

“Faith on the Edge”

Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Graphic: edges, hope,

Key Verses: 8 By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.

Theme: Faithful Christian living is edgy, unpredictable, adventuresome, and scary. Abraham obeyed and stepped out, even though he could not see the result. Step out in faith, assured that on God’s edge, you will be right where He wants to use you for His kingdom work.

1) Introduction

- a) A nun who works for a local home health care agency was out making her rounds when she ran out of gas. As luck would have it, there was a gas station just down the street. She walked to the station to borrow a can with enough gas to start the car and drive to the station for a fill-up.

The attendant regretfully told her that the only can he owned had just been loaned out, but if she would care to wait, he was sure it would be back shortly.

Since the nun was on the way to see a patient, she decided not to wait and walked back to her car. After looking through her car for something to carry to the station to fill with gas, she spotted a bedpan she was taking to the patient. Always resourceful, she carried it to the station, filled it with gasoline, and carried it back to her car.

As she was pouring the gas into the tank of her car, two men walked by. One of them turned to the other and said, “Now **THAT** is what I call **faith!**”

- b) How is YOUR faith?
- c) I mean, I have faith that when I get up here to preach every Sunday morning, that the sound system will work and the notes on my page will be here...
- d) We have faith that when we get into our cars, they will run (at least some of the time) and that our cars will take us to where we need to go...
- e) But is that the type of FAITH that we’re talking about here, or is the Christian faith something completely different than what we believe to be true because of prior conditioning? (pause)

- f) Is there more to the Christian's faith that transcends what we can see or what we experience in our lives?
- g) And if that's the case, if there's more to it, which we can agree that there **BETTER BE** (right?), then what affect does that faith have on our real lives each day?
- h) See, our lives can be in a box. I can neatly put everything I have and everything I do in a box...it's neat and it's predictable, and it's fear-less, and comfortable – we all like to be there sometimes...OR...OR... our lives can be edgy, unpredictable, adventuresome, and scary, if we choose. For me, that's the place I don't **LIKE** to **THINK** about going, most of the time, but it's also the place that I love to be when God is pulling me and leading me.
- i) I'm pretty sure that the God who created the universe out of **NOTHING** wasn't thinking of the former for us...He wasn't thinking that he'd create humans in order for us to stick to a reality that doesn't ask us to take a few risks for Him, that doesn't have to trust in Him, that doesn't have to rely on Him for the plan...
- j) This morning, as we dig deeply into the Word of God in the book of Hebrews, we will get just a glimpse of Faith on the God's Edge and what that means for us today as His followers...
- k) Turn with me in your Bibles to Hebrews, chapter 11, starting in verse 1...
- l) Pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 1-3

- i) FAITH is...
- ii) Faith is, according to our author - and incidentally, we're not sure of the identity of the author of the books of Hebrews - but he defines faith as:
 - (1) The assurance of things **HOPED** for, and in a parallel definition,
 - (2) The conviction of things **NOT SEEN**...
- iii) So faith is an assurance (something that we are sure we know) and a conviction (something that we believe and that causes us to act)...

- iv) Greek word for assurance – “to stand under” or a foundation onto which something is built...it’s something that is SO SOLID that we can build a tower, or for this author, OUR LIVES on TOP of it.
- v) Faith is a foundation onto which we build our lives...the thing onto which hope is built.
- vi) I sat in the ICU recently with a family of a young man who was dying at age 19. And if it weren’t for the rock-solid foundation of the faith that we had in God that saves those who accept Jesus, we’d have crumbled faster than a two-day old coffee cake.
- vii) In the margin of your Bible, just write the word FOUNDATION near verses 1-2.
- viii) Without a foundation, a building will not stand for very long...
- ix) Without FAITH, our Christian lives are meaningless, and will fall apart when the storm comes...or when we are challenged by others who want to tear down Christ. It’s THAT CRITICAL!
- x) And in order for us to know God and please God, we have to have faith IN God.
- xi) In order for me to serve and please my wife as a husband, she, first, has to be REAL and, second, I have to know her and know what pleases her. Same with my kids.
- xii) Faith is the assurance (the foundation) that God is real and God is good, and that leads us to be able to please God and know God.
- xiii) Without faith, we can’t do it. We just can’t!
- xiv) And even WITH HUGE amounts of faith, it’s sometimes really hard to do what God is asking...
- xv) Mainly because God doesn’t just tell us, most of the time. (I sort of wish God were more like my wife in that way, actually...) “JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT GOD, ‘CAUSE I CAN’T SEE YOU...I’M FLOUNDERING HERE!

