

What’s the most precious thing you have? Your smart phone? Your wedding ring? Your house? While those things seem valuable now, they won’t last forever. So, then what is the most precious thing you have? Your faith in Jesus. Faith is the only thing that guarantees you’ll have an amazing eternity in heaven with Jesus. Nothing, absolutely nothing else can do that.

Since faith is such a precious commodity, let’s approach it as if we are examining a multi-faceted jewel. Facets are the flat surfaces cut into precious gems to allow more light to reflect and improve their appearance.

Hebrews 11 offers the Bible’s classic definition of faith: **Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see**, with this note: **This is what the ancients were commended for.** With the help of one of those ancients, Abram, we’re going to examine **Facets of Faith**. You can fill in 4 of them on the top of p.7.

Abram, or Abraham after God changed his name, is familiar to us. He’s the one God chose to be the father of God’s people, the Jews. They were special because through them God brought the Savior into the world. How is it that Abram received this special privilege? [Read]

(1)

The way God dealt with Abram is typically the way that he deals with all sinners. If contact between God and sinner is to be established, God has to make the first move. Therefore, the First Facet of Faith is that **Faith is a GIFT from GOD.**

Had God not come to Abram, he would never have believed. The same is true of every follower, every disciple of Jesus, for he says: **“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”**

Why would God choose to give Abram faith? Was he better than others around him? Not really. In fact, we’re told that Abram’s father, Terah, worshipped idols! Although we can’t say for sure

whether Abram did, God stepped into his life so that he wouldn’t keep on following in his father’s footsteps.

What moved God to do this? The Apostle Paul said it best to the Christians in Rome: **“Salvation does not depend on a person’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.”** The same thing, of course, is true for you and me. If God had not graciously used our parents, our grandparents, our friend, our fiancée to bring us into contact with his Word, we would still be lost and condemned sinners.

(2)

The Second Facet of Faith is that **Faith is not BLIND.** Faith is not like placing a bet, and hoping for a favorable result. When God told Abram to go to a land he would show him, Abram went. He went not because he felt it was the right thing to do, but because God had given him a collection of incredible promises. **God said to Abram: “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”**

Faith is a confidence based on the solid promises of God who never lies. That’s why Christianity is so unique. When God wants to move us to action, he doesn’t do that by demanding. He does it by promising. When God tells us: **“Don’t be afraid!”** he adds the promise of protection as our reason for not being afraid.

If we base our faith on our feelings or a hunch, then we’re on dangerously thin ice. Faith is based on God’s promises. That’s why it’s essential and absolutely vital for us to stay connected to God’s Word - where we find those promises; and to the Sacraments - which are the visible signs of his promises.

Think about what God was asking of Abram: **leave Mesopotamia, your country, your people and your father’s household ... and go to the land I will**

show you.” Abram was 75 years old, and his wife Sarai was 65. That’s when most people are settling into retirement, not moving around and starting a family. Yet Abram believed God’s promise. And sure enough, at the age of 100, he had a son and settled in Canaan, the land promised to him.

Earlier we mention his name was Abram (exalted father) until God changed it to Abraham (father of many). The name change was God’s way of letting him know his promise made was soon to be his promise kept - the child would be born - soon. Abraham did become the father of many descendants. Some are blood descendants – the Israelites, Edomites and Arabs. Some are spiritual descendants because we share the object of Abram’s faith.

Although the promises made to Abram may not seem like any of the ones God gives us, there is a similarity. We haven’t gotten a glimpse of our Promised Land. But Jesus said: **“I go there to prepare a place for you,”** and so we are convinced of our reservation in heaven. Faith isn’t blind. It grabs onto the wonderful promises the Lord has given to us.

(3)

Since faith is based on God’s powerful Word, it’s not surprising to see that a Third Facet of Faith is that **Faith is ACTIVE.** Martin Luther once said: *“Faith does not sit on the heart like foam on beer.”* Abram’s faith was clearly active. He responded to God’s call: **Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions and the people they had acquired and they set out for the land of Canaan, and arrived there.**

Just as Abram’s faith itself was a gift from God, his response was also something that God engineered. Jesus once said: **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a person remains in me and I in him, they will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”** It was God’s promises that empowered Abram to do great things like leave his country, his home, and most of his family even though he was already 75 years old, and had no idea where he was going!

God’s promises still move his people to do great things.

- How is it that you can remain strong when a loved one seems to be on her/his last leg on earth?
- How is it that you remain calm under pressure when financial or employment concerns hit home?
- How can you remain confident in life when you suffer the loss of a parent, a spouse or a child?
- How can you remain optimistic when your own health is failing?

You can’t, but God can. He uses the strength of his Word to do it. If you’ve ever been envious of Abram’s level of trust, don’t be! Like Abram, you can bury your faith deep in the promises of God’s Word and you do things like Abram did.

Bodies need exercise to grow stronger. Faith does too. God exercised Abram’s faith when he arrived in Canaan. Moses gives us this little bit of info: **at that time the Canaanites were in the land.**

God hadn’t brought Abram to an unoccupied piece of real-estate. People were already living there. Abram would be forced to rely on God’s promise that his descendants would inherit the land.

God still puts his people in situations where we’re forced to rely on his promises. That’s so that we won’t only have a knowledge of his faithfulness, we’ll have experienced it too. So, when the Lord puts you in a situation like that, thank him for exercising your faith. Look forward to figuring out how God will keep all of his promises to you.

(4)

The Fourth Facet of Faith is that **Faith is PUBLIC.** **The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord. From there he went on toward the hills and pitched his tent, there he built an altar (another one) to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.**

When Abram arrived in Canaan he didn't hide the fact that he worshipped a different God than the Canaanites. He even built a couple of altars. And as he prayed to God, he was also **calling on the name of the Lord**. That's OT speak for public worship and outreach - intentionally sharing God's name with others.

Faith leads us to do the same thing when we gather here for worship. Our cars parked outside tell those who drive by that there is something important going on in here. When we speak of God's love for us even in the face of difficulty, we provide a witness to our faith. Since God has given us this wonderful gift of faith – *Sing* to him with others and *Share* him with others. That's what God has called us to do and gives us the strength to do it!

This precious gem we call faith is a multi-faceted jewel that shines brighter each time God polishes with his Word or with a life experience. Cherish your faith. It is the only thing that guarantees you'll have an eternity that will never perish, spoil or fade.