

**FLEA Video #13: "Into The Great (Un)Known
(Hebrews 11:1)
6.30.30**

One of my favorite Bible verses is Hebrews 11:1, where it says: *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see - Hebrews 11:1.* That is still one of the best definitions of "faith" I have ever heard - particularly that second part: "Assurance about what we do not see." In the world in which we live, faith is often hard to place. Political promises that are made are soon broken and forgotten. It seems to be more and more difficult for companies to stand behind their product. It is so difficult to know what to believe and what not to believe as we continue to hear new information about the COVID-19 pandemic and how best to keep it away. We've also had all the social unrest played out all around us. One of the most consistent things being talked about is how the police can no longer be trusted. And on and on it goes.

That got me thinking about some of the Bible stories we often share, particularly the ones where people had to exercise great faith - often because what was laid out in front of them was a complete unknown. Hebrews 11, sometimes called the "Faith Hall Of Fame," brings to mind some great examples of people who operated with assurance, even in instances where they had no idea what the future held. There are two stories in particular that have always impacted me:

- 1) *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family - Hebrews 11:1a.* Did you ever think about Noah? One day God comes to him to tell him to build an "ark." You want me to build a what? Noah's never seen, never even heard of a thing called an ark. And then God says He's going to destroy the world with a flood. What's a flood? This poor guy had likely never even seen rain before, so what's a flood going to look like? And yet an ark got built - and the rest is history.
- 2) And then you got Abraham: *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going - Hebrews 11:8.* Can you imagine that conversation? Abraham comes into the tent he shares with his wife: "Sarah, dear; I need you to pack all our things, everything we got." "Why?" "Cause we're moving." "When?" "Now." "Where?" "I don't know." "I don't know? Then why are we moving? How can we move when you don't even know where we're moving to?" "Cause God said so." "God? God who?" And yet Abraham hit the road to go to a place that only God knew - and the rest is history.
- 3) In the NT you have the disciples. They are just sitting around, minding their own individual business, working in their jobs when, seemingly out of the blue, this wandering, itinerant rabbi comes up to them and, with a force that they initially can't

explain or understand says, "Follow me." And He says it in such a way that they feel that they have to follow Him, that they will be missing something incredible if they don't follow Him. Can you imagine all the questions they must have been asking themselves as they fell in behind Him? Talk about a complete unknown. And yet follow Him they did - and the rest is history.

Now all three of these displays of the "assurance of things not seen" have one thing in common: All these characters placed their faith in God. It didn't make the path ahead any more known. It simply means that they found assurance in what they could know - the unchangeable love, grace, mercy and presence of God. Whether that was the God that Noah and Abraham came to know, or the God that walked among the disciples in the person of Jesus Christ, assurance was found in Who they all placed their trust in.

Why is this important? Well, I suspect we all are experiencing a whole lot of unknowns in these times in which we live. Certainly there is a virus that seems to keep confounding us, impacting the economy, impacting our ability to have simple face-to-face fellowship with each other, and keeping us in the dark about whether or not "normal" (whatever that is) is ever going to return. How are jobs going to look, how are vacations going to look, how are family reunions going to look, how is school going to look? The list goes on and on.

But what the Bible teaches is a simple yet remarkable truth: It's not on us to be able to figure things out. Some things we may never figure out. Instead, we should place our lives, every aspect of our lives, into the assurance we can know - God. And the Bible, both OT and NT, give us such wonderful words to remind us that we can live assured that God is with us, taking care of us, providing for us, and always loving us:

- 1) In the OT: ***"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified ... for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you"*** - Moses, ***Deuteronomy 31:6.***
- 2) In the NT: ***If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for US all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?- Paul, Romans 8:31b-32.***

And the only reason those verses work is because of the eternal unchanging character of God:

- 1) From the OT: ***"I the lord do not change"*** - ***God speaking, Malachi 3:6a.***
- 2) From the NT: ***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever - Hebrews 13:8.***

The only reason we can claim assurance is because of the God who provides it. He is eternally trustworthy in all He says and does, and eternally loving and gracious in all He plans and provides for us. So, it's not simply about having faith; it's all about Who we are invited to have faith in.

So - don't have anxiety. Instead have assurance. God said we could - and it's as available as God Himself.