

Aim of lesson

Many of the events and passages relevant to this lesson will have been considered in Lessons 17, 18 and 19. The purpose of this lesson is to draw from these studies an understanding of the meaning of faith in people's lives and to recognise the importance of faith to salvation. Salvation is the gift of God but an individual's access to salvation is by faith - it is the key to the door. It is important to emphasise that although it is essentially to be based upon sound doctrine, faith is an attitude towards God and his plan of salvation rather than a set of beliefs. It is to be understood in terms of trust, obedience, commitment and reliance on God rather than ourselves.

Bible background

Genesis 22; Judges 6; 1 Samuel 17; Romans 4; Hebrews 11

Preparation required

The structure of this lesson will depend on the way lessons 16-18 have been taught. If much of the narrative detail has been dealt with then it may be appropriate to ask the students to work alone or in twos to draw up a list of 'features of faith for today' from the lives of Abraham and David - see the Students' Notes. If the narrative details have not been considered then it may be appropriate to go through them verbally asking the students to suggest modern parallels of faith from each event.

Suggested outline of lesson

Definition

Hebrews 11:1,6 It is recommended that a modern version is used for these verses. The class may like to offer paraphrases which use their own language. Hebrews 11:3 is a good example: science offers no explanation of the ultimate origin of the universe - we believe it came about by God's power.

You may choose from other events in the lives of these men but the following are three examples:

Abraham and Isaac Genesis 22

Verse

- 3 early - no vacillation or hesitation - faith acts; took wood - prepared, no excuses - faith commits
- 5 worship - not seen as a chore - faith is willing; come again - trusts God - faith is trust
- 6 took - he really means it - faith commits; together - fellowship - faith is a relationship
- 8 God will provide - trust even when hard to understand; together - still together - persistence in faith
- 9 told him of - God's way, not ours - faith is obedient
- 10 knife, slay - sacrifice - faith will make sacrifices

See Hebrews 11:17-19 Abraham believed the promises of God and had concluded that God would raise Isaac from the dead - so faith is not blind faith; it rests upon the promises of God and trusts in the righteousness and goodness of God.

Gideon - Judges 6

If you feel that the young people may find these examples a little distant from their own experience, you may like to think about Gideon. His life was not one of continuous courage: he starts by being afraid, and unwilling to do what God wants him to do, but ends up by leading Israel to victory.

Verse

- 1-6,11 Israel is dominated by the Midianites, and Gideon is afraid to thresh wheat openly. But God understands our human nature, and does not expect everything all at once.
- 12-15 Gideon is called to save Israel but protests that he is unable to do this because he is too weak. God still does not reject him.
- 16-24 Gideon asks for a sign, and the angel causes fire to burn up the offering. God is willing to help his faith to grow.
- 25-28 Gideon destroys the altar of Baal, but secretly by night
- 29-32 Gideon's father supports him against the people
- 33-40 Gideon summons all Israel against the Midianites, and asks for a sign to confirm that God is with him.

David and Goliath 1 Samuel 17

Verse

- 32 heart fail - the opposite of faith. David was in his later teens - faith and courage
34-36 fought wild animals - faith increased by experience. The living God - faith in God
37 fought wild animals - knows success is from God
39 not Saul's armour - does not put faith in man's defence
40 sling and stones - but he does make provision - not blind faith but using what God has given him
42-44 Goliath curses David - faith is sometimes despised
45-47 David trusts in God - his faith is clearly in God

Relevance to our lives

It can be difficult to relate the faith shown by men like Abraham and David in their very dramatic times to faith today in very different circumstances. It may be useful to spend a few minutes discussing the comparisons and contrasts emphasising that what God wants from us has not changed - he asks for faith and commitment now as he did then.

It is suggested that a list is drawn up of the characteristics of faith based on the examples studied. It may be something like this:

trust	commitment	belief
action	willingness	relationship
persistence	sacrifices	courage
experience	dependence	humility

If time permits it would be valuable at this point to consider the faith of the Lord Jesus, using the above list. It is readily seen that in each of them the Lord Jesus excelled.

With some groups it may be appropriate to discuss the way our faith sometimes fails and the limitations we have because of human weakness. This is important because the students may compare themselves with Abraham (or the Lord Jesus) and decide they could never have such faith and should not try, or they may think commitment has to wait until such faith is achieved.

Prayer

'We ask Lord that through your word we may be given the understanding we need as a firm foundation for a strong faith. Please help us to trust in you as our loving Father, and forgive us when our faith is not as strong as we would like it to be. Amen.'

Other suggestions for activities

The young people may like to suggest some 'tests' that happen to them which require them to show the qualities of faith, like being laughed at for going to church.