- xvi) But our author once again shares that faith is the CONVICTION, the stated truth, of even the things we can't see, but that we believe...for which we have hope.
- xvii) Hope for what? Hope that God has prepared a place for us when we finish this race like He promised in Matthew 25: 34 *Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...*
- xviii) ...and not only that, but that God is re-creating this world, preparing it someday for a new kingdom...that brings us hope...that what we see NOW, points to something better. Not just “heaven”, but a new heaven and a new earth with Jesus Christ as the King and Lord...worshipping him.
- xix) Let's build our lives on THAT foundation and THAT conviction...
- xx) Because, I'll tell you, if we do, life gets pretty interesting pretty fast. It gets unpredictable...it's faith on the edge...
- xxi) And our author goes on to talk about Cain and Abel and Enoch, and our man Noah and their faith journeys...
- xxii) And then he writes about Abraham...let's read in verse 8...

b) Read verses 8

- i) Sometimes we don't know where God is leading...sometimes when we get right to the edge of what God is doing, we get scared and want to turn back.
- ii) Abraham OBEYED (underline that)...because the key outcome of our faith is obedience. And Abraham was obedient to God even though he didn't know where he was going.
- iii) I hate not knowing where I'm going! Don't you? That's why I have a GPS and maps and a cell phone...
- iv) Some of you are aware that last week I went water-skiing. I had a great time...did a couple laps of Findley Lake. And when I got out of the water, I realized that my Blackberry went water-skiing with me. I assume HE has as good a time as I did, but I haven't been able to wake him up since then to ask him. Literally, my blackberry has my life in it.

v) And in the aftermath of that experience, I have realized that God is stripping away some things that I rely on, in order for me to rely on Him.

vi) Abraham had to rely on God...and he did.

c) Verse 9-10

i) This is like Campfire for Christ, right? Here's Abraham living in tents! He's not "home". He doesn't even know where home is...

ii) Yet, he's relying on the promise that God gave him that he would be an heir to a kingdom that was greater than he was. It's like knowing that when Campfire for Christ is over, you get to sleep in your own bed...ahhhh!

d) Sometimes we are uncomfortable for Christ, living in what seems to be a foreign land...in a tent...on hard ground...

e) Verse 11-12

i) If your not familiar with the story of Abraham and Sarah, go back to Genesis 18...but basically, Abraham was really old ("as good as dead" – how'd you like to be referred to as "as good as dead"?). Yet God promised him a son.

ii) By FAITH (hear that), he received the gift of procreation...Abraham and Sarah were given a son, even as old as they were...by FAITH.

iii) Talk about edgy! How many of you over the age of 70 think that having a child right now would be an adventure? For sure!

iv) But sometimes, God does the unexpected in order for us to serve him...

f) Verse 13-16

i) "All of these" (Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah...) died in FAITH. They finished the race EVEN THOUGH THEY DIDN'T SEE THE PROMISED LAND.

ii) The vision of that promise was enough for them to trust God for their lives and trust God for their eternity.

iii) And even though sometimes we feel like foreigners in our own communities because of our faith in Jesus Christ, God is so much more

concerned about our comfort in our home in eternity with Him. Our job here is to bring others into relationship with Christ...not be comfortable.

iv) Because, he has prepared a city for us...a kingdom...and this isn't it, folks!...and that should affect every part of our living on the edge...

