or phrases would you focus on for further study?

Who are the main characters in this section of text and what did they do by faith?

FVI:

Reading and Studying Tip: Begin with Prayer

You've probably heard it before but it is a phrase that bears repeating. Whenever you come to God's Book to study read or to study that you ask His Spirit to be your Guide. The Bible is not an ordinary book. As Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword; and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

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Leader notes

Give me the highlights of the major characters of Hebrews 11 in under two minutes!

What is your biggest application so far?

Hebrews 11:8-22 Overview:

Having left the antediluvian (pre-flood) period of verses 1-7, we now meet the patriarchs, most notably Abraham, in verses 8-22. The key word running through this section is *promise*. A promise is only as good as the one who makes it (see Hebrews 6) and here the One who stands behind the promises is God. In this section, also watch the *foreigner/stranger/different country* words. People of faith seek things unseen to the physical eye. Sometimes they are unseen because they are yet to come, sometimes because they are of a spiritual nature, other times both.

Discussion Questions:

What biblical time frame does the author cover in Hebrews 11:8-22? Who are the main characters?

What key words did you pick out in this section? How often are they repeated?

What truths did you learn from studying them further or simply from reading the context of Hebrews 11? Are you able to understand the section without them?

Notes
 Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE
READ Hebrews 11:8-12 and **MARK** all references to land and dwelling as a foreigner or alien.

ABRAHAM and SARAH
Hebrews 11:8-12

- By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing where he was going.
- By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;
- for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
- By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.
- Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .
 Let's take a few minutes to look at Genesis 12:1-9. What did God call Abram to do? How old was he at the time?

We have a lot of references to promise in Hebrews 11. What promises do we see God making in Genesis 12:1-9?

FVI:
Do I have to mark the text?
 Of course not! Marking is simply a tool to help you make important words on the page stick out. Do you have to mark 'No. Once it's high' too. If the thought of marking the text makes you break out in hives, don't do it. But if you can keep an open mind, give it a try! Before you know it you'll probably like the colored pencil!

FVI:
Abram and Abraham
 If you're new to Bible study, you may be wondering if there's a typo in the first question on this page. After all, weren't we just talking about Abraham and now out of the blue the name Abram appears. Abraham's name changed all six times. Along the way, however, God changed it to Abraham. God does not like him to stay in the Bible. Says becoming Sarah and Jacob being renamed Israel are just a couple of other examples.

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Notes
 Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

ONE STEP FURTHER:
More on Marking
 As you mark the text, it is helpful to group similar words or types of words. I marked all plural/word in Hebrews 11 with a light blue pencil and distinguished different Greek words with other marks. If this makes your head spin, just ignore it and move on. For those interested, here's what I did:

Abrah, sarahim - blue highlight with double line outline
 tent; - blue highlight with blue underline
 pharis, elabos, elabosiora (all others) - simple blue highlight

This helps me see the extensive use of sight words while distinguishing the various Greek texts.

What does Abraham living as an alien mean? How is this similar to the way Christ's followers are to live?

Where else in the Bible does this concept show up?

How willing would you be to go out, not knowing where you were going?

Have you ever followed God going out, not knowing where you were going? How did it "go"?

Is God calling you to step out by faith to a place that you don't know? If so, how are you responding to Him?

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Leader notes

SEGMENT #2: Abraham and Sarah (verses 8-12)

[pages 23-25]

Key Talk Point: What does "living as an alien" mean?
 How do I respond when God calls me to the unknown?

Context/Comments: Abraham and his kin clearly lived lives of aliens (strangers) in a foreign land but alien life was not limited to them. As Christians, we also are aliens. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:11, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." Jesus speaks a similar message in John 17 (particularly verses 14-26) and John does in 1 John 2:15-17. We are not to love the world (i.e. the *kosmos*, the world system). Rather, Jesus prays that we will be sanctified in truth, His word.

I often have students who say, "I wish God would just speak clearly to me like He did in the Old Testament." "Clear" is a relative term. Abraham was told to go out, but not (immediately) told where he was going. Similarly we know God moves us, but we hesitate when we can't see far enough down the road to suit our tastes. Help your class continue to watch the sight words in this section and consider how faith and sight are related.

Discussion Questions:

What highlights of Abraham's story are recorded in Hebrews 11:8-12?

How did living as an alien impact his life? What assurance did he have? (For those who just want an e-mail from God, remind them that Abraham was called by a God his fathers had not served – he had a promise, but leaving still took faith!)

Are we told specifically to live as aliens? If so, where?

What gives us the ability to live victoriously in this world? (If students haven't read John 17 and 1 John 2:15-17, direct them to these passages.)

Leader notes

What keeps us from stepping out in faith when we don't have a full vision of the future? (This question may generate better discussion when you briefly break up larger classes into smaller groups.)

How can we better obey?

Additional Teaching:

If you have a teaching gift, you may want to flesh out further what stepping out in faith is biblically. We often have an "I will, if You . . ." attitude toward God when it comes to stepping out in faith, but isn't it better to reflect the attitude of Daniel's buddies when they were confronted with being thrown into a furnace for their faith? Their faith shines in Daniel 3:17-18: ". . . our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But *even if He does not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

Live It:

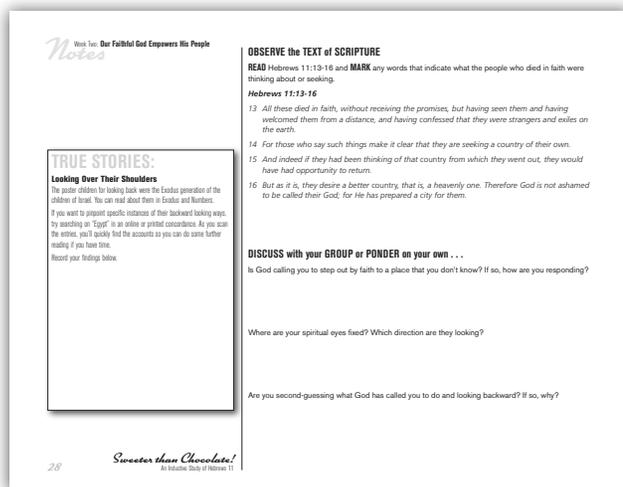
- Learn more about God so that you can better trust His promises.
- Rest into the future knowing that our sovereign God is good.
- Take care with your own promises. Let your *yes* be *yes* and your *no* be *no*.

SEGMENT #3: Seeking a Country (verses 13-16)

Key Talk Points: Waiting on God's promises.

Combating the call of the past.

Context/Comments: Verses 13-16 briefly break the "by faith" pattern as the author makes a summary comment that begins, "All these died in faith . . ." Does "all these" refer to every one mentioned thus far in Hebrews 11 or just the patriarchs (beginning with Abraham)? Because the immediate context of verses 13-16 (remind



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Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

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Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

What thoughts do you consistently entertain? Are you viewing life through the windshield or in the rearview mirror?

When we find ourselves "stuck" in life, sometimes a habit of looking back longingly is the problem. We see this in the Exodus generation. God was taking them to the promised land, but they resisted on grumbling and fixing their minds on foods they had in Egypt. Other times when we feel stuck, when we think we are "not receiving the promises," the problem's not the direction but rather our immobility. In these cases we can end up trying to make the promises happen (see True Stories: The Hager Incident sidebar on page 26) instead of expectantly waiting for an all-powerful and sovereign God to act. Consider this question: Have you ever been confused like Abraham and Sarah waiting for God to act? Did you push when you should have waited? What kind of results did you experience?

Key People	Key Events
Abel	Creation
Enoch	
Noah	Flood
Abraham & Sarah	
Joseph (12 Tribes)	
Joseph	Egypt

While Sarah especially did some pushing, the author of Hebrews commends her and others for looking in the right direction. They did not look back. Where had God brought them from? Where has God brought you from?

Do you ever look back to your old ways? If so, how does it affect your walk with God?

Sweeter than Chocolate!
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Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

What does the text specifically tell us they would have had if they were thinking about the country they went out from? What can we learn from this for our lives?

FVI:
Wise Words
"What might have been doesn't exist. Don't even go there."
- Jay Shinn

Has a backward-looking "What if?" become a long-term frustrating resident in your soul, diminishing if not paralyzing hope? If so, how can you exit it? What can you do? Who can you turn to?

OBSERVE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE
READ Hebrews 11:17-22 and **MARK** every person the author mentions.

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB, JOSEPH
Hebrews 11:17-22

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son.

18 It was he to whom it was said, "BY ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."

19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

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them the context is the study tool we're focusing on this week!) makes specific references to "the promises" and their consequential acceptance of their alien status, they are probably foremost in the writer's mind at this point. That said, however, in the grand scheme, all who followed God and gained approval prior to the cross died in faith in the promise of a coming atonement, while we live in the light of Christ's already accomplished work. Again, the text of this section is packed with visual words that paint pictures of their allegiance (*seen, make it clear, seeking, desire*). Take note specifically of the verb *mnemoneuo* (*to remember*) that shows up as *thinking* in verse 15 and *made mention* in verse 22. If the patriarchs had been remembering – dwelling mentally in the past – they would have had opportunity (*kairos: specific period, season*) to return. But they did not. Joseph, as we'll see in the next section, in a sense "remembers" (again *mnemoneuo*) and tells the people to bring his bones when they leave Egypt.

Discussion Questions:

How did the vision of the patriarchs, the direction of their spiritual eyes, affect both their individual and national outcomes?

Are you a Windshield or a Rearview Mirror? (I'd ask people if they consider themselves as Windshields or Rearview Mirrors. Help them remember that if they stare into the rearview mirror when driving forward, they will have bad results! Good drivers merely glance into rearview mirrors for additional information. If you have some Rearview Mirrors in your class, discuss how they can become Windshields! Seriously, what happens when you prolong looking out the wrong window of a car? Worst case you crash; best case you end up sick to your stomach! Remember, humor can ease people into truth.)

What could have pulled Abraham, Sarah, and the patriarchs off course?

What threatens to pull you off course? How can you most effectively stay the course?

Leader notes

Illustration: When you know people are trustworthy you can rest in their promises. Only God is ultimately trustworthy and although no person is ever totally trustworthy, I have about as close to a rock-solid promise keeper in life as you can get – my Mom. Except in the case of nuclear disaster, I can pretty much bank on the fact that if she says she's going to do something, she'll do it. I can tell story after story about how she persevered to come up with the Game Boy or the Wii for the kids at Christmas against all odds. If she says she going to be somewhere, she is. If she says she's going to do something, she does. She just flat out comes through. A lot of people have not experienced anything remotely like this in a person and so they find it harder to believe in an invisible God who makes promises. I can rest in my Mom's promises because I have seen her come through time after time after time over my lifetime. We see the same in God through the pages of His Book and in the course of our lives, but sometimes we forget. Recalling the trustworthiness of The Promise Maker gives us the ability to rest in His promises.

Live It:

- When faced with a waiting situation, focus on God's trustworthy character revealed in the Word and previously in your life.
- Resolve to use your windshield and rearview mirrors correctly!

OPTIONAL BREAK

Notes Week Two: **Our Faithful God Empowers His People**

What does the text specifically tell us they would have had if they were thinking about the country they went out from? What can we learn from this for our lives?

FVI:
Wise Words
 "What might have been doesn't exist. Don't even go there."
 — Jan Shouse

Has a backward-looking "What if?" become a long-term frustrating resident in your soul, diminishing if not paralyzing hope? If so, how can you exit it? What can you do? Who can you turn to?

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 18 It was he to whom it was said, "MY ISAAC; YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."
 19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.
 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.
 21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.
 22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

FVI:
Can God be trusted?
 Abraham wrestled with the same question that we face every day: Can God be trusted? We may not like to see it about this blindly, but when faces paralysis or we're responding to circumstances like practical matters.
 Can God be trusted? The answer from God's Word is a resounding "YES!"

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Notes Week Two: **Our Faithful God Empowers His People**

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .
 Who are we told about in this section? Record their names below and how they are related if you know. If you don't, no worries, you will soon!

If the sacrifice of Isaac isn't one of the most disturbing stories ever on a surface read, I don't know what is! For little kids raised with bedtime stories from the Bible, well, let's just say this isn't the most sleep-inducing tale of the bunch. Now that you've already seen the Hebrews commentary on the account, take some time to read the primary source material from Genesis 22. How does the Hebrews passage help to explain the Genesis account?

FVI:
Do you have an Isaac to sacrifice?
 A couple of weeks ago my husband and I participated in leadership training at our local church. We joined three other couples in a 40-week intensive process designed to help each of us clarify and live out God's call on our lives. While I learned much in the journey, the most important truth God stamped on my heart was that His call on my life needed to take other priorities over any positions I held at church or in ministry. This was not exactly new information to me, but I learned to apply it in a more practical way.
 I found myself leaning to put good things down—mistakes I had—as I trusted God to take the fully whatever He chose. Was it a fair process? No way. Did I have doubts as I started putting things down and saying "No" to good causes? Yes. Was it worth it to trust wholeheartedly on God's call? Absolutely!

Most of us either have or have had an Isaac, something so precious that the thought of sacrificing it, giving it up, losing it, is unbearable. What does God need to do to release your Isaac to Himself?

Do you believe God can be trusted with your Isaac? Knowing His character, will you choose to trust Him? Describe how you feel about this—why it's so hard, etc.

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 An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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Leader notes

SEGMENT #4: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (verses 17-22)

[pages 30-34]

Key Talk Points: The challenge of difficult obedience.

The importance of knowing God's character.

The importance of knowing the full counsel of God's Word – the whole Book!

Context/Comments: While we will talk more fully about cross-referencing next week, the account of the sacrifice of Isaac is a perfect place to introduce the tool. In this section of Hebrews, the author gives us a more palatable (at least in my opinion!) reason for Abraham's ability to sacrifice Isaac. Just from reading the Genesis account, we can speculate as to his thinking and faith (see **Digging Deeper** sidebar), but Hebrews spells it out: "[Abraham] considered that God is able to raise people *even* from the dead." Again, watch the forward thinking in each of the patriarchs: Isaac blesses Jacob and Esau "regarding things to come." Jacob blesses the sons of Joseph. Joseph gives orders concerning the day when Israel leaves Egypt in a great exodus.

Discussion Questions:

What difficult obedience did God call Abraham to?

