

#9 Encouraging Accounts of Faith

Hebrews 11

Stories that give perspective on suffering and struggles today. Not past, but present.



A Mother's Costly Choice



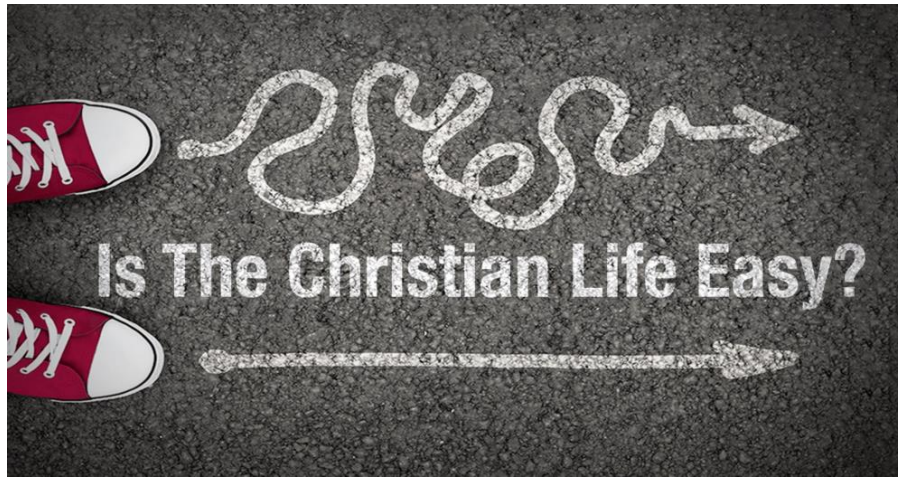
When Faridah's restaurant in Uganda burned down six months after she became a Christian, she didn't suspect anything. But then, just months later, her rented house also caught fire, and neighbors reported smelling gasoline.

Faridah, a mother of six, became a Christian after her husband left her. Her relatives cursed her and told her that she would never have peace as long as she followed Christ, and Faridah suspects that they started the fires. Compounding her difficulties, Faridah's landlord demanded that she reimburse him for the loss of the rental property.

"He said his house was burned because I rejected my family's religion and changed to Christianity," Faridah said. "He wants me to pay for damages and even repair everything that was burned."

After the fire, a local pastor connected Faridah with a VOM worker in Uganda. The worker learned that although she and her children had lost everything, including clothes and other personal items, they were still happy and thankful to God.

VOM helped the family resettle in a new home just before the country's coronavirus lockdowns went into effect. "This support came in a way that I never expected," Faridah said. "We were all incredibly happy." Faridah asks for continued prayer that her relatives will come to a saving faith in Christ. She also asks for prayer for her family's protection, as her relatives continue to threaten her life.



Where did we get the notion that the Christian life is a piece of cake? Where is the evidence for the "name it, claim it" theology that promises God will skip along in front of us with His great cosmic broom, sweeping aside each trial and every troubling uncertainty?

To the contrary, Jesus told His disciples that they should anticipate suffering. He said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Paul wrote, "In all our troubles my joy knows no bounds. For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within" (2 Corinthians 7:4-5).

Peter left no doubt about difficulties in this Christian life when he wrote, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Note in each of these references the coexistence of both joy and pain. This is the consistent, unequivocal "expectation" that we have been given by the biblical writers, and yet we seem determined to rewrite the text. That makes us sitting ducks for satanic mischief.

My concern is that many believers apparently feel God owes them smooth sailing or at least a full explanation (and perhaps an apology) for the hardships they encounter. We must never forget that He, after all, is God. He is majestic and holy and sovereign. He is accountable to no one. He is not an errand boy who chases the assignments we dole out. He is not a genie who pops out of the bottle to satisfy our whims. He is not our servant—we are His. And our reason for existence is to glorify and honor Him.

Even so, sometimes He performs mighty miracles on our behalf. Sometimes He chooses to explain His action in our lives. Sometimes His presence is as real as if we had encountered Him face to face. But at other times when nothing makes sense—when what we are going through is "not fair," when we feel all alone in God's waiting room—He simply says, "Trust Me!"

