

TALK FOOTBALL

Theme: Faith

Verse:

“Faith is the confident assurance of the things we hope for, the certainty of things we cannot see. Men of God in days of old were famous for their faith. You can never please God without faith, without depending on Him. Any one who wants to come to God must therefore believe that there is a God and that He rewards those who sincerely look for Him.” Hebrews 11:1 & 6

Focus:

Men and women of **FAITH** have God as their **FOUNDATION**

Men and women of **FAITH ACT** on what God says to them

Men and women of **FAITH** willingly endure times of **TRIAL** and **TESTING**

Men and women of **FAITH** live with a **HOPE** for eternity

Men and women of **FAITH** have asked the **YOU** question.

The questions and information provided is there for you to use and adapt as you think most appropriate and relevant for your team, their age, experience and understanding.

Ambassadors Football’s vision is to serve the local church, inspiring and equipping it to build Christ-centred relationships through football. We pray these resources help you as you share Jesus through football. If you have any comments or feedback, please contact us at gb@ambassadorsfootball.org.

Week 1: Faith Introduction

What is a hero? Why do we have heroes?

Who are some of your heroes? – People you look up to, respect, maybe model your life after?

What different ways do we celebrate/honour heroes?

- We buy the shirts with our hero's names on the back, seek their autographs.
- Try to emulate them in practice, games, etc..... even name special tricks after them – Cruyff / Maradona

Men and women are honoured for the success they achieved in their field of expertise, employment, knowledge.

God celebrates heroes too – God commends and honours men and women who have done great exploits for Him.

We read in **Hebrews 11** about special men and women who God honours and commends for their lives – and their FAITH in Him. God holds these people up and says, 'Look at these guys. Look at their lives. Emulate them.'

Hebrews 11 is like God's picture gallery or Hall of Fame for the men and women that honoured Him.

Do you know what these heroes did?

What would you think if you were honoured by God in such a way?

We are going to take a look at some of God's heroes and see what it was that helped make them people that God recorded and honoured in this chapter.

As we look at these men and women of faith over the next few weeks – we are going to use the word FAITH as an acronym to look at certain qualities that made these people heroes.

Week 2: Men and women of FAITH have God as their FOUNDATION!!

F = Foundation (F = Friendship)

What is a foundation?

In building/construction, why is the 'foundation' so important?

In what other areas may we use the word 'foundation'?

- Actors – put on a foundation before putting on their make-up
- Education – provides the foundation for getting a job / earning a living
- Others?

God honours many wonderful heroes in Hebrews 11. These heroes had God as their foundation. God desires more than anything to have a relationship and friendship with you.

Do you know God? Is He the foundation of your life? *Coach to share testimony of when he/she made that decision to place their Faith in God.*

For those who are Christians...

How would you like your faith in God to grow?

The Bible teaches us that faith is like a little seed. A seed originally starts as a very small object - but when planted in rich soil, nurtured and watered it can grow into a massive tree and yield much fruit.

At this moment in time you might think your faith in God is very small. Be encouraged as it can grow and will grow as you learn to depend on God. It doesn't happen overnight - but can take time and training!

Perhaps you can pray and ask God to show you new and exciting ways in which your faith and love for Him can be challenged and grow.

In football we practice 'foundational techniques and skills'. What are they? *Passing, dribbling, turning, shooting, heading, control and defending.*

These are the essential techniques around which the game of football is played. If a good foundation is not laid, it could destroy the work we try to do;

Would you live in a house where the foundation was made of sand?

Would you let a 'doctor' with no medical training operate on you?

How would you do in football if you could not pass/control properly?

Setting a good foundation is important. So too for our lives.

All of Gods hero's had a great foundation. Read Hebrews 11:6

'And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.' Hebrews 11:6

God's hero's established / founded their lives upon the two following principles

- That God exists - **Foundation**
- That God rewards those who seek Him - **Friendship**

Many people believe that there is a God who exists.

What evidence might they use to say that?

