

DAY 1 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

What kind of faith do you admire?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—"he disappeared, because God took him." For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. **Hebrews 11:1-6 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

What is "NEXT"? NEXT is building kingdom legacy in Eastern Iowa and around the world!

We believe faith is unstoppable. NEXT faith is believing when I don't see it.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

What does "building kingdom legacy in Eastern Iowa and around the world" mean?

"By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God's command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen." Because matter, time, energy, and information each cannot create itself, what exists in our universe necessarily must have come from something different, distinct, and independent of it. Thoughts?

Who do you put faith in, and why? Is it because you can prove the future or because you have chosen to believe based on their trustworthiness in the past?

Is **real** faith BASED ON past evidence or IN SPITE OF past evidence?

"It is impossible to please God without faith." For faith to exist in me, there must be something that is 1) not known by me, and 2) not controlled by me. God invites you to trust. He doesn't beg or control. What does that say about God's heart?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for never failing me in the past. Thank you for faithfully walking with your people through good times and bad. Thank you for creating this universe, inviting me to learn about you, and allowing me to make a choice whether or not to trust you. I choose to trust!

DAY 2 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Are your ultimate dreams bigger than this world? Describe what you anticipate in Heaven.

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. **Hebrews 11:7–16 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

We believe faith is unstoppable. NEXT faith is obeying when I don't understand it.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

If you believe God has great things in store for those who believe...if you REALLY believe that, then:

- What conversation do you need to have today?
- What gift do you need to give today?
- What habit do you need to start today?
- What bad habit do you need to stop today?

Start today, and remember...God gives us enough strength for TODAY. He doesn't give us strength *today* for tomorrow. So don't use up today's energy worrying about tomorrow. Use today's energy to walk with God today.

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for giving me enough information, energy, and capacity for today. Thank you for walking with me today. Help me trust you with tomorrow, so that if you give me the gift of tomorrow, and it becomes "today," you'll be with me supplying what I need and walking with me through the unique gifts and challenges!

DAY 3 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

Describe a time when God's ability to make good come out of bad amazed you.

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture: Now Adam had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, "With the LORD's help, I have produced a man!" Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel. When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." One day Cain suggested to his brother, "Let's go out into the fields." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

Afterward the LORD asked Cain, "Where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "I don't know," Cain responded. "Am I my brother's guardian?" But the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother's blood. No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth."

Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment is too great for me to bear! You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!" The LORD replied, "No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. So Cain left the LORD's presence and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. **Genesis 4:1–16 NLT**

Sermon Insights: We believe faith is unstoppable. NEXT faith is giving like Abel when I feel like Cain.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

"Everything happens for a reason," while it may be stated in a well-meaning way, is a very harsh and unbiblical statement, because it implies that God has a good reason for every bad thing that happens. While God can bring amazing good out of incredible evil, God does not want evil to happen, God never authors anything evil or false, God never tempts anyone to sin, and what God wants—God's will—is NOT always done *on earth*. Jesus taught us to pray, "May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Yet God responds with kindness when we turn back to him, as he did with Cain. Are you willing to walk with God even when it costs you greatly?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, I'm grieved at the evil in our world. I'm grieved that the first brother on earth killed his own brother out of anger and resentment. I'm grieved at the level of sin in my own life. And I am continually amazed at your amazing grace. While you offer a path of wisdom and blessing, you also kindly offer forgiveness on the other side of great evil and tragedy. You are not surprised. You are not dismayed. You weep with us...and then you give us a fresh start and a new beginning. Thank you for being the God of resurrection and new life, able to create something out of nothing and to breathe life where there was only death.

DAY 4 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

When you think of your "real home," what comes to mind?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.

It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned. It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down. **Hebrews 11:23–30 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

We believe faith is unstoppable. NEXT faith is persisting when I don't feel like it.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Moses "chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin." How are you choosing to sacrifice to help others rather than simply pursue sinful pleasures?

Moses "thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward." Moses understood God was going to bring someone great into the world, though he didn't know it would be Jesus. He realized God's outside ability is much greater than all the treasure in the world. What "treasure" do you have your eyes set on?

"It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible." Read that again. How are you going to imitate him?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thanks for giving me very practical insights from the life of Moses that help me in my walk today. It's tempting to fill my life with sinful pleasures and to amass wealth as the sole purpose of life and justify it by fitting in with the world. You helped Moses live for a better cause. Help me to keep my eyes on the "one who is invisible" and build my life around the expectation of Jesus coming back one day to take me to my real home.

DAY 5 – SCRIPTURE, OBSERVATION, APPLICATION, PRAYER ("SOAP")

CONVERSATION STARTER

On a scale from 1-10, 1 being "I hate ambiguity and 'the unknown'" and 10 being "I love ambiguity and embrace the constant change and excitement of the unknown," what number would represent you?

SCRIPTURE OBSERVATION (5 MINUTES)

Scripture:

It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down. **Hebrews 11:30 NLT**

The next morning as they passed by the fig tree he had cursed, the disciples noticed it had withered from the roots up. Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree on the previous day and exclaimed, "Look, Rabbi! The fig tree you cursed has withered and died!"

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart. I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours. But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." **Mark 11:20–25 NLT**

All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us. **Hebrews 11:39–40 NLT**

Sermon Insights:

We believe faith is unstoppable. NEXT faith is thanking God before I receive it.

APPLICATION SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Honestly, the question of what God does in response to our faith can be very confusing. What are God's promises? What can I ask? What will happen when I do? These are all important questions!

Jesus said to his disciples "...it WILL BE yours." God's timeline is different than ours. God's choice of how to respond is sometimes simply a mystery to us. Some people receive what they ask for immediately. Others wait gratefully and patiently—with just as much faith. The faithful people described in the book of Hebrews waited all their lives faithfully and did not receive everything God promised while they were on earth. God is always good and always faithful...just not always trackable according to our preferences!

Why is faith essential as we participate in God's work?

What does gratitude *before receiving God's blessing* do for us? Does it put us in the right frame of mind and heart?

Why is forgiving others and receiving God's forgiveness essential before asking God in faith?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

Lord, thank you for loving us so much that you would call us to participate in your plan. Teach me to trust and be grateful as I participate...as I wait... as you continue to lead us into a growing relationship with you through Jesus Christ!