From Dr. Dobson's book *When God Doesn't Make Sense*.

What does FAITH look like?

Faith is theological concept. It is to believe that God exists and His promises are true and assured (1:3 sustained). Faith makes an invisible God real and promises for the future a reality, even before they happen. By faith we are sure of God's existence and certain that our salvation is real. Faith is what kept those who suffered going. Faith Holds on. As eyesight makes the visible real, faith makes the invisible real.

The church had been told to "Hold Fast" in 3:6; 4:14; 10:19; 10:23

Similarly, churches are told to "Hold On" in Rev. 2:25; 3:11

Romans 1:17 *The righteous will live by faith.*

2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Ephesians 2:8 *For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift.*

James 2:22 *You see that faith was active together with his (Abraham) works, and by works, faith was made complete.*

1 John 5:4 *This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith.*

Hymn Faith is the Victory "Faith is the victory we know that overcomes the world."

KEY VERSES on Faith that Frame the Testimonies 11:1, 2, 3, 6, 13, 14-16

11:1 *Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen. CSB*
To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see. GNT

11:2 *For by this our ancestors were approved. CSB*

The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.
MSG

11:3 *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. CSB (Ex-nihilo)*

11:6 *Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

11:13 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. NIV Faith identified them.*

11:14-16 Seeking a homeland, not thinking about where they came from, but desired a better place. (:16) ***No looking back** but looking forward to what God has prepared. God is not ashamed of them and has prepared a heavenly home for them.

The Testimonies

Now we hear faith testimonies, examples of those who HELD ON!

11:4 Abel – an acceptable sacrifice of faith. If Cain had only done the same. Ge. 4:7

11:5 Enoch – walked with God in faith, pleasing to God (:6), escaping death Ge. 5:24

11:7 Noah – faith led to heed God's warning about the unseen & act, building an ark, the first man called righteous Ge. 6:9

11:8 Abraham – obeyed to "go out." Noah given details. Abram only directions. He stayed in tents waiting for an heir and the promised city, trusting God to provide.

11:11 Sarah – from doubt and laughter to faith in God to conceive & bear a son

11:20 Isaac – a long awaited child, who saw God's provision Ge. 17, a ram in bushes

11:21 Jacob - generational faith, the line of faith not physical, Esau, but spiritual

11:22 Joseph – faith in a sovereign God Ge. 50:20/Rom. 8:28, and future return to the promised land 50:24

11:23 Moses – renounced worldliness, suffered w/ Israelites, left Egypt behind, trust over treasure; and faith in him who is invisible led to Red Sea and Passover events

11:30 Israelites – national faith's obedience led the fall of the walls of Jericho

11:31 Rahab – a pagan girl had faith in God; included in genealogy of Christ Mt. 1:5

11:32 Gideon, Judges 6–8; Barak, Judges 4–5; Samson, Judges 13–14; and Jephthah, Judges 11–12. David, Samuel, and Prophets were lumped together.

11:33-35a Faith accomplishments, victories and resurrections

11:35b-38 Tortures, persecutions and martyrdoms

11:39-40 *All these were approved through their faith, but they did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰ since God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.* CSB

Hymn - **Have faith in God**

Have faith in God when your pathway is lonely. He sees and knows all the way you have trod; Never alone are the least of His children; Have faith in God, have faith in God.

Have faith in God when your prayers are unanswered, Your earnest plea He will never forget; Wait on the lord, trust His word and be patient, Have faith in God. He'll answer yet.

Have faith in God in your pain and your sorrow, His heart is touched with your grief and despair; Cast all your cares and your burdens upon Him, And leave them there, oh, leave them there.

Have faith in God though all else fall about you; Have faith in God, He provides for His own: He cannot fail though all kingdoms shall perish. He rules. He reigns upon His throne.

Refrain:

Have faith in God, He's on His throne, Have faith in God, He watches o'er His own; He cannot fail, He must prevail, Have faith in God, Have faith in God.