**Forward-Looking Faith Handout**

**Living by Faith # 4**

Faith is described as: Hebrews 11:1 NIV **11**Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

**Hebrews 11:20-22 NIV**

**20By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.**

**21By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.**

**22By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.**

God gave powerful and precious promises to Abraham and the patriarchs of the nation of Israel. The purpose of those promises was to claim these people as God’s own special possession, to call these persons to a particular relationship with God and a different mode of interaction with the world and direct these persons to live by faith in the now because of a preferable future designed by God.

Just as it was for them, so it is for us. God wants to lay claim to us as exclusively His own people. God calls us to live by faith according to His promises in obedience to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. And God has a preferred future for us that includes the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Genesis 26:1-6 NIV**

**26 Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham’s time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. 2The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. 3Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. 4I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2026&version=NIV#fen-NIV-697a)**] all nations on earth will be blessed,[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2026&version=NIV#fen-NIV-697b)**] 5because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.” 6So Isaac stayed in Gerar.**

Just like Abraham, God was particular about where Isaac was to live. Why would this be? It was partly linked to God’s intention to give the people of Israel a special land just for them, but it was also because God was trying to keep the cultures of the world from absorbing God’s special people. We need to beware that we are careful not to be swallowed up by the culture around us as it is hostile toward the true purposes of God.

When God tells us to do or not do something, our obedience is only part of the package, God’s blessing and mighty workings do much more than we can ask or think. Isaac was directed to follow his father Abraham’s example of trusting and obeying God. In some ways, we serve God in our now, but in other ways, our service to God impacts generations to come. When we are faithful to God great things happen. But if we are disobedient, it is often true that our unfaithfulness causes problems for people in the future.

**Genesis 28:10-15 NIV**

**10Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. 11When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13There above it[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-787c)**] stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.[**[**d**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-788d)**] 15I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”**

In each case, we see that these persons kept to a faith in God, a unique identity given by God along with a distinct culture and call to a promised future.

**Genesis 50:22-26 NIV**

**22Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father’s family. He lived a hundred and ten years 23and saw the third generation of Ephraim’s children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph’s knees.[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+50&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1530c)**]**

**24Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” 25And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.”**

**26So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.**

Faith looks forward because today’s choices have eternal impact.

Faith looks forward because we each serve those who come after us as well as serving one another in love as we obey God.

Faith looks forward and goes where God sends and stay where God says.

Faith looks forward listening to God to discern where the culture around us is detrimental to us.

Faith looks forward because God’s promises are certain, and God’s plans are greater than we can imagine.

Faith looks forward because God’s blessings help us now and help others for generations to come.

Faith looks forward because that’s the place where prayers are answered.