

The Faith Adventure

Heb. 11:8-10

Series “More”

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I’ve told you before that I have a number of playlists on my phone. I love music and am very eclectic in my musical tastes. I feel like I have a playlist for every mood that I am in.

- I’ve got a movie score playlist that I can listen to while studying...
- If I’m road-tripping it, give me my George Strait (country from the 90’s - early 2000’s playlist) ...
- If I’m in a chill mood...kind of internal reflection mood, give me my instrumental hymns...
- I have a workout playlist that I haven’t gotten to in a long time, but it’s there!

One of my favorite playlists though is one that I created this past year. I had a couple of buddies that asked me to run a half-marathon with them, and so I got into it and when the miles pick up during the training runs, you have to have something to listen to.

I can only listen to so many podcasts or sermons...need some music to help the time pass, so I decided to create a new playlist to help the time pass and I titled it “Old School”.

Now, this playlist is AWESOME. And here’s what it consists of – old 80’s, 90’s and it MAY have an early 2000 song on it from the CCM days – contemporary Christian music.

These were the songs that were really popular when I was a 7th grader through a senior in high school.

I LOVED these songs...songs from artists like Amy Grant, 4Him, Michael W. Smith, DC Talk, Point of Grace...and it’s been years since I listened to them.

And so, I made this playlist and started listening to it when I was running...and there is one song that when it comes on – I’m telling you, it doesn’t matter what mile I’m on, when it plays, the pace picks up! I’ll let you hear the opening words to it:

Illus. Saddle up your horses (song)

Oh, man...that’s good stuff right there! May go for a run after this service! That’s from Steven Curtis Chapman and his song, “The Great Adventure”.

Now, I remember listening to this song at summer camp...actually watching the music video and got so inspired. I want you to listen to some of these words to this song. It fits perfectly with where we are headed in the message today.

Saddle up your horses

We've got a trail to blaze

Through the yonder of God's Amazing grace
Let's follow our leader into the glorious unknown
This is the life like no other whoa whoa
This is The Great Adventure

We'll travel on, over mountains so high
We'll go through valleys below
Still through it all we'll find that
This is the greatest journey
That the human heart will ever see
The love of God will take us far
Beyond our wildest dreams
Yeah, oh saddle up your horses
Come on get ready to ride

Saddle up your horses
We've got a trail to blaze
Through the yonder of God's Amazing grace
Let's follow our leader into the Glorious unknown
This is the life like no other whoa whoa
This is The Great Adventure

Yes sir!!! This is it right here! I'd listen to this and we'd worship to them on Wednesday nights at church, hear them at summer camps...I would get so inspired, I'd blast them on my way to school driving getting fired up about living for Jesus – that following him is “The Great Adventure”.

And that's what I want to talk with you about today. We're continuing in our *MORE* series, and the title of the message today is: **The Faith Adventure**

The Faith Adventure IS the Great Adventure, and this is what we learn and what is highlighted by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews chapter 11. This is the chapter known as the Hall of Faith.

And like in any Hall of Fame, you have people who are known for being great at their craft, in their particular area of expertise they are known for being the best, but even in the Hall of Fame – whatever Hall of Fame you're looking at, you have ONE person that is just known as the GOAT – the greatest of all time!

This is the person that all other people – even in the Hall of Fame are held up against!

- In baseball, we think Babe Ruth...
- In basketball, we think Michael Jordan...

In the faith Hall of Fame, this is Abraham. He is the measuring stick if you will to everyone mentioned in Hebrews 11. It's why the writer ascribes 19 verses in Hebrews 11 to the life of Abraham – we'll look at just a few of them today and cover the rest over the next two weeks.

Hebrews 11:8-10 – “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”

As with everyone we have looked at and learned from so far in this study, trace it back to why Abraham is mentioned here in Hebrews chapter eleven and you’ll find that just like Abel and Enoch and Noah – Abraham is listed here and heralded as an example to follow because he believed God and obeyed God.

THIS is the essence of faith. It’s a belief – not simply intellectual – you can believe something intellectually, but still not be believing it in faith.

By definition, faith is belief expressed in action. Recall the definition we have given from our NextStep book:

Faith – Choosing to live (that’s key! That’s action!) as though God’s Word is true (because it is! Backed by his character and nature – go back and listen to week one. This is v. 1-3) regardless of circumstances; regardless of emotions and regardless of cultural trends.