Read Hebrews 6:11-19 and consider how we can be imitators of Abraham.

How is hope described in Hebrews 6:19? How can that truth change your thinking and behavior day to day?

Notes

What You: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

Digging Deeper . . .

What did Abraham know and when did he know it?

If you feel like digging this week, spend some time in the following texts that show the progressive revelation of God's promise to Abraham. The promise never changes, but along the way it becomes more and more specific. For each reference, note what is told about the promise, how old Abraham is at the time (if mentioned), and any other pertinent information.

Genesis 12:1

Genesis 13:14

Genesis 15:4

Genesis 17:16

How does the revelation of the promise become more specific over time?

Who is born in the interim?

Do you see how very specific the promise became over the years? By the time Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac, he had a minimum history with God of 35 years, probably more. He also knew that God would fulfill His promise through His very son. If God doesn't come through on this, Abraham will be sitting on a house of cards about to crumble. Of course at this point we know he built on the solid rock!

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What You: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

WHERE WE ARE . . .

Here is a simple recap to help get you up to speed on the story of redemption and fill in some of the gaps where Hebrews 11 hasn't connected the dots.

In the beginning, God **creates** Adam as the first man created. Eve the first woman. God creates them without sin but they are quickly deceived in the Garden of Eden by the serpent (later identified as Satan). Eve actually eats the forbidden fruit (from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) first and gives it to her husband Adam. Through this act of sin, death enters the world. Adam and Eve are banished from the beautiful garden, so they cannot eat of the tree of life which would cause them to live forever.

Although man rebels against God, God immediately predicts the coming of a Savior who will crush the head of the serpent (Messiahic Covenant). This prophecy is later fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. However, in the meantime, sin has entered into the world and death through sin.

Adam and Eve have many children, the first two, Cain and **Abel**. Cain, resentful that God had accepted Abel's sacrifice and not his own, kills Abel, and sin really starts rolling. Things continue to go downhill until God has simply had enough.

Saying that He regrets having made man, God calls **Noah** to build an ark so that he can save himself and his family from the coming destruction of the world by a **flood**. Noah obeys and God saves him, his wife, his three sons and their wives. After the flood, God puts a rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with all living creatures that He will never again destroy the entire earth with a flood.

Noah's sons, Japheth, Shem, and Ham become the fathers of all the nations. Over time, the population of the world increases, and the people again begin to go off course when in their pride they determine to build a tower that will reach to heaven. In the midst of the construction, God frustrates their plans by confusing their languages.

The next major player on the scene is **Abraham**, originally known as Abram, Abram and his wife Sarah (whose name is later changed to **Sarah**) live in the land of Ur. God calls Abram to leave his land to go to a land that God will show him. Abram trusts God and goes, taking with him his wife and household. Although God changes his name to Abraham and promises to make him a great nation, Abraham finds himself really *oid* with no children.

Taking matters into her own hands, Sarah decides to play God. She gives her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham so that the promise might be fulfilled through her seed on behalf of Sarah. Not a good idea. Hagar bears Abraham a son named Ishmael and Sarah is steamed.

Eventually, God does bless Sarah with a son in her old age. His name is **Isaac**, and it is through him that God chooses to fulfill His promise to Abraham. Like his father before him, Isaac finds himself in possession of a promise to be a great nation but without a child for quite some time. Isaac, though, prays for his wife Rebekah, and God causes her to conceive twins, Esau and **Jacob**.

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Illustration: There are two truths that I cling to when life is unstable: God is sovereign and God is good. If God is sovereign but bad, we have a problem. That means He is in control and has wicked purposes. If He is good but not sovereign I believe we have a bigger problem: He wants good and just outcomes but is powerless to make them happen. But because God is both sovereign and good, we can rest in the fact that He not only has His good purposes; He also has the power to pull them off – every time! When writing *Sweeter than Chocolate! Psalm 119* I ran across a verse that God has cemented in my heart that testifies to this truth in a succinct way: God is good and does good! (Psalm 119:68).

Live It:

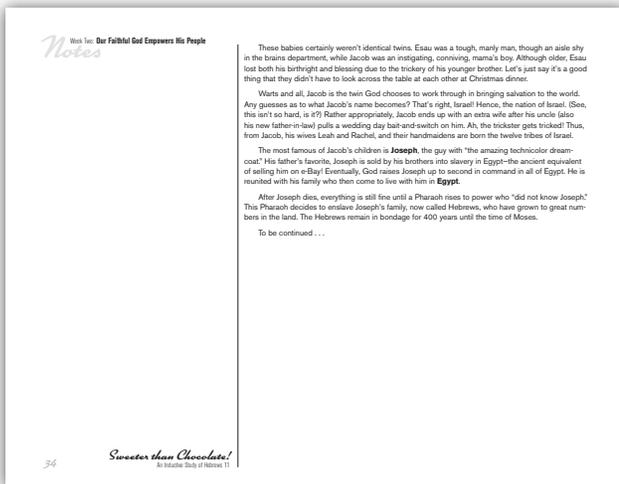
- Resolve to trust God when obedience is difficult.
- Continue to pursue a more full knowledge of God through His Word.

SEGMENT #5: Inductive Focus: Context

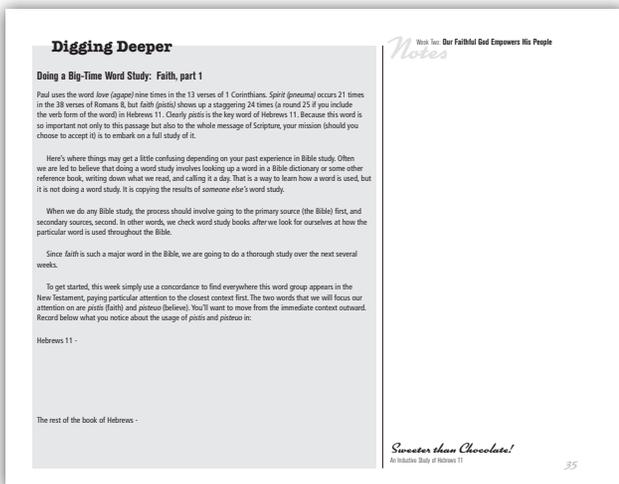
Depending on your available time and general familiarity with the epistle to the Hebrews, you can extend your discussion of context to the whole of the book of Hebrews or limit it to the verses immediately preceding and following Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11 is often pulled out as a stand-alone chapter, but no chapter in the Bible truly stands alone. All are intricately woven together and interrelated. In order to help your class see this, direct them to Hebrews 10:35-39 and Hebrews 12:1-3.

HEBREWS 10:35-39 – Interestingly, this section begins with the transition word “Therefore” that asks us to look back into the text. The standard question we should always ask when we see “therefore” is this: What is the “therefore” there for? Corny, yes, but also memorable and effective. The point of these verses is that followers of Jesus need endurance. We see several words in this section that show up throughout Hebrews 11 and into Hebrews 12. Of particular interest is the *endure/endurance (hupomone)* pair that frames Hebrews 11. While the word *hupomone* does not appear in Hebrews 11, all of the witnesses in the chapter, each hero of faith, is an example of endurance. Jesus, as we see in Hebrews 12, is the supreme example. Also draw your students' attention to the introduction of *promise* in 10:36 and *pleasure* in 10:38, both concepts the author addresses in Hebrews 11. The witnesses of Hebrews 11 endure, do not shrink back, and please God.



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HEBREWS 12:1-3 – In Hebrews 12 we find another “Therefore” that calls us to live like the men and women of Hebrews 11. Help your class pick out the key words (*endurance/endured, witnesses, and faith*) that tie this section contextually with Hebrews 10:35–11:40. In the big picture we see the need for endurance at the end of Hebrews 10, the examples of endurance throughout Hebrews 11, and the call to endurance at the beginning of Hebrews 12.

Context in this case has a huge impact on application. The people of Hebrews 11 are not just heroes; they are God’s living illustrations of how we should live.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS – One of the major themes of the letter as a whole is that endurance in the faith is evidence of salvation. The Hebrew Christians found themselves in an atmosphere of persecution and the author exhorts them to imitate those who endured in faith in the past.

Discussion Questions:

Read Hebrews 10:35-39 aloud. What key words/content in this text tie it with Hebrews 11? Explain.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What key words/content tie this back in with Hebrews 11? Why is the “therefore” significant?

What key words/concepts do you see tying the entire section of Hebrews 10:35 through Hebrews 12:3 together?

Week Two: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

Class pages

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Work You: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

FVI:
Who wrote what to whom?
 Major authors in the New Testament include ...

Luke: Gospel of Luke
 Acts

Paul: Romans
 1 and 2 Corinthians
 Galatians
 Ephesians
 Philippians
 Colossians
 1 and 2 Thessalonians
 1 and 2 Timothy
 Titus
 Philemon

John: Gospel of John
 1, 2 and 3 John
 Revelation

In Luke and Acts -

In Paul's epistles -

In John's writings -

Elsewhere in the New Testament -

Summarize what you learned this week from surveying the New Testament usage of *πίστις* and *πίστεως*.

From what you have studied so far, how do these words compare to the English words *faith* and *believe*?

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 An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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@ THE END OF THE DAY . . .

Spend some time quietly reflecting on where your mind typically dwells. Are you looking forward or backward? Does the direction you are looking indicate anything about your walk of faith? Explain.

What is your biggest backward-looking temptation? Is it a temptation to return to a former life you lived? Is it false guilt over forgiven sin? How can you combat these in your battle to look forward and fix your eyes on Jesus?

Notes

Work You: Our Faithful God Empowers His People

ONE STEP FURTHER:
Practice the Timeline . . .
 If you have a couple of minutes, make a quick list of everyone in the story of redemption you can remember without bringing in a magazine.

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 An Inductive Study of Hebrews 11

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Leader notes

How does the call to endure tie in with the greater message of Hebrews and the New Testament as a whole?

Live It:

- Handle the text of Scripture carefully, paying attention to the immediate and greater contexts.

SEGMENT #6: Summing Up and Looking Ahead

[pages 37-38]

Discussion Questions:

What is your key take-away point from this week?

How will you live it out?

Next week:

Hebrews 11:23-29

Week Three: **Are You Living a Bold and Fearless Life?**
Class pages

Inductive Focus: Cross-Referencing

Cross-referencing is reading what the Bible says about similar topics in different locations. There was a day when finding cross-references in the Scriptures depended on your flat-out knowing the Book backward and forward or your relying on someone else. Over the years, scholars have written books full of cross-references, others have compiled concordances, and slowly but surely we have had more and more tools to take on the once cumbersome task of cross-referencing.

Cross-referencing is part of understanding the larger context of Scripture.

Often we still rely on other people to tell us where to look for cross-references. This is okay if we have reliable people telling us where to dig, but it still keeps us dependent on others to, well, cut the steak for us.

We'll look at more of the specifics in the lesson plan!

Leader notes

Week Three
Are You Living a Bold and Fearless Life?

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

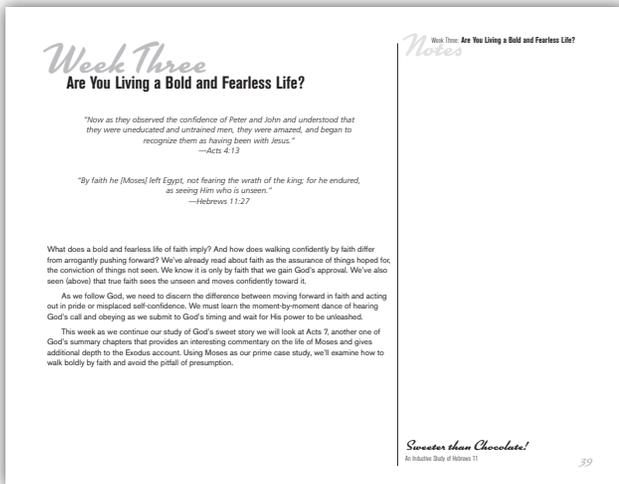
How do we live bold lives today? How can we overcome fear and live as God intends? How does walking by faith differ from arrogantly pushing forward? Moses covered a lot of ground in his 120 years on earth and his life is a prime example of walking in faith after running in fear. This week we'll focus in on the inductive skill of cross-referencing as we look at Moses in Hebrews, Exodus, Acts, and Numbers!

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>2 Hour Class</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min. 5 min.	OMIT 10 min.	• Hebrews 11 • Review
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Cross-Referencing
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Moses: Hebrews 11:23-29
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	30 min.	10 min.	Moses: Acts 7; Exodus 2:11-15
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Moses: Numbers 20:8-12
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Summing Up and Looking Ahead

Week Three: Are You Living a Bold and Fearless Life?

Class pages



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Leader notes

START HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Read Hebrews 11

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

How do the components function together?

What risks do we run if we don't correctly observe the text? (misinterpretation; misapplication)

What risk do we run if we don't apply? (judgment)

SEGMENT #2: Inductive Focus on Cross-Referencing

In this week's lesson students will jump into the waters of cross-referencing and even more so in upcoming weeks. While this study (and most other studies) do much of the cross-referencing for students, it is imperative to equip your class to find cross-references on their own.

Before we jump into the *how* of cross-referencing, we need to talk about the *why*. Two basic assumptions underlie the reason we pay such close attention to cross-referencing Scripture. First is the belief that the entire Bible is true. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The related presupposition is that because the whole Bible is true, then Scripture can and will interpret Scripture. We don't need to go to external sources, although they can be helpful at times. The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself.

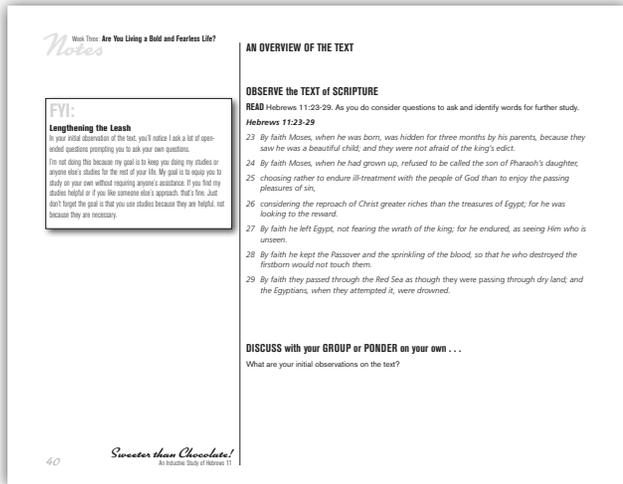
So how do we go about cross-referencing? Just as you can take more than one route between cities, there are different ways to go about cross-referencing. I'm going to describe three basic ones that I use and compare them to travel so hopefully you'll get a better feel for the differences between them.

