

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

*By faith, Abraham...obeyed...sojourned...looked...offered...
By faith, Isaac blessed...
By faith, Jacob blessed...and worshipped
By faith, Joseph...made mention...and gave commandment...
– Hebrews 11:8-22 –*

Our text is part of what has been called the “Faith Hall of Fame” found in Hebrews 11. This chapter forever immortalizes so much about how God views individual humanity. Perhaps the largest, most overwhelming lesson of this chapter, propounded by an overwhelming and inexhaustible parade of example after example, is that *true, God-pleasing faith is active*. Read the chapter fully, carefully, and critically and you will find that from Abel to the unnamed company at the chapter’s end, a wide array of verbs abound, reminding us that *faith does not and cannot lie dormant within the breast of a believer but will always motivate and drive some kind of ongoing, life altering action as he lives out his days under the sun*.

Integral to all of the action of Hebrews 11, though, we also find the remarkable and encouraging lesson of the *legacy of four unbroken familial generations of vibrant, God-honoring faith* in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. In Genesis, God said of Abraham, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment, that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (Genesis 18:19). In this divine observation, God used His covenantal name, YHWH (Jehovah, translated LORD). It was therefore His intention to progressively reveal Himself to Abraham’s posterity first and foremost through the vehicle of Abraham’s personal faith.

The Genesis record of Abraham, like the remainder of the Bible for that matter, does not give us every detail in the life of each of its subjects. We are not granted access to every day and hour that comprised the life of Abraham, just the ones sufficient to relay the unbroken narrative of a life of learning to increasingly trust God. Yet we are also clearly to assume that Abraham is a member of Adam’s fallen race just like us, and as such, it is not difficult to imagine some of those undisclosed building blocks of his family life in light of what we do know. How he must have relayed his interactions with Jehovah and the remarkable journey from Ur of Chaldees to young Isaac! Bed-time stories, “supper table” lessons, and work-day conversation were all likely borne and bathed in a rehearsal of God’s promises, so much so, that when it came time to be tested on Mount Moriah, Isaac himself was willing to offer his life in faith to the God of his father.

But God would ultimately also reveal Himself personally to Isaac as well, who in turn no doubt educated his twin sons as to their family’s special place in the purposes of the Almighty. Jacob’s vague understanding of those promises motivated his scheming heart to steal the blessing from his brutish brother, making him a fugitive until the day, many years later, he would finally be broken by and surrendered to that very same God of his father and grandfather, Who condescended to strive with him at Peniel. And Joseph must have received an early education in the things of Jehovah, because decades in Egypt did not relinquish his trust that God would visit his family and move them back to the land promised to his great-grandfather, Abraham.

Brethren, God delights to work in and through families. He has something to do today with Abraham, tomorrow through Isaac, next week via Jacob, ultimately preparing Joseph for the coming famine. Abraham could not have possibly foreseen all of that. He just knew to command his household after him and live his faith before them.

Let us rest confidently that true personal faith begets personal faith. Cast your bread upon the waters. It will return.