3) Application

- a) For all of us, there are times when we are living on the edge – great times of growth and ministry. Then there are times when we are so far from the edge that there's no danger of taking risks. There's no danger of having some of the messiness of ministry happen around us...sometimes, it's even because we're too busy planning ministry and not busy enough DOING it.
- b) And when we are afraid...faith is hard to find.
- c) When we trust ourselves (or our toys) more than God, faith is fleeting...we don't need it.
- d) When we reject the leading of the Holy Spirit, faith lives in the comfortable spaces of our ordinary lives...what we know and what we like.
- e) Yet we know, from guys like Abraham, that FAITH calls us out to the very , risky, edge...calls us out to the places where life gets messy...where we have to forgive others...share our faith...give our money and time...invest ourselves in someone who might not like us...yet where exciting and adventuresome things happen...God moments...
- f) Where we (and these are directly from the story of Abraham):
 - i) Don't always know where we're headed; but we're trusting God.
 - ii) Where we live in places where we may not be comfortable; but God keeps us from becoming too frail.
 - iii) Where we live in tents (for more than one night); but God grounds us in thoughts of our eternal home.
 - iv) Where we look forward to more of God working in us.
 - v) Where we receive gifts to use FOR GOD; and then learn how to use them; and then USE THEM.
 - vi) Where we are used by God and produce fruit; like Abraham and Sarah

- vii) Where we feel like strangers on earth (what Stanley Hauerwas calls Resident Aliens); yet God is our refuge and constant companion.
- viii) Where we always are seeking that promised homeland; but God shows hospitality for us and others right here.
- ix) Where we never look back because God has given us great memories and has moved us forward.
- x) And where we let God lead us to HIS place.
- xi) It's risky...it's edgy...it's unpredictable...and it's scary. But as Christians, that exactly where God already is, and he's waiting for us to join him.
- xii) As you pray about where God is leading you to dig deeper and serve more, let me share a story about taking the next leap into what God has for you...

4) Conclusion

- a) A little girl had been shopping with her Mom at Target. She must have been 6 years old, a beautiful red-haired, freckle-faced image of innocence. It was pouring outside, the kind of rain that gushes over the top of rain gutters so much in a hurry to hit the earth it has no time to flow down the spout. Several people stood under the awning waiting, some patiently, others irritated because nature was interfering with their hurried day, when the little girl's voice rose above the sound of the downpour. "Mom, let's run through the rain."

"What?" Mom asked.

"Let's run through the rain!" She repeated.

"No, honey. We'll wait until it slows down a bit."

The young child waited about a minute and repeated, "Mom, let's run through the rain."

"We'll get soaked if we do," Mom said.

"No, we won't! That's not what you said this morning," the young girl said

as she tugged at her Mom's arm.

“This morning? When did I say we could run through the rain and not get wet?”

“Don't you remember? When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, ‘If God can get us through this, he can get us through anything!’”

The entire crowd was struck silent. Not a sound was heard but the rain. Mom paused and thought for a moment about what she would say. Some might have laughed it off or scolded the child for being silly. Some might have even ignored her. But this mom chose to affirm her little girl's faith.

“Honey, you are absolutely right. Let's run through the rain. If God let's us get wet, well maybe we just needed washing.” And off they ran, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and right through the puddles. They got soaked. But they were followed by a few others who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars. Suddenly, getting wet didn't seem like such a bad idea.

- b) This morning, I trust that God is tugging at your heart right now. He's tugging at you to allow your faith to spur you on in greater levels of holiness and mission.
- c) He wants you to know that He loves you in a way that takes you from right where you are and transforms your life for His kingdom work.
- d) Today, as I pray, commit yourself to be open to what God wants...not what you want.
- e) Open yourself to step out in faith for something that God has been calling you...something that's been on your mind...an idea...a prompting to make a change in some relationship or some task you do...
- f) Step out into the rain and let God soak you with his grace and his joy serving Him and his kingdom...
- g) Let's pray...