This is faith – it’s belief that is expressed in action and THIS describes Abraham’s life. The Bible says here (Heb. 11:8) that Abraham obeyed WHEN he was called.

Let’s look at this calling a bit more in depth and to do so, let’s go all the way back to Genesis 12.

Gen. 12:1-5 – “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” ⁴ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.”

Now, Abraham was originally from a place called Ur. It was located in what is today, southern Iraq, and it was an ancient city known for its:

1. Religion – it was a polytheistic society that worshipped the moon god, Nanna. In fact, still standing today – while it’s been partially reconstructed is what is known as the Great Ziggurat of Ur. You can see what was known as the “stairway” to heaven where this false god could descend and meet with priests.
2. Economy - Ur was a wealthy trading city, and from what we know from Abraham’s life is that he evidently came from wealth.

Gen. 13:2 – “Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.”

3. Technology and Learning – It was advanced for its time regarding architecture, mathematics and literature

We often think of these time periods in which the patriarchs lived as lacking or unintelligent, but that’s not the case. Ur was about as advanced as you could get at the time, and God shows up in Abraham’s life when he is 75!

He reveals himself to Abraham, and God calls him to leave ALL that he knows and go – and he doesn’t even tell him exactly where he is to go!

(Gen. 12:1b) – “...it will be a land that I will show you.”

(Heb. 11:8b) – “...and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

If you’re taking notes, write this down. I want to hang three words on this idea of living “The Faith Adventure”.

The first word, is the word: **Mindset**

While we don’t know exactly HOW God revealed himself to Abraham – scripture doesn’t explicitly tell us. Steven preaches in Acts 7 and states “the God of glory appeared to Abraham.” ...and in this appearance God spoke to him.

This is Gen. 12:1 – “Now the LORD (all caps – Yahweh) said to Abram...”

Now, this exchange that Abraham had with the Lord fundamentally changed him. He believed God. Paul refers to him in (Rom. 4:11) as “the father of all who believe”. It’s in this same chapter (Rom. 4:3) that Paul quotes from:

Gen. 15:6 – “And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

Very important...this plays off last week in what we talked about Noah as well - they were graced by God...favored by God. And upon believing God, their life was changed forever.

And one of the first aspects of this change was the way they thought...there was a shift in their mindset.

For Abraham, upon this revelation and hearing the voice of God – that meant he no longer followed Nanna as god. There is a shift in his thinking...in how he saw his life.

Notice upon hearing the call of God to go, the scripture simply says (Heb. 11:8b), “He went out” – the tense in which this is written means a decisive, completed action.

In other words, he heard from God, and his mind was made up! He immediately started going in the direction God told him to go!

Illus. Instant obedience – good lesson for us! Most of us are educated well beyond our obedience. Our problem is not that we don't know what God has said (we'll talk about that in a moment), our problem is we're not currently obeying what we know we've been commanded to do!

Abraham hears from God and its instant obedience for him!

Talk about a "Faith Adventure"! It started with him going home and telling his wife! I sure wish that conversation was recorded for us in scripture!

Illus. Telling Debbie about CF – 9/29/20 – this next week will be the 5-year anniversary of getting a call about CF (kickin' chickens) – I'll never forget it! And I'll never forget coming home to tell Debbie. You bring something life changing up, you better have the receipt that you're hearing from the Lord to go with it!

Now, remember, Abraham is well off! He's got resources...he's got land...he's got livestock! Because of his wealth, he probably has status in the community. He's 75. This means they have their friend group settled. He and Sarah are comfortable living in Ur.

And after an encounter with God and hearing him speak, EVERYTHING changes. They pack up, leave the familiar and start heading in a direction not even knowing where they are going!

Listen...if you are going to live the "Faith Adventure" with the Lord, you better have the mindset – I'll just call it a "pilgrim mindset" that God's call trumps your comfort. Your mindset has to be that I will follow God NOT sit back in what is familiar and safe.

I've said this often to guys that I walk with in a discipleship relationship, comfort is the enemy of cross-bearing, AND the language that God often speaks is a calling us away from and out of our comfort zone.

Now, this brings up something very important that we need to address and that is ensuring we know how to hear from God.

You do know that we serve a God who speaks, don't you?! He didn't just speak to Abraham and the patriarchs; he is still speaking to us today!

The question is do we know how to discern his voice so that when he does speak, we like Abraham are ready and eager to obey?

Let me offer some guidance on how to discern God's voice. First of all, we need to demystify God speaking. When we say God speaks, I'm not talking about hearing God's audible voice.