- *Creation – if God created YOU and Me then he created us with a purpose.*
- *The Bible – tells me how much God loves me and what He’s done for me.*
- *The life of Jesus – shows me what God is like.*
- *Worship - people desire to worship something greater than themselves.*

But God wants our belief to go further - for belief to be turned into FAITH.

God doesn’t simply want people to believe that He exists, but He also wants people that will seek Him and build a friendship with Him. **Believing God exists** is the starting point for then **getting to know Him**.

What do you think it means to ‘seek’ God?

- *Developing a friendship with God*
- *Someone to talk to – to share your hurts, dreams, desires, struggles with.*
- *Look to see God’s purpose/plan in every day circumstances.*

The Biblical heroes we are going to learn about were celebrated and honoured by God because by FAITH they accepted that

- a. He existed, and
- b. He wants to build a relationship with each one of us.

We want you to consider that FAITH in God is much more than just believing in God or being religious. It is actually putting that **belief into action** and learning what it means to have a right relationship with the God who created us.

Are you ready to consider what real FAITH truly entails?

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Week 3: Men and women of FAITH ACT on what God says to them.

Last week we learned that God's heroes first of all accepted that God does exist and secondly that He wanted to develop a relationship/ friendship with them.

Today we want to look at the A in FAITH which stands for **ACTION**.

If you have a foundation and friendship with God, but don't put it into ACTION, it will be of little use.

E.g. we believe and have faith that aeroplanes fly ... but unless you get on one you will never experience it for yourself!!! Take ACTION

Who are the main people in charge of the teams? *coaches/managers*

Why are they there? What is their job? *Teach new skills, help with teamwork and tactics, get players fit...*

Their principle task however is to get the team—and each player—ready for action!

What things will a coach talk about to prepare the team for action? *Team formation, team selection, positional roles and responsibilities, team tactics and strategy.*

What things will a coach talk about to prepare each player for action? *Confidence and belief in foundational skills (refer to last week), being mentally ready, playing hard and fair, individual skills and movement.*

The action - the match - is the coming together of a player's skill and the coach's tactics to produce a winning performance.

Football is about taking the many hours of techniques and skills learned in training and **putting them into action** during the course of a match. Teamwork and tactics mean applying in action the instructions of the manager.

What may happen if a player ignores the manager's instructions? *team will play poorly, player plays poorly, player may be substituted team may lose, other player have to compensate*

God's heroes were men and women of ACTION. They did things – put into action - the things that God asked of them. They were obedient to God's 'game plan' during their time on earth.

Let's have a look at one. Noah. – **Hebrews 11:7 (Genesis 6-9)**

Anyone know what Noah was asked by God to do? *[Quickly re-tell the story for all!!!]*

What a strange request by God – build a HUGE boat in the middle of the desert, miles away from any water, and never having seen rain before. You just have to ask, "Why God?"

If God asked you to do that, what would you have said to Him?

What kind of things do you think Noah's friends and neighbours might have said to him?

But what happens in the story? How does it end?

Noah builds the boat, loads on all the animals and he, his family and all animals are saved. Noah's ACTION and obedience saved his life and the life of his family.

Was it worth Noah acting obediently on what God said? For sure!!!

One of the great things about God is that life is never dull or boring. Sometimes God will ask us to do things that seem daft – like building the ark!

Sometimes He may ask us to do things that are impossible. *Opportunity for coach to share a personal story!*

But when God says it—and we act on it—that is FAITH in ACTION.

In Gods Hall of Fame, men and women were commended for acting in obedience

- Sometimes doing the impossible
- Sometimes doing the strange things
- But all the time doing the simple things and doing them well.

They **Accepted** God's requests - game-plan and strategy

They **Acted** upon it in faith – not knowing the final outcome when it started

They **Achieved** great things when they faithfully obeyed

The great thing about God is that when He says to act—and do something—we can do it and put into action in great confidence. God knows what he's talking about. He has the power to back up what He asks you to do. That means we don't have to be afraid in action ... but go into it with confidence. Noah did!!