Get them from someone else. Most Bible studies and many study Bibles give you cross-references. This is like letting someone give you a car ride. You trust that the driver will take you to the right place. If you have a sense of where you're going, you can usually sniff out a mistake, but you are largely at the mercy of whoever has the information, just as the passenger is at the mercy of whoever has the keys. Is this a bad thing? No. It is one way we learn.

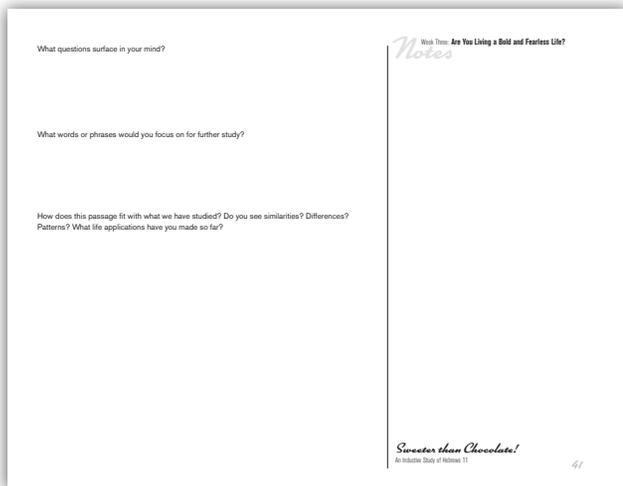
The better the source, the better off you'll be. Also, the more you do this, the more familiar you will become with the biblical material and the better able you will be to handle the text yourself as time goes on. It's easy to get stuck here, though, so be careful that you don't find yourself forever needing someone else to tell you where to look. The risk here, obviously, is another driver taking you way off course. So if you're taking a ride, choose your driver carefully.

Use books/technology. While I welcome cross-referencing help from teachers and commentators, I often use concordance searches with Logos Bible Software to help me locate references in Scripture. Searching the name "Moses" in a concordance will bring you to every mention of Moses in the Word of God. I compare this to driving in a new town with a GPS. You get exactly where you're going, but you're not always positive of your surroundings. When you cross-reference like this, it is very important to pay attention to your context, the textual surroundings, so that you handle the text appropriately.

There are several online concordances you can use for free on web sites such as www.blueletterbible.org, www.studylight.com, www.crosswalk.com. While technology is pretty reliable for returning accurate results, you still need to stay awake because programs are programmed by fallible human beings. Ever try to get to a Dairy Queen with your GPS and end up in the middle of a field? The same thing happens from time to time with electronic concordances. Enough said?



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Leader notes

Reading with synthesis in mind. The final way I find cross-references is by reading the Bible with the big picture in mind. Obviously this doesn't happen over night. Over time, however, as you start understanding how God's story of redemption fits together, you begin to become aware of places where one author of Scripture quotes or alludes to another and you begin to pick up on common themes in the text. This is when the fun really starts!!

Again, it takes some time, but reading with the big picture in mind is the most hands-on approach to cross-referencing you'll find. It is like strapping on a backpack and walking to your destination with only a compass in hand. Hard work? Yes, but satisfaction when you arrive like you can't imagine and the confidence that comes with discovering truth for yourself!

SEGMENT #3: Moses: Hebrews 11:23-29

[pages 40-41]

Key Talk Points: Fearlessness of Moses and his parents.

Watching the verbs in the life of Moses.

Hard choices with long-term ramifications.

Context/Comments: The workbook questions in this section are very general as students will be looking at several accounts of Moses for comparison. As you discuss their observations, help them focus on the action sequence in this section which paints a picture of Moses' choices and consequent actions after he grew up (refused, chose, considered, left, endured, kept). Also note that while Moses is clearly the main character, this section begins with two people unnamed in this text: his parents. Their faith shows in their fearless protection of their son. Later we're told that Moses, also, did not fear the wrath of the king. The text of Exodus indicates Moses was justifiably afraid when he left for Midian after murdering an Egyptian. Accordingly, I believe the reference to his fearless behavior applies to Moses tangling with the Pharaoh and eventually leaving Egypt under the power of God.

Leader notes

Discussion Questions:

What characteristic does the author attribute to both Moses and his parents? (fearlessness)

How does it play out in each of their situations?

What actions does Moses take according to Hebrews 11:23-29? (Watch the verbs!) What are his motives?

What happened?

Have you ever had to choose between “the passing pleasures of sin” and “ill-treatment with the people of God”? How does this show itself in our culture and other cultures in the world today?

Live It:

- Think about what dominates your life and make changes if needed. Do you fear God or man? Do you fold or endure?
- Consider circumstances you can imitate the fearlessness of Moses and his parents in.

OPTIONAL BREAK

Week Three: Are You Living a Bold and Fearless Life?

Class pages

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Week Three: Are You Living a Bold and Fearless Life?

The CONTEXT of ACTS 7
 Acts 7—another of the fabulous summary chapters of the Bible—contains a speech given by Stephen, the first Christian martyr, just prior to his death. Acts was written by Luke the physician who also authored the Gospel account bearing his name. Some also point to Luke as a possible author of the book of Hebrews but we need to remember that God's Word doesn't name the author, as it does for other books.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE
READ Acts 7:1-53. As you read, **MARK** the people who are mentioned and make note of anything new you learn about the Old Testament story line.

Acts 7

- 1 The high priest said, "Are these things so?"
- 2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.
- 3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'
- 4 "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.
- 5 "But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM.
- 6 "But God spoke to this effect: that his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.
- 7 "AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I MYSELF WILL JUDGE," said God, "AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE."
- 8 "And He gave him the covenant of circumcision, and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.
- 9 "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household.

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Week Three: Are You Living a Bold and Fearless Life?

What questions surface in your mind?

What words or phrases would you focus on for further study?

Who did Stephen speak about in his sermon?

Did you learn any details about these people that weren't included in Hebrews 11?

Re-read versus 52. What do the prophets of Acts 7:52 have in common with the people referred to in Hebrews 11:37-38?

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SEGMENT #4: Acts 7 and Exodus 2:11-15

[pages 42-52]

- Key Talk Points:** The importance of cross-referencing.
 Decisions and consequences.
 Sovereignty and the redemptive acts of God.

Context/Comments: As we look at the cross-references on Moses, reinforce your students with the need to see the whole story and use Scripture to interpret Scripture. The Acts account, delivered by Stephen in front of the high priest just before the Jews stoned him breaks down Moses' life: 40 years living as a prince of Egypt, 40 years shepherding animals in Midian, and 40 years shepherding people in the wilderness (cf. Deuteronomy 34:7). We also learn from Acts that Moses was "a man of power in words and deeds" which calls into question his self-assessment as "slow of speech." Acts also shows that 40ish Moses thought he could deliver his people (Acts 7:25), although the people did not see it. While the text of Hebrews adequately teaches something about Moses, the cross-references make the picture much more robust.

Discussion Questions:

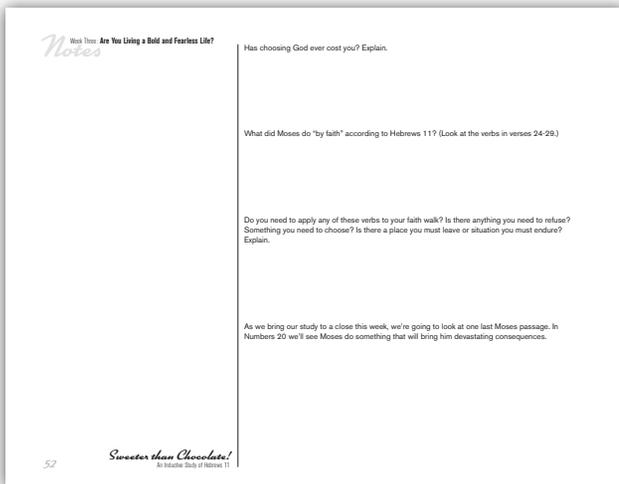
What specifics did you learn about Moses from Acts that weren't in the Hebrews account? (educated in all the learning of the Egyptians; man of power in words and deeds; approaching 40 when he goes to visit his kin; 40 years in Midian; 40 years in wilderness with Israel.)

Considering all of your sources, what people did God use to keep Moses alive through his birth and childhood?

Have you ever reaped bad consequences for a bad decision that you fear will leave you unusable by God?

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What lesson can you draw from this text for yourself and others in situations that seem hopeless?

Live It:

- What hard decisions face you this week? How will the big picture affect your choice?
- Is a "past" keeping you from being all God has called you to be? Are you ready to give it to Him to redeem?

SEGMENT #5: Numbers 20:8-12

[pages 53-56]

Key Talk Points: The weight of leadership.
Honoring the holiness of God.
The importance of finishing well.

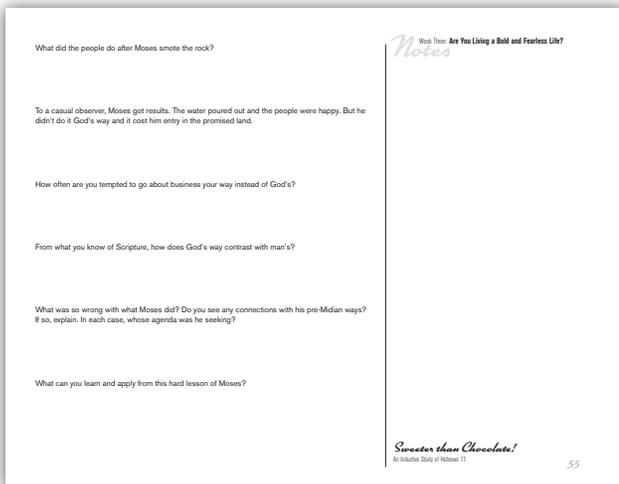
Context/Comments: While Moses more often humbly obeys, Numbers 20 shows us how quickly sin can strike. Commanded to do three things, Moses does two. 1. Take the rod – done; 2. Assemble the congregation – done; 3. Speak to the rock – not done. Not only did Moses yell at the people instead of speaking to the rock, he also lifted his hand and struck the rock twice. The miracle still happened – God provided water for His people. But Moses crossed a line.

What was the sin? The text says Moses and Aaron will not enter the land, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel." Tough? Yes, but consider the words just a few chapters earlier in Numbers 15:30, "But the person who does anything defiantly (*raham yad*, literally *with a high hand*), whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from among his people." Watch the words for yourself. While there is not a specific reference to Numbers 15:30, the phrasing in Numbers 20:11 is reminiscent of "Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice." Compare Exodus 7:20 and 14:16 where Moses lifted up his *staff* (as opposed to his *hand*) to part the Red Sea. While the sin of Moses and Aaron probably does not fall squarely under the condemnation of Numbers 15:30, the allusion to the raised hand is hard to overlook. They knew what to do, they choose to do differently, and in the end they paid the ultimate earthly price.

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Discussion Questions:

What was Israel's persistent sin throughout their wanderings?

How did Moses and Aaron's behavior mimic that sin?

Do people today fail to treat God as holy? How?

How did they treat God as holy in their context? How do we today?

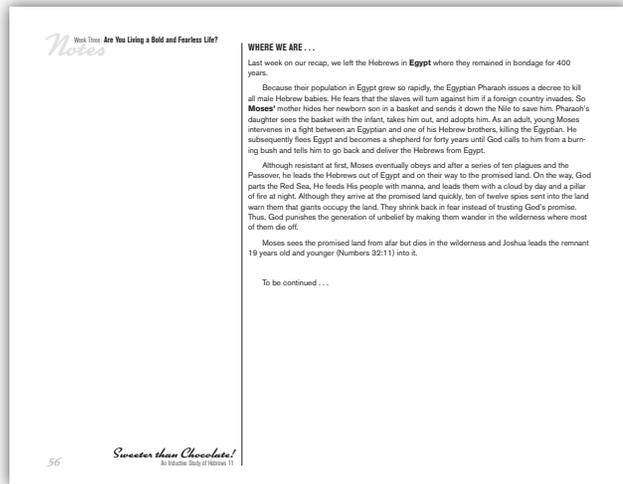
What lessons will you take from this tragedy in Moses' life?

Live It:

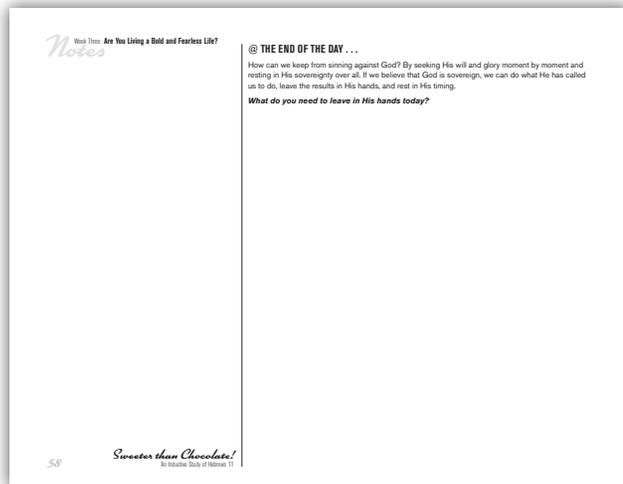
- Consider how you can treat God as holy in your life context.
- Ban the expression OMG from your household.
- If you're a leader, take care to follow God fully and not respond rashly to the flaws of His people.

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SEGMENT #6: Summing Up and Looking Ahead

As you close this week, take the remainder of your time to do one of two things:

- Break into small groups, talk about specific applications, and pray for one another.
- As a large group, try to talk through the biblical story thus far without the aid of notes.

Next week:

Hebrews 11:32-43 and LOTS and LOTS of cross-references from Joshua and Judges!

Inductive Focus: Asking Questions

Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? At the heart of inductive study sit these six questions. Indeed, these questions are the heart of biblical exegesis, drawing the meaning out of the text of Scripture. The questions help us focus on the author's intended message to his original hearers.