For the record, we don't know that Abraham heard God's audible voice. We know God spoke through visions and dreams and there were certainly theophanies in scripture where God's

presence is manifested visibly (think the burning bush, pillar of cloud and fire, the one known as the angel of the Lord).

I could do a whole sermon on God speaking...wrote an entire chapter on it in my book, *The Always* God – talked about HOW he speaks. There's no question, God speaks (creation, conscience, circumstances, wise counsel, Word and prayer) .

What we're after today though is how do we discern his voice in these things?

Some may be thinking, "I'd do what God told me to do...I'd leave my home and comfort if I KNEW, like Abraham, that it was God speaking to me!"

Some of you may sense God speaking to you about something right now. He's calling you to go somewhere or maybe he's calling you to do something big or small for his glory. How can we discern the voice of God? This is so important!

Let me say this as it relates to God speaking and then I'll give some brief tips on discerning his voice because it's NOT as difficult as we may think or make it out to be.

First, write this down and NEVER forget it: **God's primary way of speaking is through his Word** (the Bible), **and what he speaks will always reflect his character** (God doesn't change) **and align with his Word** (it will never contradict the Bible and this means we must know the Bible).

If you want to hear God speak, it will only happen when you open his Word. Stop chasing a dream. Stop longing for a vision from above. God speaks EVERY time we open his word. Open his word and read it – this IS God speaking.

From Abraham's life, we learn that when God speaks...this is how you can discern his voice: **It's personal**. He came to Abraham...this is what I want YOU to do.

Illus. Time alone – amazing how often I read through God's Word in a systematic way and his Word for me in that given moment is exactly what I need – blows me away!

Not only is it personal, but in discerning God's voice, you need to know this: **It's progressive**

What I mean by this is God doesn't always give you the final outcome, typically what he gives you is, the next step. Did you notice that God did not lay out for Abraham where he was going? He just said, "Go" and I'll show you. That's NOT a lot to go off of!

This is why we are calling it the "Faith Adventure"! God will speak and usually through his Word, he gives a little bit at a time. We don't like this...we want to see it all up front and know how it's going to work out! God doesn't work that way!

Psalms 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

It's not a big spotlight on the future...God speaks progressively as you give yourself to his word, and if you are waiting for him to tell you how it's going to fare out before you make your move, you will NEVER make your move!

Illus. Puzzle – one piece at a time without seeing the cover! Calvin said, “Just close your eyes and take my hand” – it's a step at a time. It's progressive.

Thirdly, you can discern God is speaking to you in that: **It's peaceful**

God is not the author of chaos (1 Cor. 14:33). Now, notice I did NOT say that what he is speaking to you will not cause fear...or maybe a bit of panic, even.

Again, God speaking is typically calling us away from the familiar...out of our comfort zone...that's always going to have some fear associated with it!

- Moses – go to Pharaoh
- Joshua – put your feet in the water Jordan
- David – grab a slingshot
- Jeremiah – prophesy against the king

There will be fear present...but with the still, small voice of God will be a sense of calm...there will be a confidence that God is with me and will whatever he is calling me to do, he will equip me to do – maybe even the exact moment that I need him to do it!

Remember, the Holy Spirit is known as the “Helper”. He comes alongside, and when God speaks, you can know it's him because even in the midst of crazy circumstances or unrest, God's voice will be peaceful.

Also, let me just add this to discerning the voice of God: **Slow down** – It's hard to hear God when you're in a hurry. Remember from a few weeks ago, the Three-Mile per hour God!

Then make sure you: **Sit still** – What does the scripture say? **Psalm 46:10a** – “**Be still, and know that I am God...**”

I'm not just talking about a stillness physically...I'm talking about removing the noise from your life. How do you expect to discern the voice of God when notifications are going off on your phone, when your mind is wandering – it's just not going to happen.

And then finally, I'd say: **Stop talking** – I was going to say “shut up”, but this sounds nicer! Some of us can't hear and discern the voice of God because we never stop talking to hear what he might have to say to us.

Illus. Time alone – reflect, journal, listen

See, when God spoke to Abraham – he knew it was God speaking and it changed everything. The mindset shift was, God is in control of my life. He gets to dictate what I do...where I go...who I spend time with...the direction of my life.

This is the mindset that governed his life from the moment God revealed himself to Abraham and spoke to him. From that point on, his life was NOT his own AND this world was not his home.