Thought to finish:

For those of you who already have a faith in God...

What could you do to actually put your faith into action more? What may God be asking of you to do?

Tell a friend about Him, stop a bad habit, invite a neighbour to church.

Pray and ask God to show you what He may want you to do and act on it seeking His help.

For those not yet Christians and don't have a friendship with God;

The greatest action you can make today is to begin that relationship with God. God is real—He is alive—He created you—He gave you the Bible so you can read how much he loves you and what you mean to him. He wants to be like that manager/coach and prepare you and help you for the game of life.

Are you willing to step into the action—and ask God to direct your life?

Week 4: Men and women of FAITH willingly endure times of trails and testing. Today's focus should be on 'I' – but we're saving that letter to the last week!

Review

F = foundation of knowing God exists and establishing friendship with Him

A = acting in obedience and faith to Gods game plan and strategy for our lives

T = **Trials and Testing**

How many of you would like to go to school and not have any tests?

What about living at home and not having any trouble or trials with parents/siblings/neighbours? That would be pretty great wouldn't it? But the fact of the matter is that trials and testing are all part of life.

What do you think about the idea that God allows us to go through tests and trials in our lives? Actually – God will put us right in the middle of them!

At a football academy players can be tested in a couple of ways.

1. When a player comes to a club he/she is given a trial. **What is that? What is the purpose for having a trial?** *To see whether a player can match the ability of those already at the club.* If they can't – they are out! If they are – they make the team!

2. With most academies now, all of the players go through fitness testing at regular points of the season. Below are some components of fitness that are often tested:

- Speed (20m/30m sprint)
- Endurance (bleep test – how long they can run at increasing speeds)
- Flexibility (sit and reach test – how flexible the hip area is)
- Leg power (jump – how high a player can jump to get up for a header)

What is the purpose for being regularly tested during the course of a season? *Helps the coach to evaluate a player's fitness progress during the season. Gives a benchmark of fitness levels to be attained if ever out through injury.*

Tests and trials in football assess whether you are good enough and help measure your progress as a player

God puts us through tests and trials too. He's not doing it to make us fail, but to see how we are growing and developing as people. Our character is often tested by the things God puts us through and our spiritual character is the one thing God is interested in developing in all of us.

In Hebrews 11 we read the name of a man who was put to the test a bit. His name was Gideon.

Anyone know who Gideon was? Judges 6 and 7

Gideon was a man that God chose to be a mighty warrior. The only thing was, Gideon was a bit of a wimp, a bit soft. Gideon was hiding in a big wine press and threshing wheat, so that the enemies of Israel - the Midianites - couldn't come and steal it. All of a sudden an angel appears to Gideon and tells him that he is appointed the commander to go fight and defeat the Midianite army. No training in military warfare. No previous combat experience. A person who'd rather hide than fight. Yet Gideon was chosen.

What would you do if you were told to go to war and fight a battle?

Gideon rounds up an army – altogether 32,000 men turn up. Quite a good size army. But there's one problem. God says the army was too big **Judges 7:1-4**. It was time to whittle it down. Gideon asked those who were scared to leave – 22,000 men left – now down to 10,000.

Still the army was too big **Judges 7:4-6**. God told Gideon to take the men to a river to drink. Those that lifted the water to their mouths were chosen – now down to 300 men.

From 32,000 men to 300 men!

Would you go and fight against a massive army with only 300 men? What would you do? Would you question God? Would you say, ‘No – this is foolish!’

But it gets worse!!!!!!

The 300 men weren't armed with swords, spears, daggers, and guns.
No - they were asked to go into battle each carrying a trumpet and a flaming torch.

Now what do you think?

However, Gideon obeyed and carried out Gods battle plan.
During the night Gideon and his army encircled the Midianite camp – and on Gideon's command began waving their torches and blowing their trumpets. The Bible tells us the Midianites became so confused that they ended up turning on each other and killing each other. The end result – the Midianites were thrashed.