Once you begin the question-asking process, it becomes clear that not every question can be asked of every verse though most verses can be asked several questions and some verses can be asked the same question multiple times. We'll hone in on this more closely in the lesson.

For now, help your students realize that asking questions is a fluid process in which one question answered often opens up follow-up questions that need to be asked.

There is a sense in which it is like having a conversation with a person you are very interested in. You don't ask canned questions that don't work in context; you ask questions appropriate to the conversation that will yield as much information as possible.

Although it will take time to learn to think in terms of questions, assure your students that they will be doing this before they know it.

Leader notes

Week Four

God Works in Flawed People

BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

How can God work in me? Better yet, how can He work in her?! As we look at Hebrews 11:23 and its cross-references in the books of Joshua and Judges, we'll see example after example of God working His purposes through flawed people. God worked His sovereign purposes through Rahab (a prostitute), Barak (a warrior who refused to go to battle without a woman at his side), Gideon (a man with serious fear issues), Jephthah (the son of a harlot who vowed to give his daughter to either a life of virginity or a death by sacrifice), and Samson (a Nazarite from birth who regularly chased women and broke his vows). God worked in spite of their flaws. What lessons can we learn from the stained lives they led? How can we better submit ourselves to the God who works His purposes?

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Hebrews 11 • Review sections with names • Overview
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Asking questions of the text – 5Ws and H
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Rahab: Joshua 2 and 6
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Deborah and Barak: Judges 4:1-15
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	Gideon: Judges 7:1-23
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Jephthah: Judges 11:29-40 and Samson: Judges 16:28-31

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

While the author of Hebrews invests 22 verses from the book of Genesis alone, we see him picking up serious speed as he nears the three-quarter mark in his treatise. Verses 30 and 31 refer to events in the book of Joshua, verse 32 begins with men from the time of Judges.

READ Hebrews 11:30-34. **MARK** with a circle every person who is mentioned by name and underline every action attributed to the unnamed people of faith.

Hebrews 11:30-34

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets.

33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

FVI:
Joshua and Judges
 The books of Joshua and Judges sit between Moses and the kings of Israel. Joshua is a book of overwhelming victory. Judges a book of profound defeat. The book of Joshua records events related to the children of Israel entering and taking possession of the promised land under Joshua, the man God placed in leadership upon the death of His servant Moses. After Joshua and the elders who followed him died, the people's hearts weakened. The period of ruling judges was marked by cycles of sin, Israel sinned, God brought foreign powers to subdue them, they cried out for deliverance, God sent deliverers (judges), they obeyed until the judge died, and then the cycle began again. The book of Ruth also takes place against this backdrop. During the time of the judges, we read "every man did what was right in his own eyes."

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SEGMENT #2: Inductive Focus: Asking Questions – 5 Ws and H

[pages 69-74]

Key Talk Points: Ask the 5 W and H questions: *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?*

Direct questions to the text is like an inquisitive conversation.

Ask logical questions and follow-ups.

Relax!

Context/Comments and Practice:

Take some time to lead your class to query Hebrews 11:32-34. I've included some to get you started. You'll notice that some of the questions I'm asking have to do only with this text, while I'm bringing other Scriptural background to others. The background that I'm bringing (for instance about Deborah) would end up a follow-up question if you did not already know her story. Again, those I've listed are just to get you started. Encourage your students to help you compile a thorough list of question to ask the text.

Hebrews 11:32-34

32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

Who is the "I" talking?

How does his style change from that in the previous verses?

Who are Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah?

Where did they live and when?

What did each of them do?

Why are they mentioned?

How did they do their deeds?

Why is Gideon mentioned before Barak and Samson before Jephthah when they lived after these men?

Where's Deborah? Wasn't she a judge?

Why is David the only king mentioned?

Who are "the prophets" and how do they fit in?

Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

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ONE STEP FURTHER:

The Greek Alphabet

Your letters or for...

Α	Alpha - "A"
Β	Beta - "B"
Γ	Gamma - "G"
Δ	Delta - "D"
Ε	Epsilon - about "E"
Ζ	Zeta - "Z"
Η	Eta - long "I"
Θ	Theta - "H"
Ι	Iota - "I"
Κ	Kappa - "K"
Λ	Lambda - "L"
Μ	Mu - "M"
Ν	Nu - "N"
Ξ	Xi - "X"
Ο	Omicron - about "O"
Π	Pi - "P" (pronounced just like our letter "P")
Ρ	Rho - "R"

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own ...

What do you already know about:

Jericho?
Rahab?
The Spies?
Gideon?
Barak?
Samson?
Jephthah?

How can you find more information about these people? Where will you start?

Where can you find secondary texts?

What other tools can you use to find out more about the stories referred to here?

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

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OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

The first event mentioned in this section is the fall of the walls of Jericho, and the first person of faith is Rahab.

READ Joshua 6, the account of the fall of Jericho. Use a Bible you have on hand or read online at www.blueletterbible.com.

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own ...

What do we know about Jericho from the first few verses? Why was it shut up so tightly?

Why does the wall event at Jericho make the faith chapter?

What specific "battle" instructions did God give the Israelites?

FVI:

What's wrong with this picture?

I love Maggie Ball's take on this text so you understand I'm commenting here as a fan and not a snarky critic. Even with things we love and trust we need to maintain discernment. If you've seen the Maggie Ball's rendition of the fall of Jericho, Josh and the Big Wall you'll know what I mean.

Obviously Maggie Ball's gives the text a different spin as they tell their children's versions of classic Bible stories. We know they take liberties in getting the basic story across as they seek to engage kids, but every now and then one of those liberties contradicts the text and when it does, we need to know it and explain it to our kids. We need to help our kids learn to discern truth.

I've not seen how many times I viewed Josh and the Big Wall before it struck me that the inhabitants of Jericho were being entirely misrepresented. While Scripture tells us the people's hearts were melting within them because of fear, the Maggie version portrays French Fries sitting next to the wall taunting the marching Israelites because of the strength of their wall. It's funny, but it's not far.

Does this mean we throw out Maggie Ball's? I'm sure not going to, but I always discuss the biblical text when we watch over! Discernment is an everywhere, all-the-time job, especially in our culture today.

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ILLUSTRATION: There are certain days in school that just stick in your mind. For me, one of those was the first day of Greek Exegesis. I took it as a college senior and was one of only two women and a handful of other undergrads in a room full of graduate students. The assignment our professor gave us that day was to read the first few verses of the book of Galatians in Greek and come up with 20 questions related to the text. That is where inductive study starts – looking at the text closely enough to question what the author was saying to his original audience.

Did we all come up with the same questions? Of course not. Some were the same but many were different. Some were more important and germane to the text, others less important. As we continued to study, we learned not only how to answer our own questions, but how to ask better questions in the first place. Bottom line: Don't worry about not having good questions. Asking and answering questions are skills you will develop.

I often have students who are discouraged because they have so many questions. You probably do, too. But this shows the best potential for accurate Bible study. Lots of questions is a good thing!

Live It:

- Start to incorporate 5W and H thinking when you read the Bible.
- Think "conversation" as you question the text.

SEGMENT #3: RAHAB (Joshua 2 and 6)

[pages 75-82]

Key Talk Points: God can use the most unlikely people.

God is not bound by human convention.

Knowledge of God is not enough; how we respond to the knowledge is key.

Your faith affects others.

Context/Comments: It's mildly shocking that Joshua is not named in Hebrews 11 while Rahab is. Rahab the harlot is the second woman mentioned by name. (Sarah is the first; Moses' mom gets a nod as a "parent.") While some commentators want to sanitize the story of Rahab, the New Testament usage of *porne* (*harlot* or *prostitute*) to describe her both here and in James 2:25 strongly supports the view that she did more than run a bed and breakfast. She is a great example both of God's care for Gentiles and His redeeming power over what we sometimes consider "uglier" sins.

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

How do the people respond?

What happens when Joshua and the people respond in faith?

Before moving on, spend some time asking God if there are any cities that you have been planning on storming that He would have you march around instead.

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

Now that we've seen the fall of Jericho for ourselves, let's step back in the text to Joshua 2 and the account of Rahab. This one we'll look at in the workbook, along with the comment on Rahab from the final portion of Joshua 6.

READ Joshua 2 and Joshua 6:17-27. As you do, **MARK** with a circle every reference to Rahab and her family and underline every reference to Jericho and its people.

Joshua 2

- 1 Then Joshua the son of Nun sent two men as spies secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho." So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there.
- 2 It was told the king of Jericho, saying, "Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to search out the land."
- 3 And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land."
- 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from."
- 5 "It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."
- 6 But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof.
- 7 So the men pursued them on the road to the Jordan to the fords; and as soon as those who were pursuing them had gone out, they shut the gate.
- 8 Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof,
- 9 and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you.
- 10 "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.
- 11 "When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.
- 12 Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth,

FVI:

Will the Greek alphabet actually help me?

My son and I recently spent a college-visit day at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. We attended a Roman class in the morning and a Hellenistic class in the evening. Now what they were learning in Hellenistic? The Greek alphabet. Now why? So they can better use original language study tools. It's not necessary to learn, but it's certainly helpful.

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Don't miss this opportunity to drive deep on application. God can redeem anyone. Sexual sins are quickly hidden and regretted and they can paralyze people in guilt for years if they do not believe truth.

Rahab, sinner though she was, believed truth and acted on what she knew. Although Jericho had heard about Israel's defeat of its enemies, only Rahab believed and cast her lot with God and His people. God saved her and she went on to become the second mother-in-law of Ruth (another Old Testament Gentile God grafted in), the great-great grandmother of David. She's an ancestor of Jesus, and is listed in His lineage in the Gospel of Matthew.

This section is also rich with application as we consider the power of a God who fights His peoples' battles for them. We are still called to the battle, but sometimes He tells us to walk around a city and shout or simply stand firm and watch (KJV Exodus 14:13).

Discussion Questions:

What did the people of Jericho know about Israel and her God?

What was unique in the way Rahab responded?

How did her behavior show she believed that God is and is a rewarder? (Hebrews 11:6)

What did she specifically say about God?

How do you respond to what you know of God? Do you respond more like the people of Jericho or Rahab? Explain.

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ONE STEP FURTHER:

Rahab . . .
What can you learn about Rahab this week? Where will you look? What resources can help you? If you have time, see what you can find. Who is she related to? What do other biblical writers say about her and her faith? Record what you discover in the space below.

13 and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."
14 So the men said to her, "Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours, and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."
15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was hanging on the wall.
16 She said to them, "Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way."
17 The men said to her, "We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear.
18 Unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household.
19 "It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him.
20 "But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear."
21 She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed, and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.
22 They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned. Now the pursuers had sought them all along the road, but had not found them.
23 Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them.
24 They said to Joshua, "Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us."

Joshua 6:17-27

17 "The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.

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THINK ON THIS:

You Don't Start with the Infield Fly Rule
Choices are you know what baseball is. Regardless of whether you're a man or a woman, you probably have enough knowledge to explain the very basics of the game to an inquiring child. Now, whether or not you know a little about baseball or a lot about baseball, you'll likely start with things like batters, pitchers, running the bases, balls, strikes, outs, etc. Even if you know what the infield fly rule is (that when a batter hits a pop fly with less than two outs and there is a potential base out at first or home, the batter is automatically out) the odds you could explain this successfully to a four-year old are minimal—although I must admit I may have done so with my son.
So often we do the equivalent of trying to explain the infield fly rule with people who are new to Bible study. We forget to help them understand the big picture, the bats and strikes and outs, and rather jump into the occasionally complex details that can overwhelm beginners.
Is the infield fly rule important? You bet it is, but it will confuse anyone who doesn't know what an out is!

ONE STEP FURTHER:

For Serious Gamers Only!
Who was the fastest pitcher in the game of Rahab?

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .
Compile a list of everything you learned about Rahab and the people of Jericho.

Rahab	People of Jericho
-------	-------------------

Everyone in Jericho knew that Israel's God was going to win. So what made Rahab different from everyone else?

What did Rahab do as a result of her faith and how did it affect those around her?

How is your faith affecting others in your circle of influence?

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Does your knowledge of God's sovereignty affect how you behave?

What about His goodness?

How will your life be different when you more thoroughly act on what you know of God, the way Rahab did?

What concrete hope does the account of Rahab bring to those who have a past of sexual sin?

How can you bring this message in a loving way to people who need to hear it?

Additional Teaching:

If you have a teaching gift you may want to talk a little more about how faith can affect others by contrasting the lives of Rahab (whose whole family was saved through her faith) and Achan (whose whole family died as a result of his sin).

Live It:

- Like Rahab, take the truths you know about God and act on them!
- Let God heal your past and bring that healing news to others.
- Think twice before plowing through a wall that God might have you walk around.

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

SETTING the CONTEXT

As mentioned earlier, Judges is a book of tremendous defeat. Throughout its pages, we see cycles of sin, oppression, cries for help, and temporary deliverance. The people of Israel sin. God sends foreign countries to oppress them. Eventually they cry for help and God sends a deliverer/judge to free them from their enemies for a time. When the judge dies, the people start a new cycle. The book shows cycles of sin as well as a linear decline from the beginning to the end.

We see a hint of this at the end of the book of Joshua when we are told, "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel." After Joshua dies, Israel continues to push into the promised land, but they do not completely drive out the inhabitants as God has commanded. And so we are told in Judges 2:19 that with each cycle the people turn back and act more corruptly. The rule of judges comes to an end in the book of 1 Samuel when the people sin even more boldly by anointing God, their true King, for a temporal king of flesh and blood to fight their battles. But that, my friend, is a story for another day. Today, we will look at that time of profound decline in the nation of Israel, the time of the judges.

As we work our way through this section, we will look at snippets from the lives of the four judges mentioned in Hebrews 11: Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. We'll save Samson, the fifth judge mentioned, for next week because he's a hinge character between the judges and the kings.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

As we look at the judges, we will deal with them chronologically from the Old Testament text which is in a little different order than the one the author of Hebrews has selected.

READ Judges 4:1-16. **MARK** with a circle every reference to Barak, including pronouns, and underline every reference to God and LORD watching carefully what He says and does.

Judges 4:1-15

- 1 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died.
- 2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.
- 3 The sons of Israel cried to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years.
- 4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

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Why buy software?

Online Bible study websites provide a free and efficient way to amp up your study if you have online access. For beginners, sites like biblestudytools.com, studylight.com, and others will give you the basic text and speed you need.

