

HEROES — Week 1: By Faith Hebrews 11:1–7 | Jesus Over Everything Series

Today we are launching a brand-new mini-series within our Jesus Over Everything series. We're calling Heroes. And we're going to be spending several weeks in Hebrews chapter 11.

And honestly, as we launch into summer here at Awaken, this series just fits. **Because every generation tells stories about heroes.** Especially our current one.

Check this out: Marvel Cinematic Universe has generated more than **30 billion dollars**. Avengers: Endgame earned roughly **3 billion dollars** – **in movie theaters** all of that in a streaming world where we prefer DoorDash over interacting with the human taking our order at the restaurant. We pack theaters for stories about courage, sacrifice, rescue, and someone standing against impossible odds. **Why?**

Because something deep within the human heart longs for a hero. **I NEED A HERO!!!**

I love that moment when Captain America — battered, bleeding, shield barely holding — tightens the strap and keeps moving toward what looks like certain defeat. That moment resonates so deeply because we long for it. We long for someone strong enough to save and resonate with the idea that ordinary people can become something more.

And when we come to Hebrews 11, we find a different kind of hero.

Not a museum of untouchable saints. These were ordinary people — with fears, failures, doubts, and weaknesses — who trusted an unseen God and His unbreakable promises. They were not defined by their strength or their flawless performance, but by faith.

Faith is what turns ordinary people into heroes.

And over the next several weeks, we're going to walk through the stories of these men and women — who chose faith when fear would have been easier, obedience when compromise would have been simpler, surrender when comfort would have felt safer.

Because Hebrews 11 is not simply inviting us to admire heroes from a distance. It is inviting us into the same kind of faith.

Let's read our text together.

Hebrews 11:1–7

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Let's pray.

PART 1 — FAITH SEES DIFFERENTLY

The book of Hebrews was written to people who were exhausted. These were believers beaten down by pressure, persecution, uncertainty, and suffering. Some were discouraged. Some were drifting. Some were tempted to turn back to what felt safer.

And the writer's answer is not, "Try harder." Or, "Just hang on a little longer." **The answer of Hebrews is: see Jesus more clearly.**

Throughout this letter, Hebrews lifts our eyes to the supremacy of Christ — greater than angels, greater than Moses, greater than the priesthood, greater than the old covenant. And here in chapter 11, we begin to see what happens when theology becomes trust. When belief stops being abstract and becomes lived. Hebrews 11 is what happens when faith gets off the page and into your actual life.

And that matters because we live in a culture obsessed with visible results, instant gratification, and outward success. The world says, "Only believe what you can see." Hebrews 11 says the opposite: the invisible realities of God actually make sense of everything we do see.

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

Faith is not wishful thinking or blind optimism. It's not pretending reality is easier than it is. Biblical faith is confidence in the character of God even when the circumstances around you remain unclear.

And here's what Hebrews 11 shows us that I think we miss: faith was not a superpower possessed by a select few spiritual elites. **It was trust placed in the right place.** The heroes of this chapter were not extraordinary because of the greatness within themselves. They were extraordinary because of the greatness of the God they trusted.

The issue was never the size of their faith. It was the size of the God behind it.

Faith changes the way a person sees. And because it changes the way they see, it changes the way they live. Abel saw true worship. Enoch saw eternal reality. Noah saw rain before rain had ever fallen. While the world sees only what is visible, faith sees what others cannot see. **And what you see determines how you live.**

James K.A. Smith puts it simply: you are what you love. What you behold, you become. This is why we fix our eyes on Jesus — the author and perfecter of our faith. This is why we are being renewed in our minds, conformed into the image of Christ. Because what you set your gaze on shapes you. And if you want to become something different, you have to behold something greater.

What we see determines how we live. And the world knows this. This is why marketing companies make millions of dollars helping companies fix their vision problems. Fix what they are aiming for. Aim small, miss small. Set your focus on the right thing and you will yield the right results by living in the right way."

Now Hebrews 11 gives us three pictures of what that kind of faith actually looks like in real life. Three ordinary men. Three very different lives. Three different stories. But one common thread.