It's why he picked everything up...left his stable home...stable community...and went to a land he didn't even know he was going to 1500-2000 miles away (Houston to Cananda with no GPS, hotels, nice restaurants along the way).

He was according to (Heb. 11:9) "living in tents". This represented the temporary nature of his lodging. Talk about a "pilgrim mindset".

Interestingly, you know what it says Abraham did everywhere he went on this journey? He pitched a tent, and he built an altar. He worshipped all along the "Faith Adventure" – this has to be what kept him sane...what kept him on track!

Everywhere he went he built an altar – he worshipped...and pitched a tent. It was a perpetual reminder this world is not my home. Abraham was just passing through.

This was the mindset of Abraham...once God revealed himself and spoke – he knew from that point on that he was a sojourner...an exile! Look down at (v. 13).

Hebrews 11:13 – "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."

Listen to me, when you come to Christ "by faith" this is what you are signing up for! Comfort goes out the window! Christ bids you to come and die! We don't live for the "here and now" any longer. We're living for the world to come.

This leads to the second word I want to give you regarding the "Faith Adventure", and that's the word: **Motivation**

What kept Abraham going? This was a long journey with some winding roads and some ups and downs and some sleepless nights. It wasn't enough just to have a pilgrim mindset; Abraham was motivated by something...it was like a proverbial carrot at the end of a stick. What was it that motivated him and kept him going?

Was it not the promises of God? In Gen. 12, Abraham was given SEVEN promises in two verses.

Gen. 12:2-3 – “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Look again at **Hebrews 11:8-10 – “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. (Promise) And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”**

What kept Abraham going...and what kept him on mission was his faith...his belief...his trust in the promises of God.

God (according to scripture) must have filled Abraham in on this city he was preparing...a city with foundations – in other words a city that is built to last – for all of eternity. It wasn't a man-made city like Ur or any other Canaanite city Abraham saw, but instead this city was one whose “designer and builder is God”.

Hey, question for you? What is it that's going to keep us pressing ahead and moving forward in this faith adventure? Because like Abraham, our journey is filled with highs and lows...there's some dark and lonely days, and sometimes with the pressure and spiritual warfare we are going to feel like giving in and quitting!

What is it that keeps us going? It's our belief in the promise of God.

It's our eyes on this future city that God has constructed for us that's going to keep us moving forward by faith. It's looking to this city that will cause us to leave what is comfortable and give it all up knowing what awaits us – the motivation of THIS promise is what will keep us going.

Illus. Pilgrim's Progress – John Bunyan in the mid 1600's was a preacher in England. He was a non-conformist. He was arrested and spent 12 years in prison. They said they'd release him if he stopped preaching and refused.

His story is an amazing one and it was in prison that he started writing what he is best known for and that is the allegorical tale, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

In the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian who is the hero of the story if you will is on his way to eternal life. But along the way he is tempted by all sorts of people. People named Simple, and Sloth and Presumption. He has to march up the Hill of Difficulty and he gets tired...the journey is long and difficult.

Finally, he comes to a place called Castle Beautiful where he could get some rest – it was a respite from the journey if you will and he could gather his strength and it's there that he gets to see in the far distance his destination. It's called it the “Celestial City”.

And while he still had a long way to go and he knew that troubles and persecution and dangers awaited him, you know what motivated him to keep going – the Celestial City. Seeing it...just a glimpse of it was all he needed.

I want to the best of my ability to give you a glimpse of that city this morning. Because I know for some you may be wondering, is it worth it? Some of you are tired...you're hurting...some are closer to this city while others are just starting out on the journey.

What will keep you motivated along the way. It's the promise of this city to come and all that awaits us there!

Rev. 21:2-4, 18-27, Rev. 22:1-5 – “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away...(v. 18-27) The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel. The first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. ²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life...(Rev. 22:1-5) Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”

I'm telling you today, that future city that awaits us – it is worth everything we will face on this “Faith Adventure”.

Let's be like Abraham – when God speaks, we move. That's the third word I'm giving you today. It's the word: **Movement**

See, when we have a pilgrim mindset. When we understand this world is not our home, and because it's not our home we are not living for what it can give us. Instead, we live motivated by the promise that awaits us...we are citizens of a different country...a better city.

And when our mindset is right, and when our heart is motivated by the promises of God...our feet will follow. We'll move in the direction God leads.

So, saddle up your horses...we've got a trail to blaze.

Would you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.