More advanced students, however, may want to consider investing in a Bible software program that provides access to libraries full of reference tools and commentaries.

I am a Logos Bible Software user and have been since the first day I saw it if I remember. I love this software because it is searchable and provides me more study tools than I will probably ever be able to learn. It speeds my study, allowing me to do more in the time I have.

No, the software is not cheap, but for the amount I use it, it is an awesome value. My family loves it because it makes Sunday and Christmas day-long studies for me-it's always in the market for an upgrade or a new set of e-books!

Take a look for yourself at www.logos.com.

Anywhere else?

Barak is mentioned in the Bible only in Judges 4:5 and Hebrews 11. Deborah only in the Judges account.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?

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- 5 She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment.
- 6 Now she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, "Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, 'Go and march to Mount Tabor and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.'
- 7 'I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand.'"
- 8 Then Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go."
- 9 She said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.
- 10 Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him.
- 11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh.
- 12 Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.
- 13 Sisera called together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon.
- 14 Deborah said to Barak, "Arise! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hands; behold, the LORD has gone out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him.
- 15 The LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak, and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot.

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDOR on your own...

What was the situation in Israel during the time of Deborah and Barak?

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OPTIONAL BREAK

General Comment on the Judges:

Be careful with your time management as you enter this section as there is a tremendous amount of material and opportunity for discussion. If your class has an online discussion forum, you may want to finish up there if you don't make it through during your allotted class time. The biggest thing you want them to take from the time of the judges comes directly from the last verse of the book of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Even the judges commended for acts of faith were far from perfect examples of righteous living. Joshua shows us victory but the book of Judges on the whole defeat – acts of righteousness, yes, but a general downward trend in the hearts and minds of men.

SEGMENT #4: Barak and Deborah (Judges 4:1-15)

[pages 75-77]

Key Talk Points: God can deliver in spite of terrible odds.

God has a history of using a variety of people.

Leaders need to lead.

Context/Comments: As strange as it is to see Rahab's name instead of Joshua's in conjunction with Jericho, it is stranger still to see Barak included and Deborah omitted in the section on Israel's judges. In the cross-referenced account in Judges 4-5, Israel's other two protagonists are Deborah and the unlikely Jael. Deborah is the only recorded female judge, but don't let your students miss the fact that she was also a prophetess; in fact she is the first "prophet" mentioned since the departure of Moses. She not only judges Israel but also functions as God's mouthpiece as, for example, when God calls Barak to action through her.

Jael, who kills Sisera (the commander of the enemy's army), receives the title "most blessed of women" in Judges 5:24. Don't miss the fact that Jael is not only a woman, but a foreign woman! God is not limited in who He uses to accomplish His purposes. We'll see this truth replayed throughout the book of Judges as God works through one flawed character after another.

Although we are told in Joshua 11 that Joshua defeated Jabin at Hazor, the reference is to a different Jabin than the one in Judges. "Jabin" may also have been a title for Canaanite rulers – similar to "Pharaoh" in Egypt,

Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

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What extreme advantage did the nations hold over Israel?

Who was Deborah and what did she have to do with Barak?

Look back at every place you marked God and LORD and recap what role He played in this event from start to finish.

What did God do? What did Barak do?

How did Barak act in faith?

While we're here, consider this: How much does "getting the honor" mean to you? Even when told the honor would go to someone else, Barak still moved forward. What can you apply from this example?

Have you ever become stuck in your walk with God because you hesitated in obedience? What can you learn from Barak about this?

Notes

Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

TRUE STORIES:
Deborah and Barak
This week, get the rest of the story @Judges 4-5.

ONE STEP FURTHER:
Plot the Slide
If you have time this week, consider reading the book of Judges and watching the cartoon *Overboard* slide in the behavior of both the people and leaders of Israel. Barak, toward the beginning of the story period, doesn't want to go out unless Deborah goes with him. By the end of Judges, we see tribes of Israel being their own priests, priests taking on responsibilities, and everyone doing what is right in their own eyes.

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"Abimelech" in Philistia, and "Caesar" in Rome. As the people of Israel did not fully conquer the land of their inheritance, enemies rose up to pose problems by the time of the judges. At this point in Israel's history, they had neither a professional army nor the tools of war – specifically the iron chariots some of their enemies possessed. In the end, though, God demonstrated clearly that He is limited neither by odds, by weapons, nor by the flaws of people.

Discussion Questions:

What is the basic story of Barak and Deborah?

How did Barak act in faith?

Can disobedience thwart the purposes of God? How does disobedience affect our walk with God?

How can we learn to obey immediately? Remembering God's faithfulness in the past, perhaps? His general character? Other ideas?

What eventually prompted God's people to act? What can we learn from this as leaders?

Live It:

- Act in obedience when God calls.
- If you're a leader, listen to God and lead as He directs.

Week Four: **God Works in Flawed People**
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TRUE STORIES:
Gideon
 If you have time this week get the rest of the story @Judges 6-8. While you're at it, consider the importance of continuing to walk by faith. Did you find Gideon to bring about a great deliverance but he failed to be a great ruler. What steps can you take to avoid ending like Gideon?

Notes
GIDEON
OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE
 The entire account of Gideon covers Judges 6-8. In Judges 6 God calls a frightened man hiding out in a wine press to deliver an oppressed nation. By Judges 8 we see this man God uses mightily nonetheless finish life poorly. We will pick up in Judges 7 with the story Gideon is most remembered for.

READ Judges 7:1-23. **MARK** with a circle every reference to Gideon/Jerubbaal, including pronouns, and underline every reference to numbers of people, both for Israel and for her enemies.

Judges 7:1-23

- 1 Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him, rose early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.
- 2 The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'"
- 3 "Now therefore come, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead.'" So 22,000 people returned, but 10,000 remained.
- 4 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."
- 5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who kneels to drink."
- 6 Now the number of those who lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt to drink water.
- 7 The LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the 300 men who lapped and will give the Midianites into your hands; as for all the other people go, each man to his home."
- 8 So the 300 men took the people's provisions and their trumpets into their hands. And Gideon sent all the other men of Israel, each to his tent, but retained the 300 men, and the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.
- 9 Now the same night it came about that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down against the camp, for I have given it into your hands."

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Week Four: **God Works in Flawed People**
Notes

FVI:

Key People	Key Events
Israel	Creation
Joseph	
Joseph	Flood
Abraham & Sarah	
Joseph (12 Tribes)	
Joseph	Egypt
Moses	Exodus
Joshua	Promised Land
Judges (Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson)	
Samaritan (transition)	

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SEGMENT #5: Gideon (Judges 7:1-23)

[pages 78-80]

Key Talk Points: God works through weak vessels.

As we saw with Barak, God succeeds against terrible odds.

Gideon refused the crown, but named his son Abimelech, "my father is king."

Context/Comments: While Deborah opens the book of Judges as a bright light, the judges after her dim quickly. Enter Gideon. God called him while he was hiding from the Midianites in a wine press. The Midianites descended from Abraham through his second wife, Keturah.

Although the lesson focuses on Gideon's faithful attack on the Midianites in Judges 7, you will very likely encounter a question or comment concerning Gideon's fleece in Judges 6. If this issue comes up, help your students reason through the clarity of God's words to Gideon. Did God leave something out? Was He unclear? No. Gideon's laying out a fleece presupposes some doubt and a desire for confirmation. God honored this request for confirmation but the text does not teach that this is a normative approach for determining God's will.

It is interesting that God gave him balm for his fear before he asked for it in Judges 7, telling him in verse 10 that if he is afraid he should go down and eavesdrop at the enemies' camp. Gideon took God up on the offer and his hands were "strengthened to go down against the camp." Again, God met him at his point of need.

The Judges 7 account of Gideon and the Midianites parallels the way God delivered Barak and Deborah with unlikely heroes and bad odds.

If your students read the entire Gideon account, help them reason through Judges 8, particularly the people's offer of kingship to Gideon. Watch how he refused the title of "king" but gave the son of his concubine the name "Abimelech" which means "my father is king." While he did not accept the title, his behavior indicated he thought more highly of himself than he let on.

Remember, Gideon is commended for acts of faith. We can't take his request to God as normative for how a believer should trust God. He had flaws as did the next two judges we'll look at.

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

Week Four: God Works in Flawed People
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ONE STEP FURTHER:
The God of Bad Odds
Just for this week, take a little time and read every instance in the Bible that you can recall where God saves or works wonders in the face of overwhelming odds. Then, the next time you are faced with overwhelming odds, remember what you know!

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .
Why does God tell Gideon he has too many men? What will happen if they win with those numbers?

How many men does God whittle it down to? What are we told about the numbers of their opponents?

How does God give Gideon assurance?

What happens when Gideon steps out in faith with his tiny band of 300 men?

How do you react when you face insurmountable odds? How can this account help you learn to respond in a more God-honoring way?

Spend some time today asking God if there is a specific area in your life where you need to trust Him and move forward by faith in spite of terrible odds.

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ONE STEP FURTHER:
Problem Promises by Jephthah the Judge
If you're up for a challenge this week, consider the fact that says that Jephthah "let to her according to the vow which he had made." This text makes me want to skim over and move on to the next instance of human sacrifice in the name of Yahweh in the Old Testament or is it something else? Study the text carefully, check your commentary, record your thoughts and give your informed and well-reasoned opinion below.

JEPHTHAH
OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Judges 11:29-40. **MARK** with a circle every reference to Jephthah, including pronouns; underline every reference to God; and make a box around every reference to Jephthah's daughter.

Judges 11:29-40

29 Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon.

30 Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, "If you will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand,

31 then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

32 So Jephthah crossed over to the sons of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD gave them into his hand.

33 He struck them with a very great slaughter from Aroer to the entrance of Minivah, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keranim. So the sons of Ammon were subdued before the sons of Israel.

34 When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. Now she was his one and only child; besides her he had no son or daughter.

35 When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot take it back."

36 So she said to him, "My father, you have given your word to the LORD; do to me as you have said, since the LORD has avenged you of your enemies, the sons of Ammon."

37 She said to her father: "Let this thing be done for me; let me alone two months, that I may go to the mountains and weep because of my virginity, I and my companions."

38 Then he said, "Go." So he sent her away for two months; and she left with her companions, and wept on the mountains because of her virginity.

39 At the end of two months she returned to her father, who did to her according to the vow which he had made; and she had no relations with a man. Thus it became a custom in Israel.

40 that the daughters of Israel went yearly to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.

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Discussion Questions:

What is Gideon's story? For those who have read the whole account, how does he start? How does he finish?

God took away most of Gideon's soldiers so he would know who won the battle. What odds are we tempted to trust in today?

Has God ever called you to step out in the face of bad odds? How did you respond?

Live It:

- Remember, God gives victory.
- Guard your heart from pride, which creeps in even when success is so obviously from God.

SEGMENT #6: Jephthah (Judges 11:29-40) and Samson (Judges 16:28-31)

[pages 82-86]

Key Talk Points: The spiritual and moral slide of the judges continued with Jephthah and Samson.

Jephthah acted in faith when he fought for Israel.

Samson killed more in his death than his life.

Again, they were both commended for discrete acts of faith, not fully faithful lives.

Leader notes

Context/Comments: As we progress further into the book of Judges, the spiritual slide steepens. Jephthah and Samson are perplexing characters whose inclusions in the faith chapter gives pause.

Jephthah – Let’s consider the issues associated with Jephthah first. Jephthah was the son of Gilead, an Israelite, and a harlot of unknown background but either an Israelite or Canaanite. He was cast out by his half brothers and took up residence in the land of Tob (Hebrew for *good*). Ironically in this land of “Good” (*tob*) “worthless fellows gathered themselves” to him.

When the men of Gilead come to Jephthah to ask him to lead them against the Ammonites, we see the first of two critical “ifs” that frame his story. The first comes in Judges 11:11 when Jephthah wants to know if he will become leader if he wins against Ammon: “If you take me back to fight against the sons of Ammon and the LORD gives them up to me, will I become your head?” They agree to this. Knowing he will become the leader if he defeats the Ammonites, Jephthah offers up the tragic “If” vow he is best known for promising God in Judges 11:30b-31: “If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD’S, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” Jephthah wins; his only child, a daughter, comes out the front door to meet him.

The interpretative question before this house is this: Did Jephthah actually offer his daughter up as a burnt offering, a human sacrifice, or did he commit her to a lifetime of virginity in service of God? We don’t know for sure. There are good arguments on both sides. The clear reading of the text is that he vowed the first thing to meet him on his return would belong to the LORD as a burnt offering. While this strikes us as wrong, remember the moral climate of the times even among the “good guys” left a lot to be desired. We’ve already seen Gideon finish badly amidst a proliferation of wives and a bent toward idolatry, and we’re coming up on Samson who by no means wins “Moral Man of the Year.” Jephthah’s great grief at his daughter’s appearance suggests this possibility.

That said, however, the alternate possibility is that Jephthah committed his daughter to a lifetime of service to God as opposed to killing her. Think of Samuel, for instance. Hannah gave Samuel back to the LORD and brought him to serve at the temple. We also know that every firstborn male belonged to the LORD, but that God called for people to redeem their firstborn sons. Finally, the emphasis on the daughter’s virginity seems a little odd if that is not what is at issue. In verse 37–38 we’re told she goes away to spend two months on the mountain weeping. The phrase “because of her virginity” is used twice in these verses. We’re then told in verse 39 that Jephthah “did to her according to the vow” and what immediately follows is not that she died, but that “she had no relations with a man.”

We don’t know how Jephthah fulfilled his vow, but these are the two clearest possibilities. Either way, Jephthah’s line ended with his daughter’s death or lifetime of virginity. Help your class realize that offering his daughter was not based on revelation from God.

Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

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DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

What was Jephthah's great victory? What do we learn about the circumstances leading up to it?

What vow did Jephthah make?

What does the text tell us about Jephthah's daughter?

From the entire context, what do you think Jephthah "did" to his daughter and why? List all your reasons and then check some commentators to see what they say and why.

What happened to Jephthah's line after he fulfilled his vow to God? Why?

What can we learn about vows from Jephthah's?

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People
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Read the full account of Jephthah in Judges 11-12:7 and list truly commendable acts Jephthah did.