By faith

PART 2 — THE HEROES (15 MIN)

Hero #1: Abel — Faith Worships

Verse 4: *"By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain..."*

Picture this scene. Two brothers. Same family. Same upbringing. Same God. Both of them bring an offering. Both of them show up. But only one of them comes by faith.

The difference wasn't religious effort. The difference was the heart behind it.

Cain brought something. Abel brought worship.

And this is important because it is entirely possible to bring God an offering without actually surrendering yourself to God. It is possible to sing the songs, attend the services, check the spiritual boxes — and still keep yourself firmly at the center.

Some of us are a lot more like Cain than we want to admit. We're giving God attendance without surrender. Presence without obedience. Religion without trust.

In a city like Las Vegas — where everything constantly pushes us toward self-promotion, self-protection, self-indulgence — Abel reminds us that faith always asks one foundational question:

What sits at the center of your life? Worship always reveals what you actually value most.

Abel worshiped even though it cost him something. Faith worships before it gets what it's asking for. Faith says: God, You are worthy of my first and my best.

"Faith says, God, you are worthy of my first and my best, because you are my first and my best. I don't — I'm not a Christian because I have to be a Christian. I'm not a Christian because if I'm not, then I will pay later. And not because I'll be cast into the eternal fire — that is not the motivation of my walk with Jesus. I'm a Christian because I am loved by the Father. I am a Christian because I have found the source of my very life and my identity. I love and I worship God. This is the heroic characteristic of Abel. This is why he testifies to this day. This is why he still speaks to this day."

Hero #2: Enoch — Faith Walks

Verse 5, and then Genesis 5:24 fills it in for us: *"By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death... Enoch walked with God."*

I love that description. Not: Enoch impressed God. Not: Enoch achieved great things for God. Not: Enoch had a massive platform.

Enoch walked with God.

Day after day. Step after step. In nearness. In fellowship. In relationship.

Nobody writes books about Enoch's big miracle moments. The Bible doesn't give us his greatest hits. What it gives us is the most quietly radical life in the entire Old Testament: a man who just kept walking closely with God for three hundred years.

And I think this confronts us, because we tend to think of faith in terms of dramatic moments. Big miracles. Public breakthroughs. Mountaintop experiences.

But Enoch reminds us that some of the deepest faithfulness happens in ordinary, daily communion with God. Not just Sunday. Not just when life is hard. Not just when you need something.

In a culture that trains us to move faster, consume more, scroll longer, and live chronically disconnected from God while still calling ourselves believers — Enoch's life is genuinely radical.

Faith walks with God. Sunday isn't the destination. Sunday launches you into a week of walking with God.

Last week I welcomed everyone to Resurrection Sunday. The team looked and said, Bro *it's not Easter*. And I said — I know. But here's the thing: every Sunday is Resurrection Sunday. As John Stott would say, when we gather, we are transported to the heavenlies. We practice resurrection. We are living in this space as it should be, and as it one day will be permanently. And then we are sent back out, seated in the kingdom, to live that way all week long.

Hero #3: Noah — Faith Works

And now faith becomes visible. It gets public. And this is where the hero's story gets cinematic.

Verse 7: *"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household."*

Here's the scene. Noah is standing in his yard with blueprints from God in his hand. And what God is asking him to build is enormous — 450 feet long. And what God is warning him about has never happened before. Because it has never rained.

Not once. Not ever. The earth was watered from the ground up. There were no storm clouds. No floods. No frame of reference for what God was describing. So Noah picks up his hammer. And he starts building.

Year one — the neighbors walk by. "What's that?" "It's a boat." "...We're in the middle of the land." "I know." Year five. Year ten. The ridicule is relentless. The questions don't stop. The mocking gets louder. And still Noah builds.

Because faith obeys before the outcome is visible.

That's what Noah shows us. Faith doesn't wait for the evidence to show up before it moves. Faith acts on the Word of God even when the culture thinks it's foolish. Even when there's no rain in the forecast. Even when the people around you think you've lost your mind.

And Genesis 6:22 says this — one of the most simple and powerful verses in the entire Old Testament: *"Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him."* He just did it.

