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Hebrews 11
“Faith Lessons” Part 5
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This study is the final study in this five-part series. In [Hebrews 11:32-40](#), we read that Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah and Samuel are mentioned specifically, as well as prophets, women and others. All of these men and women are commended for their faith, and the fact that they demonstrated their faith with tremendous bravery and courage.

There is an interesting difference that needs to be considered, and that is that some demonstrated their faith through valiant acts,¹ while others demonstrated their faith through their suffering.² We need to be reminded that faith is not exclusively measured by the results. For example, the one who “*shut the mouths of lions*” is commended just as much as the one who was “*sawed in two.*”³ Also notice that some were put to death by the sword ([Hebrews 11:37](#)), some women received back their dead ([Hebrews 11:35](#)).⁴ Some received life, while others lost their life, but they all had faith.

How is faith measured? Faith is measured by the relentless pursuit of God, and persevering through the challenges of life with trust and confidence in the promises and faithfulness of God. It’s leaving the results up to God because, eventually, the ultimate payoff is heaven!

Some, because they don’t have a proper understanding of faith, have done a great disservice to other Christians over the years. On far too many occasions damage has been done by Christians who shame others for what they perceive as a lack of faith, because they judge the results of the person’s life, rather than the perseverance of the person’s life of trusting God in the face of difficulty. Another danger exists if you

¹ [Hebrews 11:33-35a](#)

² [Hebrews 11:35b-39a](#)

³ This is believed to be a reference to Isaiah.

⁴ Examples include the woman of Zarephath with Elijah, and the Shunamite woman with Elisha.

look at the fact that by lacking a proper understanding of faith, the potential exists for a great many people to become judgmental toward others and/or disillusioned with God.

In this study we'll look at the faith of Barak, Gideon and Jephthah, most likely the three least known of those mentioned in this section of Hebrews 11.

Barak

1. A woman named Deborah led the people of Israel, who had been oppressed by the Canaanites for 20 years.
2. Barak was counted among the men who refused to lead Israel, which makes it hard to understand why he was included in the Hall of Faith.
3. **Judges 4:6-8** - *"She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, 'The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.' Barak said to her, 'If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go.'"*
4. **Judges 4:9-22**, tells the account of the defeat of Sisera's army (every single man, except Sisera!), and how Sisera fled to the tent of Jael, who killed Sisera with a tent peg and a hammer!
5. Even though he was a reluctant leader, he did lead 10,000 soldiers at the urging of the prophetess Deborah, and he did step out in faith to do something no one else was willing to do.

Gideon

6. The background of the account of Gideon is found in **Judges 6:1-11**.
 - a. The Midianites had oppressed the Israelites for some time.
 - b. The Midianites practiced scorched earth warfare.
 - c. Gideon was found threshing wheat in a winepress so the Midianites wouldn't discover him.
7. **Judges 6:12-16** - *"When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon,⁵ he said, 'The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.' 'But sir,' Gideon replied, 'if the LORD is*

⁵ Many Bible scholars believe Gideon was approximately 17 years old.

with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.' The LORD turned to him and said, 'Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?' 'But Lord,' Gideon asked, 'how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.' The LORD answered, 'I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together.' "

8. God saw Gideon's inadequacies, and even though Gideon believe think he was up to the task, God did.
9. Gideon assembled an army of 32,000 men, which may seem like a good-sized army, but the Midianites outnumbered the Israelites.⁶
10. God determined, much to the surprise of Gideon, that an army of 32,000 was way too many, so he decided to reduce the size of Gideon's force to 300 men, which would ensure that God would get all the glory for the victory! ([Judges 7:1-25](#))
11. Once again God used a young man who knew about weaknesses and limitations, but who had a willing heart to obey God.
12. [Hebrews 11:34](#) is probably a reference to Gideon and Barak.
 - a. *"...[they] quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies."* (Emphasis added)
13. The faith lessons we learn are faith doesn't require a strong start, just a strong finish, and God can use weak, reluctant people if they would simply trust him.

Jephthah

14. Jephthah's half-brothers, who considered him to be illegitimate,⁷ drove him away and made him an outcast.
15. He was a mighty warrior, so when the Ammonites came against the Israelites, the elders of Gilead met with Jephthah and persuaded him to come back and be their military leader. ([Judges 11:1-10, 32-33](#))

⁶ [Judges 6:5](#) - "...like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels..."

⁷ Jephthah's was a prostitute, who had an affair with Jephthah's father.

16. Even though his mother was a prostitute and his family had rejected him and drove him away, the faith lesson we learn is that Jephthah's faith was in God and what he could do for God, in spite his unfortunate upbringing.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Hebrews 11:32-40](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Review [Judges 4:6-22](#) to provide background on Barak.
4. Review [Judges 6:1-16](#) to provide background on Gideon.
5. Review [Judges 11:1-10, 32-33](#) to provide background on Jephthah.
6. Have you had the experience of being a reluctant leader like Barak and Gideon?
 - a. How did the Lord convince you to take a step of faith to be a leader?
 - b. Spend time talking about times when it seemed like you didn't have the resources necessary to pay your bills, you didn't have the resources/manpower to accomplish a task, etc.
 - c. What was the outcome?
 - d. How did God reveal himself in the situation?
7. Is it your testimony that your faith in God did not start strong, but as time goes on, your Christian life is growing stronger?
 - a. Allow the people in your group to share examples that show how they are growing in their relationship with the Lord.
8. Spend time talking about the lives of people who didn't have the greatest upbringing, like Jephthah, but because of their faith in God, they were incredible servants of the Lord.
9. Close your time with prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to help each person: to be people of greater faith, because they have had the revelation of Jesus; be willing to take a step of faith to obey the Lord's will at all times, even when circumstances don't seem to make sense.