How is your faith standing up against difficult scriptures? Is God's Word reliable? Explain.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

So what's a Nazirite?
Samson is described as a Nazirite from the womb. If you have time, investigate what a "Nazirite" was. Who decided? What were the rules? How did Samson do? Record your discoveries below.

SAMSON

SETTING the CONTEXT

One of the more tragic figures in the Bible, Samson is set apart and used by God in spite of himself. He chases foreign women, executes perpetual vengeance on the Philistines he paradoxically loves to hang out with, and behaves egocentrically throughout his life. The most famous story of Samson is his romance with Delilah, the woman who entices him to reveal the secret of his strength. Of course God is the source of his strength, but when Samson tells Delilah of his Nazirite vow and she cuts his hair, his strength leaves him. We pick up Samson's story after this point when the Philistines have captured him in his weakness, put out his eyes, and brought him to a large gathering for their amusement. In the final hours, God strengthens Samson to defeat Israel's enemy.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Judges 16:29-31 and **MARK** every reference to Samson.

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Samson – As we come to the account of Samson, we move from a man who made an unwise vow in Jephthah to a man God made a Nazirite from birth, but who made a habit of breaking the respective vow. When the Samson story begins, we are told that the Israelites had been given into the hands of the Philistines. There is no crying out to God, just subjection. Into this situation, the angel of the LORD appeared to a barren Danite woman who eventually gave birth to Samson. Samson lived his life according to what looked good to his physical eyes (the text is littered with sight-related words). What Samson saw and liked, Samson set out to get. If Jephthah is an unlikely inductee into The Hall of Faith, Samson perhaps is more so.

Help your class see that Samson, like Jephthah and Gideon, performed acts God used to accomplish his purposes. Note that Samson mixed it up with the Philistines in the land originally allotted to Samson's tribe of Dan. The Danites, however, decided to abandon that land for an easier takeover of the lush area in the north. Subsequent chapters in the book of Judges mark the exodus of the Danites for those greener pastures.

Discussion Questions:

What was Jephthah's background?

What consequences did fulfilling his vow to God bring? Explain.

Did you struggle dealing with this passage? How? Why?

What is your final take on Jephthah? How did he act in faith?

What lessons can we learn from the way God sovereignly used Samson in spite of himself?

Do the accounts of the judges give you hope? Why?

Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

What does Samson ask God?

How does the story end?

Are you surprised that Samson "makes the cut" for Hebrews 11? Why or why not?

It's very easy to think our faith is powerful. Samson is a prime example of God empowering faith within human weakness. The power is God's, not ours. Samson was flawed, but God still used him. While God worked through Samson warts and all, it still makes you wonder what Samson's life could have been had he lived it surrendered to God throughout. If you're alive and reading this, it is not too late to live a life fully surrendered to the God who can work wonders in flawed people!

What truths can you apply from Samson's life?

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Week Four: God Works in Flawed People

@ THE END OF THE DAY . . .

There's nothing like the true accounts of people like Rahab, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson to show us God working His purposes through flawed flesh and blood. Although a murderer, Moses still sits on a high mountain, as do Enoch, Abel, Noah, and Abraham. But Rahab? Samson? If God worked through them, He can work through you and me too! Next week, as we transition into the prophets and kings we'll look at one final judge who is a hinge, so to speak, between the judges and kings of Israel. His name? Samson!

As we close this week, take some time to reflect on what you have studied and ask God to drive specific truths into your heart. Record your thoughts below.

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Live It:

- Live in light of the truth that God judges the sin of His chosen leaders.
- Live as salt and light in the midst of our culture which has so many similarities to the culture in the time of the judges.

Next week:

Next week:

The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament

Hebrews 11:32-43 and LOTS and LOTS of cross-references from Deuteronomy, 1 Samuel, and 1 Kings.

Week Five

The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament

Inductive Focus: Word Studies

There are word studies and there are word studies. Many people believe the way you do a word study on a Greek or Hebrew word is to look it up in a Bible dictionary and if you really want to go over the top, you look it up in two of them! While this is part of doing a thorough word study, it leaves out some critical steps for students who want to discover truth for themselves.

Studying a biblical word first involves identifying the word in the original language (Greek for the New Testament and Hebrew for the Old Testament*) and looking at how the word is used throughout the rest of the Bible. As you look for the meaning, you'll give more weight to other uses of the word that are closer in context and used by the same author.

After investigating how the word (and others in its word family) are used for yourself, then you can check in Bible dictionaries and word study books to compare your findings.

Jumping to a word study book before doing your own concordance work is similar to reading a commentary before studying the text of Scripture for yourself.

We'll look at this more closely as we move through our lesson.

*With rare pinches of Aramaic.

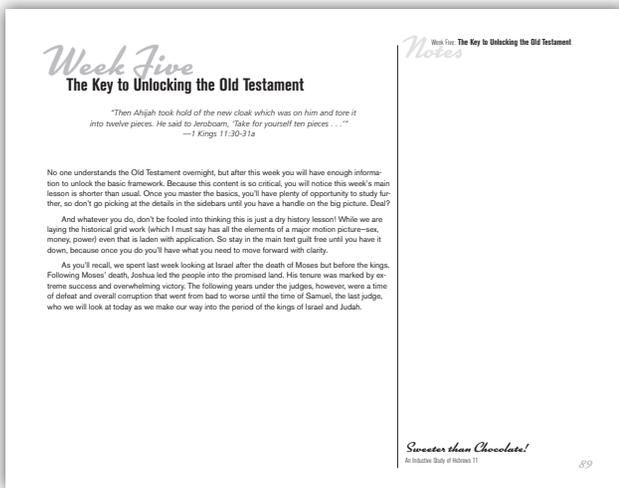
BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

The Old Testament is puzzling to many. In this section we'll lay in the corners and the edge pieces. While most of our weeks focus heavily on application, the main goal of this week is to help your students understand the transition from the time of the judges to the time of the kings and then to get a grip on the difference between the united kingdom of Israel and the division that takes place after the time of Solomon. The cherry on top is for them to take hold of two key dates: 722 BC and 586 BC when Assyria and Babylon respectively attack the northern and southern kingdoms. Armed with this knowledge, they'll have the tools to jump into the Old Testament anywhere and immediately put themselves in context.

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>2 Hour Class</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Hebrews 11 • Review basic concepts • Overview
Segment 2:	15 min.	10 min.	Inductive Focus: Word Studies and Time Phrases
Segment 3:	15 min.	10 min.	Samuel: 1 Samuel 3
Optional Break	15 min.	OMIT	
Segment 4:	15 min.	10 min.	Living with Kings: Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Sam. 8:7, 10-20
Segment 5:	15 min.	10 min.	David: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 27:4-8
Segment 6:	15 min.	10 min.	Kingdom Divides: 1 Kings 10:23-11:13 and 1 Kings 11:26-40



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START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Read Hebrews 11

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is observation and why is it important? What question will this answer?

How do you remember the major segments of Hebrews 11?

Who was Hebrews written to? Explain.

Who are some possible authors?

Leader notes

What clues do we have regarding the date of writing?

What is the biggest takeaway application you have had so far?

SEGMENT #2: Inductive Focus: Word Studies

Doing a word study from scratch involves identifying the word in its original language and seeing how it and others from the same root are used throughout the Word of God. When looking at usage, pay closest attention when the same word is used within the verse you're looking at, then move to the chapter, the book, the author, the testament, and finally the entire corpus of Scripture.

Below I've listed all the occurrences of the word group for *endurance* that appear in Hebrews. You'll notice they cluster on either side of Hebrews 11 with the word group appearing six times combined over the final verses of Hebrews 10 and the opening verses of Hebrews 12. Read the verses where the word appears to begin to understand its usage.

Hupomone

Heb. 10:36 . . . you have need of *endurance* . . . Strong 5281 (*hupomone* - noun)

Heb. 12:1 . . . let us run with *endurance* . . . Strong 5281 (*hupomone* - noun)

Hupomeno

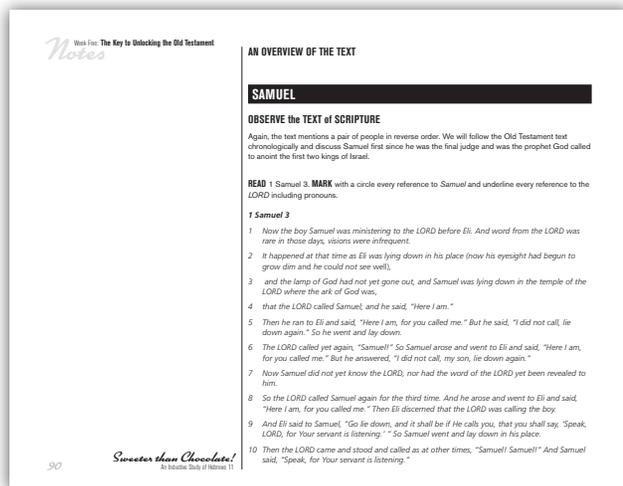
Heb. 10:32 . . . you *endured* a great conflict of sufferings . . . Strong 5278 (*hupomeno* - verb)

Heb. 12:2 . . . who for the joy set before Him *endured* the cross . . . Strong 5278 (*hupomeno* - verb)

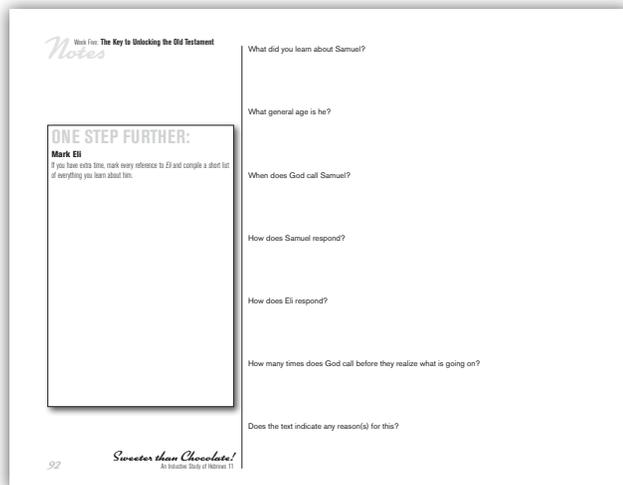
Heb. 12:3 . . . consider Him who has *endured* such hostility . . . Strong 5278 (*hupomeno* - verb)

Heb. 12:7 . . . it is for discipline that you *endure* . . . Strong 5278 (*hupomeno* - verb)

After focusing on the usage of *endure/endurance* in Hebrews, you can extend your study to how the word group is used in the rest of the New Testament and finally examine usages of *hupomeno/hupomone* in the LXX.



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Leader notes

Once you've done your research, compare your findings with those in word study reference books and commentaries. For a list of helpful word study tools, see the Appendix of the *Sweeter than Chocolate! Hebrews 11 Workbook*.

Note: If you have access to a computer, Internet, and projection equipment, this is a great time to show your students how to run concordances searches, etc. online.

SEGMENT #3: Samuel (1 Samuel 3)

[pages 90-93]

Key Talk Points: Samuel is the major transition figure between the judges and kings of Israel.

Godly leadership doesn't result from position alone.

The importance of knowing and hearing the voice of God.

Context/Comments: As Samuel 3 opens, the boy Samuel is growing up in the temple of the LORD at Shiloh. (The center of worship does not move to Jerusalem until later, under King David.) Although on the surface this may appear to be a wholesome way to live, we see that Eli and his sons were not treating the temple and worship of God as holy. Samuel accordingly lived amid a terrible mix of outward religiosity and inward depravity as Eli and his sons put their own agendas ahead of God's. Just prior to the account we read that God sent a prophet to Eli, the priest, warning him of coming judgment. As you reason through this passage with your students, help them to identify the plethora of speaking/hearing words. Watch who calls, who listens, who can hear, who can't. Remember, at this point the text tells us that Samuel did not yet know the LORD, although he was living in the temple. When God called repeatedly to Samuel, it took Eli quite some time to discern what was happening. It's significant that the message God gives Samuel in chapter 3 lines up with the message the unnamed prophet brought in chapter 2. These were not simply words a boy made up in his sleep; they were a confirmation of a previously spoken prophecy. Samuel will be a true prophet of God and the people will know it.

Discussion Questions:

Have your students read 1 Samuel 2:27-36. Does the immediate context give weight to the message Samuel brings to Eli? Why or why not?

Class pages

Week Five: The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament

If you're aware of Scripture providing additional information, go ahead and cite that here.

When does God finally continue speaking?

Now for the medding question: How are you at recognizing and hearing the voice of God? How did Samuel's hearing problem differ from Eli's? Do you see any specific application point for your life today? If so, what?

The history of faith is one of ups and downs of both heart attitudes and missteps. And while faith is an individual matter, we have also seen the corporate dynamic of people groups exhibiting faith or unbelief. God brings judgment on an unbelieving and sinful world through the flood and spares only righteous Noah and his family. God delivers Israel through a mass exodus from Egypt. Israel's corporate faith in God hits some high points at the exodus and in the early conquests in the promised land, but their faith wanes throughout the days of the judges as the people fail to fully possess the land as God commands.

As we saw last week, the people of Israel drift further and further away from God during the period of the judges. Yes, their sin cycles, but each cycle worsens the situation. Eventually, they wear their national heart on their sleeve and ask God to give them a flesh and blood king. Of course this doesn't take God by surprise. Knowing the demand is coming He warns them beforehand about how kings will treat them. In this next section, we'll take a look at the prediction that the people will ask for a king. We'll watch the people ask and see God's warning before granting their request.

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If you are pressed for time, go ahead and proceed to the section entitled **The United Kingdom** (page 100). Background on the kings is important, but the division of the kingdom is what you don't want to miss. If summarize the material for you but it will stick much better if you work through it for yourself. In a perfect world, we want it all to stick, right? But according to the last memo I received, we still live in a fallen world. Be encouraged and take one step at a time.

TRUE STORIES:
Samuel's Story
Get the rest of the story starting @1 Samuel 1. Samuel is the last judge of Israel before the people demand a king. His story is found in 1 Samuel. At the time above, do some reading on Samuel and David in 1 and 2 Samuel. Record important information here.

OBSERVE THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE
READ Deuteronomy 17:14-20 and **MARK** every reference to kings including pronouns. Remember, this was written before Israel took possession of the promised land, before the time of the judges—several hundred years prior to the people asking for a king.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

- 14 "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,'
- 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman.
- 16 "Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.'"
- 17 "He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.
- 18 "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.
- 19 "It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,
- 20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

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How are you at recognizing the voice of God?