Not half of it. Not the parts that made sense. Not the parts that were socially acceptable. All of it. Abel shows us faith worshiping. Enoch shows us faith walking. And Noah — Noah shows us faith that builds before the storm comes.

PART 3 — YOUR STORY

Now here's where Hebrews confronts us. It is very easy to sit in a room like this and admire faith without ever stepping into it yourself. We can celebrate Noah while never building anything God asks us to build. We can admire Enoch while never actually walking closely with God ourselves. We can respect Abel while still keeping ourselves firmly at the center.

And that's one of the dangers of hero stories. We can consume them. Be inspired by them. Imagine ourselves as the hero. And then go home and change absolutely nothing.

Hebrews 11 is not written to inspire you from a distance. It's written to wake you up.

Here's the truth: everybody lives by faith. The real question is not whether you have faith. The real question is what your faith is in.

Some people put their faith in money. In comfort. In success. In relationships. In control. In whatever version of security they believe will finally hold their life together.

Tim Keller put it like this:

"Either you are connected with God and everything is secure no matter how chaotic your life looks, or you are disconnected from God and nothing is secure no matter how orderly your life appears."

That's powerful because it exposes what most of us already know deep down. There are people in this room whose lives look completely put together on the outside while everything inside is collapsing. And there are other people walking through real chaos, real loss, real uncertainty — who still carry this unshakable peace because their lives are anchored in God.

That's the kind of faith Hebrews 11 is talking about. Not shallow optimism. Not positive thinking. A deep, settled confidence in the character of God that actually changes the way you live.

And I want to get real for a second. I think about the person who has been sitting in the back spiritually for a long time. You believe in God. You've believed for years. But if you're honest, your faith is mostly passive. You consume it. You watch other people live it. And somewhere along the way, obedience got replaced with observation.

God is saying to you today: it's time to pick up the hammer.

Maybe for you, faith looks like Abel's worship. Finally stopping the cycle of giving God your leftovers — the leftover time, the leftover energy, the leftover finances — and placing Him back at the actual center of your life.

Maybe for you, faith looks like Enoch's walk. Not a dramatic moment. Not a decision you make today and forget tomorrow. A daily choice — day after day, step after step — to stay close to God. To open the Word. To actually pray. To build something that nobody calls impressive but that God calls faithful.

And maybe for some of you, God is calling you to something that looks like Noah's ark. Something that makes people around you raise their eyebrows. A conversation you've been avoiding. A call you know you need to make. A commitment that will cost you something. A step of obedience that doesn't have all the answers attached to it yet.

That kind of faith will often look foolish to the world around you. It will. But there is still a world that desperately needs men and women who build before the rain comes.

Now listen. I need you to hear this before we sing.

Hebrews 11 is not a highlight reel. It is not a hall of fame you visit, get inspired by, and then walk away from unchanged. It is a summons.

Every single name in this chapter — Abel, Enoch, Noah, and the dozens still to come — every one of them is standing up and saying: *this is not just my story. This is available to you.*

Because here's what I know about you. You were not placed in this room, in this city, in this moment in history by accident. You were called. You were chosen. You were made for more than a seat in the stands.

Abel didn't observe worship — he brought it. Enoch didn't admire people who walked with God — he walked. Noah didn't watch someone else build the ark — he picked up the hammer.

And I am telling you — there is a hammer with your name on it. You too can be a hero.

Not a Marvel hero. Not a cultural hero. A Hebrews 11 hero. Someone who trusted God enough to move when it wasn't comfortable. Someone who worshiped when it cost them something. Someone who walked with God in the ordinary, invisible, unglamorous days. Someone whose name may never be on a stage or in a book — but whose name is known in heaven as one who lived by faith and not by sight.

That is the invitation sitting in front of you right now.

So we're going to sing a song called Christ Be the Center. And I want you to know — that is not just a lyric. That is a declaration. It is a surrendering of the throne of your own life and saying: God, you lead. I'll follow. Whatever you ask, wherever you send, I will go. Because faith calls the ordinary to the extraordinary. Not because of what is in you — but because of the God who is with you.

Christ be the center. Not comfort. Not success. Not fear. Not self. Christ be the center — and watch what an ordinary life can become.