How does the Word of God factor in to hearing God's voice today? (It is the way He speaks to us today and the Word never contradicts itself.) What does this mean to us practically?

Live It:

- Know the Word so that you can discern God's voice.

OPTIONAL BREAK

SEGMENT #4: Living with Kings (Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 8:7, 10-20)

[pages 94-100]

Key Talk Points: How to guard a heart

The consequences of turning from God.

Context/Comments:

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

Although written well before the advent of kings in the land of Israel, Deuteronomy gives God's commands to His people for the day they will ask for a king. As you reason through this section with your students, help them to see how both the prohibitions and positive commands of God regarding the kings impact the heart. God clearly says that multiplying wives will cause a king's heart to turn away. As we'll soon see, that behavior will turn the heart of even Solomon, the wisest man ever to live. Conversely, when a king focuses not on horses, women, and money, but rather sets the Word of God before him by writing a copy and reading it, this will cause him to fear God and subsequently guard his heart from pride.

Week Five: **The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament**
Notes

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .
 What are your initial observations on the text? What questions do you have?

When will the people ask for a king?

Why will the people ask for a king? What is the inherent problem in this?

Who may serve as king? What are the requirements?

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Week Five: **The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament**
Notes

QUIZ: (Open book if you need it)
Write Your Letters
 Without looking, try writing the first 17 letters of the Greek alphabet with their English equivalents.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.

What is a king NOT supposed to do?

What is a king supposed to do? Why? Who is to be involved?

What does reading the Word daily do? What does this counteract?

As we continue to look at Israel and her kings, it will be very tempting to develop an attitude about what they didn't do and what they should have done. So let's first consider ourselves in light of these commands. What commands God gave to the kings of Israel are applicable to your life today? (How well do I stay in God's Word? Do I trust power and wealth instead of God? Am I guarding my heart?, etc.) Explain.

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1 Samuel 8:7, 10-20

We read in the opening verses of 1 Samuel 8 that Joel and Abijah, the sons of Samuel, were judging Israel but not walking in the ways of their father. The people subsequently asked for a king, but God told Samuel "they're not rejecting you but Me as their king." As you walk your class through this section, note the repeated phrase "he will take" and the breadth of what the king will demand from the people – from children to fields to their very lives. Also try to draw out of them what the people are trading in for this king of flesh. (They're exchanging the mighty God who delivered them from Egypt for a man just like themselves.)

Discussion Questions:

What does Deuteronomy command kings to do and warn them not to do?

What are some modern equivalents? How can we use these principles to guard our hearts today?

Where do we typically fall in this regard?

When are we tempted to opt for the seen, like Israel did with a visible earthly king? How does this show itself in our lives today?

How can we effectively counteract fleshly impulses? What truths can we bring to bear? (Looking for specific truths here, not just "Live by God's Word!")

Week Five: The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament

Class pages

Week Five: The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament

Notes

FVI:

Key People	Key Events
Abel	Creation
Enoch	
Noah	Flood
Abraham & Sarah	
Isaac (12 Tribes)	
Joseph	Egypt
Moses	Exodus
Joshua	Promised Land
Judges (Benam, Deborah, Jephthah, Samson)	
Samuel (transition)	
Saul, David, Solomon	United Kingdom
Judah	Israel
Rehoboam	Jeroboam
Isaiah	Divided Kingdom
Who of good and bad	All bad
Two Tribes	Ten Tribes

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Week Five: The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament

Notes

DAVID

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ the account of David's anointing in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 taking note of what God is looking for in the future king.

READ Psalm 27:4-8 and **MARK** every reference to the LORD.

Psalm 27:4-8

- One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.
- For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.
- And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.
- Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, and be gracious to me and answer me.
- When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

According to 1 Samuel 16, what is God looking for? How does this compare with what man looks at?

What happens to David when he is anointed?

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ILLUSTRATION: Both my husband and son like to mountain bike. I on the other hand prefer my stationary bike in the basement. Nonetheless, I typically pull out the real bike to help my sister-in-law with bike camp at the church in the summer. I'm fine with pedaling and casual riding, but put an obstacle in my path and I get a little twitchy. My hubby's expert biking advice is look where you want to go, not at what you want to avoid. If you don't want to hit the horse hooley in the middle of the path, don't look at the horse hooley in the middle of the path. Instead, look to the clear part of the trail where you want to ride. It makes sense, sort of.

You can probably guess where this is going. Last summer as we were on the trail, I noticed that indeed a horse had been there before me. I knew that I should NOT look at what the horse left on the path, but in my zeal to avoid it, I did look at it. Yup. Ran right through it. Tried to look at it and avoid it, but looking at it brought me through the center of it. The same principle holds true in life. Fix your eyes on your goal (Hebrews 12:1-2) and not on the pitfalls because you tend to move in the direction you're looking!

Live It:

- Be careful where you're looking.
- Learn to guard your heart through the truth of God's Word.

SEGMENT #5: David (1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 27:4-8)

[pages 101-103]

Key Talk Points: After the people reject God as their king, the first king, Saul, rejects God's word. God and man see differently. David learned to seek God's face.

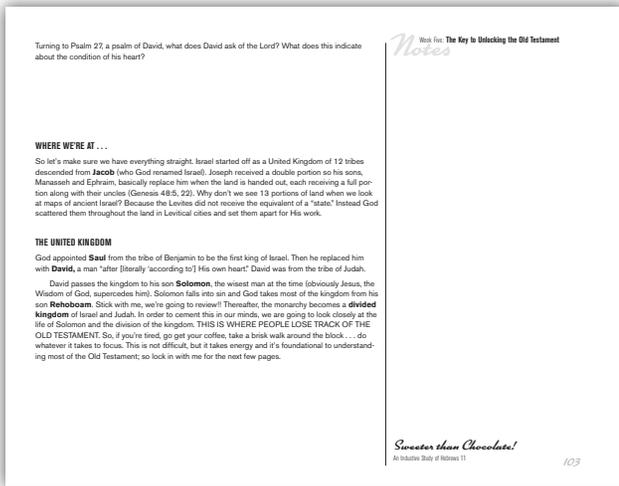
Context/Comments:

1 Samuel 16:1-13

As we move into the text where Samuel anoints David as the future king of Israel, we encounter the word *rejected* (*maas*). A quick concordance search reveals an interesting sequence in which the people reject God as their king (1 Samuel 8:7 "they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me"; 1 Samuel 10:19 "But you have today rejected your God"), King Saul rejects the word of the LORD and God, in turn, rejects him as king (1 Samuel 15:23 "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king"; 1 Samuel 15:26 "for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel"). According to 1 Samuel 15, King Saul disobeyed the direct word of the LORD

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to his own demise. As 1 Samuel 16 opens, God reprimands the prophet Samuel for his sustained grief over Saul whom God has now rejected. As the text continues, we see that God also rejects one of David's older brothers as a candidate because "the LORD looks at the heart."

Again, help your students identify visual words in this section as keys and reason through with them the difference in the way God and man see. Note that the Hebrew word meaning *to see* (*raah*) appears in verses 1 (selected), 6 (looked), and 7 (sees, looks, looks). The word *appearance* that occurs twice in verse 7 also derives from the same root. Additionally, help them pick out the key word *anoint* (3, 6, 12, and 13) and consider what it meant for David to be anointed while not yet installed as king.

Psalm 27:4-8

While Solomon pleased God by asking for wisdom to rule his people, I believe David asked for something better. David asked and sought to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of his life to behold His beauty and to meditate in His temple. Help your students identify *seek* as a key word and zero in on the fact that David was told to seek God's face and he obeyed.

Discussion Questions:

What key words did you note in the 1 Samuel account? What did you learn about the difference in the way man and God look at things?

What other key word did you note? (anointed) What happened to David when he was anointed?

What didn't happen? (He was not immediately installed as king and had to live by faith for this promise to be fulfilled.)

What did you learn about David's heart in Psalm 27?

Can we ask God for the same thing David asked for? What do we know about making requests? (See 1 John 5:14-15.)

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 Week Five: The Key to Unlocking the Old Testament

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ 1 Kings 10:23-11:13. If you have colored pencils, **MARK** every reference to horses and/or chariots in brown, **MARK** every reference to riches (silver, gold, etc.) in green, **MARK** every reference to women (wives, daughters, princesses, etc.) in pink, **MARK** every reference to idols in black. Or, if you have something against marking, just read the text very carefully keeping these categories in mind.

1 Kings 10:23-11:13

23 So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.
 24 All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.
 25 They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.
 26 Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen, and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.
 27 The king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland.
 28 Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's merchants procured them from Kue for a price.
 29 A chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, and a horse for 150; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.
 1 How King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,
 2 From the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love.
 3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.
 4 For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.
 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

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ONE STEP FURTHER:

The Davidic Covenant
 If you have some free time this week, look into the Davidic Covenant. What is it and why is it so important?

6 Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.
 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.
 8 Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.
 9 Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,
 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.
 11 So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.
 12 "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.
 13 "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .
 What are your initial observations on the text? What questions do you have?

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Live It:

- Ask for what David asked for.
- Consider specific ways you can intentionally seek God.

SEGMENT #6: Kingdom Divides (1 Kings 10:23-11:13 and 1 Kings 11:26-40)

[pages 104-110]

Key Talk Points: Israel is united under Saul, David, and Solomon.

The country divides under Rehoboam.

David's line maintains the Southern Kingdom of Judah under King Rehoboam

Jeroboam is anointed king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Israel remains a nation until defeated and scattered by Assyria in 722 B.C.

Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, falls in 586 B.C. to Babylon.

After 70 years in captivity in Babylon, Judah returns to her homeland.

Context/Comments: Whatever you do, don't shortchange this section!! If you need more time, continue this material at the beginning of next week's lesson; just don't miss it. This information will help your students frame a great majority of the Old Testament. It will give them the historical knowledge they need to understand the history of Israel and will equip them with the tools they need to begin handling the prophets, too.

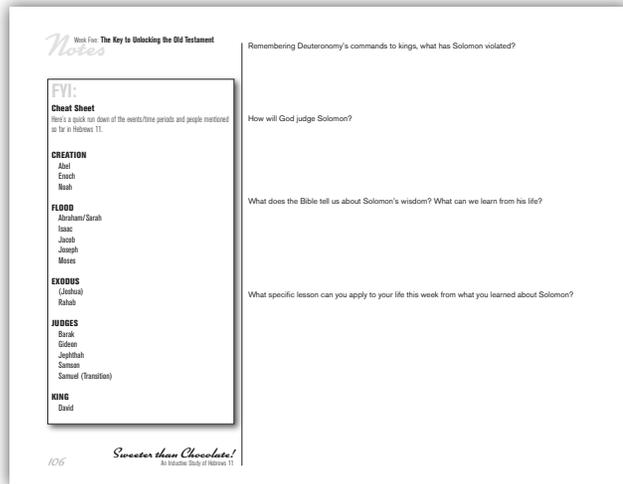
Here's how it will help with the prophets. The first questions we ask when dealing with any of the prophets, major or minor, are these:

• *Is their book written to Israel (north), or Judah (south), or someone else?* (Occasionally, the prophets preach to the enemies of Israel: one example is Jonah).

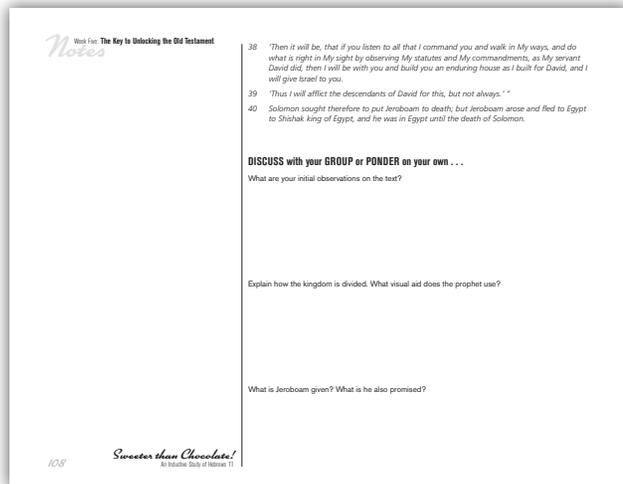
• *Is their book written before, during, or after the respective captivities of Israel or Judah?*

Obviously, in order to make any sense of these questions, you first need to know the distinction between Israel and Judah and you need to know that God's judgments fell on both of them. With these questions, you can fit the prophets into the overall biblical time line.

As you'll recall, Assyria defeats the ten northern tribes of Israel in 722 BC. Judah officially falls to Babylon with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. While Israel is scattered far and wide, Judah goes into captivity in Babylon and the people are not allowed to return for 70 years. Let's take some time now to look at why and



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how the kingdom divided.

1 Kings 10:23-11:13

This passage explains why the kingdom divided. God tore it away because of Solomon's sins. As you reason through this passage with your students, encourage them to remember God's commands to kings and then to compare God's standards with Solomon's behavior. Also prompt them to look for the key repeated phrase about Solomon's heart. These verses not once but four times refer to Solomon's heart being turned away from God and toward idols.

1 Kings 11:26-40

When God divided the kingdom, He used a prophet with a visual aid: he sent Ahijah to Jeroboam to tear a robe into twelve pieces. Ahijah told Jeroboam to take ten pieces to represent ten tribes of Israel God will give him. Two tribes will remain with Solomon's son Rehoboam. From this time forward, we have two distinct nations – Israel to the north, Judah to the south. By the way, this wouldn't be a bad place to use a similar visual aid yourself!

Discussion Questions:

How did the Israel change from being one country to two countries?

How can this help you understand the kings and prophets?

If the wisest man in the world couldn't play with sin without being burned, what hope is there for us if we cozy up to it?

Next week:

Playing to Win!

Inductive Focus: Application

Application is always grounded in accurate observation and interpretation of the Scripture. It always comes out of what a text says, which never contradicts the full counsel of God's Word. Sometimes it is obeying a clear command of Scripture. Other times it is imitating a good example or avoiding mimicking bad ones.

Application is not an add-on to study. It is the heart of why we study, what God uses to transform us more and more into the image of His Son.

Leader notes

Week Six

Playing to Win!

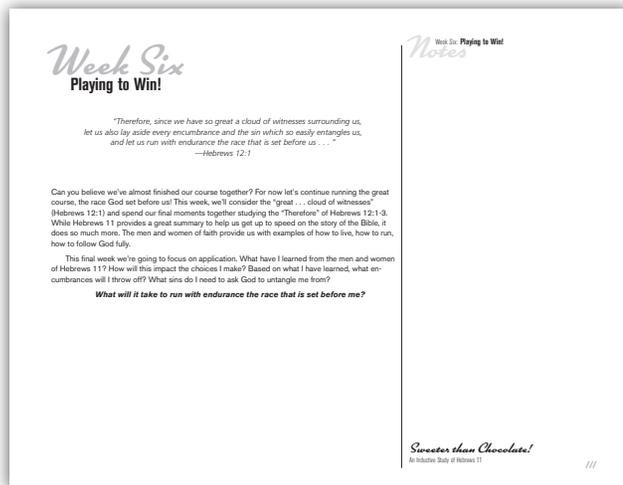
BEFORE CLASS

Hot Topics:

While we'll consider who some of the unnamed heroes of faith in the closing verses of Hebrews 11 are, the big issue for today is this: *How do we live by faith?* What are encumbrances and how do they slow us down? How did Jesus endure and what can we learn from His example? What lessons should we be applying as we seek to endure and live by faith? Appropriately, our final inductive focus will be on Application, putting hands and feet to what we have learned in God's Word.

Class-at-a-Glance

Segments	2 Hour Class	1 Hour Class	Topic
Segment 1:	15 min. 15 min.	OMIT 10 min.	• Read Hebrews 11 • Review
Segment 2:	25 min.	15 min.	The rest of the story: Hebrews 11:32-40
Optional Break	10 min.	OMIT	
Segment 3:	25 min.	15 min.	Inductive Focus: Application
Segment 4:	30 min.	20 min.	Living the "Therefore": Hebrews 12:1-3



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START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Read Hebrews 11

Review Basic Concepts

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

What is Observation and why is it important? What question does it answer?

How is Interpretation different from Observation?

What do we need for proper Application?

What genre is the book of Hebrews?

What is a "general epistle"?

Leader notes

Who was Hebrews written to? Explain.

Who are some of the possible authors?

What clues do we have regarding the date of writing?

List the highlights of the Old Testament characters the author of Hebrews cites in under two minutes!

What has been your biggest application point in the class?

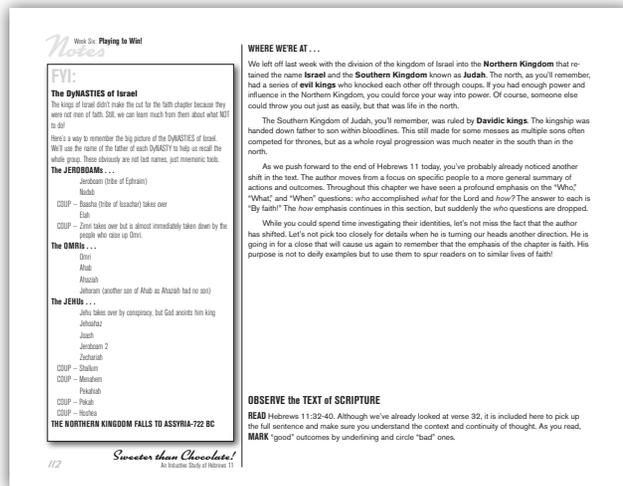
SEGMENT #2: The rest of the story (Hebrews 11:32-40)

[pages 112-115]

Key Talk Points: True faith doesn't guarantee positive short-term outcomes.

Faith looks to the bigger picture that extends beyond this life.

Context/Comments: After finishing the faith stories of Abraham and Moses, the author of Hebrews shifts from naming names to describing acts of faith. As you walk through these final verses and discuss allusions in the text, remember we can't be dogmatic where the text is not clear. Help your students think through their own mental concordances and discuss who the author may have had in mind in these final verses.



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Notes

Week Six: **Playing to Win!**

Hebrews 11:32-40

32 *And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,*

33 *who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,*

34 *quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight,*

35 *Women received back their dead by resurrection, and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection,*

36 *and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.*

37 *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated*

38 *from men of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.*

39 *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,*

40 *because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.*

DISCUSS with your GROUP or PONDER on your own . . .

What are your initial observations on the text?

What questions surface in your mind?

ONE STEP FURTHER:
Jeroboam—The Progression of Unbelief
If you have some time this week, consider the example of Jeroboam from 1 Kings 11:34-39 and 12:25-33. As you read, note God's promise to Jeroboam and the subsequent downward progression of his thought processes as related to his to hear and mind. Though to consider while you read:
— What did God promise to Jeroboam?
— What did Jeroboam fear?
— How did Jeroboam's fear manifest?
— How can we guard against "dying a Jeroboam"?

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FVI:
Naming Some of the Unnamed
While we don't know who the author of Hebrews had in mind when he lists only actions, here are a few whose lives fit some of the descriptions.

32 shut the mouths of lions - Daniel

34 quenched the power of fire - Shadrach, Meshach, Abimelech
escaped the edge of the sword - Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah
from weakness were made strong - David, Samson, Gideon

35 women received back their dead by resurrection - probably a reference to the resurrection through Elijah and Elisha
others were tortured, not accepting their release - may be a reference to persecutions during the Maccabean period

37-38 stoned - tradition points to Jeremiah
sawn in two - traditionally this is associated with Isaiah
went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground - could include Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, and John the Baptist

At what point does the text take a dramatic turn? What does it turn to?

Look back at your markings and compile a simple list of the "good" and "bad" outcomes. Don't forget to record the verses.

GOOD BAD

Do the final verses of Hebrews 11 evoke a different response in you than the earlier part of the chapter? Why or why not?

How are the outcomes at the end of the chapter different from the earlier ones?

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Here are a few possibilities:

conquered kingdoms

shut mouths of lions

quenched the power of fire

escaped the edge of the sword

from weakness were made strong

women received back their dead

stoned

sawn in two

put to death with the sword

sheepskin, goatskin . . . ill-treated

Joshua, David

Daniel (in the lions' den)

Samson and David also tussled and won against lions

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah

Samson, Gideon, and others

the widows during the time of Elijah and Elisha

a common fate of the prophets; tradition says Jeremiah

Isaiah (one tradition)

John the Baptist among others

Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, and John the Baptist

The text takes a marked turn in 11:35 as the author moves from permanent "good outcomes" to temporary "bad outcomes." Faith does not mean everything comes up roses in a fallen world. This faith, however, looks forward to the heavenly city and country to come. While we are "seated with Christ in the heavenlies" and in a principle sense have gained what was promised, we still live amid all the tensions of our fallen world and struggle to run the race set before us.

In what ways are all the outcomes similar?

Is living by faith different when life is difficult? Support your answer with specific examples from your life.

What have you learned by walking with men and women of faith?

Has your faith influenced others? Explain.

The men and women of faith who died before the cross looked forward to the promise of a Messiah-Savior. Some saw lesser promises and miracles fulfilled, but they all "gained approval" through their faith, though they died (with the exception of Enoch!) without receiving the promises during their mortal lifetimes.

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TRUE STORIES:
Elijah and Elisha
God used both of these prophets to bring people back from the dead. You can read about Elijah and Elisha @1 and 2 Kings.

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Discussion Questions:

How does the tone change in this section?

How is living by faith different when life is difficult or is it?

Although some outcomes were better from a human standpoint, what difficult situations did the people in the early part of Hebrews 11 encounter?

What have you learned by walking with men and women of faith?

Has your faith influenced others?

Live It:

- Persevere even when short-term outcomes look dire.
- Live in the reality that God has fulfilled His promises!

OPTIONAL BREAK

SEGMENT #3: Inductive Focus: Application

Key Talk Points: We apply from direct commands.

We apply based on good examples.

We avoid based on bad examples.

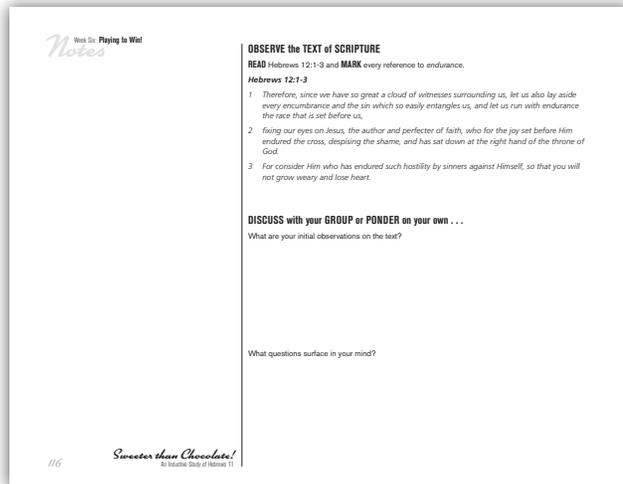
Context/Comments: Few Christians have sat in a Bible study and *not* been asked at some point, “What does this passage mean to you?” While application is of paramount importance, “What does it mean to you?” is not the way to get there. “What does it mean *to you*?” is an entirely relative question. When we apply Scripture, we do so only after carefully considering the text to see what the author intended to say to his original readers. The text means today precisely what the author intended to say to his original readers.

Sometimes this is clear and easily applied across time and culture: Do not steal. Clear. Don’t do it. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and might. Clear. Obey.

Other times when we read Scripture, especially in the historical accounts of the Old Testament, we are not always given direct commands of what to do and what not to do. Sometimes people ask, “How do I know what to do when I’m just reading stories?” Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:11-12 that we are to learn from those who have gone before us (in this case the grumbling Israelites), saying, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall!”

Even here in the book of Hebrews the author calls his reader in 6:12 to be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Throughout Hebrews 11 we have examples of faith, but when we look back more closely at each individual story, we can find lessons both about what to do and what not to do. Men and women of faith did not always behave faithfully. This is a huge way that we learn from Old Testament readings. We observe how people lived their lives either aligned with God or at odds with Him, and take those lessons to heart.



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Discussion Questions:

What direct commands have you seen in Hebrews 11 and 12? Are they clear? What are some specific ways you have been applying or will apply them in your life?

What example of faith most resonates with your own journey?

What did you learn to avoid by reading your both Hebrews 11 and the cross references?

Live It:

- Do what God commands in His Word.
- Imitate godly behavior.
- Learn from the mistakes of others – and don't repeat them!

SEGMENT #4: Living in the “Therefore” (Hebrews 2:9-18)

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Key Talk Points: Living the “Therefore.”

Throwing off what weighs us down.

Learning to run the race with endurance.

Context/Comments: Hebrews 11 is sometimes studied isolated from the chapter that follows. When this happens, though, we lose the power of the “Therefore” of Hebrews 12:1 that calls us to endure like the witnesses who went before us. While we should be encouraged by these examples of faith, the author calls us not to focus on them, but rather to fix our attention on The Example who is greater still – Jesus, the author and finisher of faith. As you reason through these verses, help your students identify the key word *endure/endurance* and

What words and phrases can you focus on for further study?

What words to these verses to the overall theme of Hebrews 11 and how do they function?

What specific actions is the author of Hebrews calling us to?

How can we accomplish them?

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What does the author of Hebrews exhort us to do with our eyes in Hebrews 12? How does this vision compare with the vision of the men and women of faith in Hebrews 11?

What steps will you take this week to throw off encumbrances and sin in your life? (The more specific you can be the better.)

Remember, my friend, as we seek to throw off encumbrances and sin and to run the race set before us, we do it by faith! It is not something we muster up on our own, we are empowered by the One who set us free from the power of death! As we bring our study to a close, we are going to dip back into Hebrews 2 for a reminder of why we can walk in faith and whose aid we can count on when times are dark and temptations abound.

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ONE STEP FURTHER:
Them and Us
 "Apart from us they would not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40). What does this mean and why does it matter? What is the "something better" God provided for us? If you have extra extra time this week, explore these questions and record your findings below.

ONE STEP FURTHER:
"A Better Resurrection"
 What a miracle, what's this all about? Think this through carefully based on the full content of Scripture. Then check commentaries and record your findings below. Once think about the topic of resurrection talked about in its immediate context?

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wrestle with how considering Jesus' endurance can help us to run with endurance. What did He fix His gaze on to endure? What should we look at to endure?

Talk your class through how the author calls his readers to respond: laying aside encumbrances and sin, running with endurance, and fixing our eyes on Jesus so we won't grow weary. Be clear that encumbrances are broader than sin. Encumbrances weigh us down and hinder us from running our best.

Discussion Questions:

What is the "therefore" there for?

What action are we called to do?

What encumbrances weigh you down? How can you throw them off?

What causes you to grow weary and lose heart?

What is the antidote according to the text?

How can you better fix your eyes on Jesus?

Week Six: **Playing to Win!**

Class pages

@ THE END OF THE DAY . . .

So where do you fit in? Where do I fit in? Hebrews 11 presents us with an excellent summary of the biblical story of redemption but it also leaves us with a profound challenge. Will you, will I, pick up the baton and run the race as those who have gone before? Generations have known about Abel, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, and the rest. But the story doesn't end with them! God's story continues in you and in me. No, our faith will never be recorded in holy writ, but our lives are a part of the continuum of faith; we are among those apart from whom the Old Testament faithful will not be made perfect.

My friend, we run with the advantage of a clear goal. We are called to fix our eyes on Jesus. We run having examples of faith who now surround us as "so great a cloud of witnesses."

What is the next step of faith that God is calling you to today? Don't worry about a mile down the path. Right now, record what you think is the next single step He is calling you to.

Are sins hampering your obedience and your ability to hear His voice? If so, what steps will you take to align yourself with God's revealed truth?

What encumbrances are weighing you down and holding you back from running your best race? How will you run lighter?

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Next week:

LIVE IT!!

Notes

ONE STEP FURTHER:

John 15

Spent some time this week reading in John 15 and considering how a tree bears fruit and how this applies to us here as believers in Christ. Record your findings below.

FVI:

Are you being perfected by the flesh?

The Jewish Sabbath, who has benighted you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly paraded as crucified? This is the only thing I want to feed me from you: did you receive the Spirit by the words of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

-Galatians 3:1-3