What a test of Faith! God puts Gideon in an almost impossible situation. He has a choice – to obey, or to bow out. Gideon could have bailed at any time;

- When God first told him to lead the army
- When God only allowed him to have 300 men to fight with
- When God said they couldn't take weapons with them.

But Gideon faced his test – and passed.

Final thought! What are some tests that you and I find in life?

Each time we encounter a decision between right and wrong, good or bad – we are in a test, our character, our integrity, our obedience to God.

How do you do in the midst of these tests/trials?

Many say that the life of a Christian is a crutch to get us thru the trials of life. Actually, it's God that puts the trials in our path - trials that allow us to see our great need for him and tests that make our FAITH in Him strong and enduring

Week 5: Men and women of FAITH live with a hope for eternity

Review

F = founding of knowing God exists and establishing friendship with Him
A = acting in obedience and faith to Gods game-plan and strategy for our lives
T = testing and trials that shape in us the Character God wants for our lives
H = Hope

Today we want to look at how those in Gods Hall of Fame lived in hope.

- The 'hope' that God would fulfil His word, His promises, His purpose for Israel.
- The 'hope' of eternal life - a life forever with God in heaven.

Think back for yourself or imagine an academy player at the start of a football season. What is it that you/they might hope for? *To be champions – to be a first team player.*

In the Premiership, what is it that all teams hope to achieve? *Win the league, a cup or stay up.*

A student enters year 11/12 at school- what is it they hope for? *Finish with good GCSE's or A levels*

A person finishes college/university. What might they hope for? *Good job*

In life, what are the things that you hope will happen as you grow into adults? *Marriage, kids, job, holidays, money, cars etc.*

In reality, we all live life with hopes and dreams that we would love to see fulfilled. But it's not enough just to hope – because to achieve the things we hope for often takes commitment, hard work, and sacrifice.

What are some of the sacrifices an academy player must make to make it to the top/first team/Premiership?

In the end, they count the cost and consider it all worth while.

God wants our lives to be full of hope as well. One of God's heroes who was full of hope, was a man named Abraham.

God called Abraham to leave his home land (Ur of the Chaldeas) and move to a new country. God promised Abraham that:

- It would be a good land.
- The land would belong to his descendants for ever.
- That God would make his descendants into a mighty nation.

The promises from God all came true. Today we know that land as the land of Canaan – (present day Israel). The people became the Hebrews, or Israelites – or Jews as we know them today. God wants to and can fulfil our hopes in the natural.

But in Abraham we see a man with a greater hope than simply being successful in life!! **What is the first thing you would normally do if you moved to a new land?** *Hopefully purchase a house – maybe buy some land and put a new home on it.*

But Abraham didn't do that. Instead Abraham chose to live a bit of a nomadic life - content to live in tents that were easily taken down and put up. He didn't settle down and build himself a nice home with a conservatory, pool, jacuzzi and water feature on the front lawn. No - Abraham chose to live a life where he was free to go and move around as God so wished.

That is a bit strange. A land God has given to him – and he continues living in a tent!! But God commended Abraham for this action. **Why? Read Hebrews 11:9-10**

Although Abraham had been promised by God this great land, Abraham knew that this wasn't the end. Abraham knew that one day he would die and he would spend his life in eternity. He was looking forward not so much to what he would achieve and the riches he could attain in this life But what God was going to give him and provide for him in eternity. He **lived in the hope** that one day he would be in Heaven forever!

At the end of the day – it is this hope of knowing where we will spend eternity that helps shape the goals, dreams and hopes that we have for today.

One thing is certain – we will all one day die. The Bible teaches after that we must all stand before God and give an account of our lives – the acts we have done, the words we have spoken.

The Bible says, ***'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul.'*** Mark 8:36

What do you think that verse means?

A person may be so focused on this earthly life that they never consider the value and importance of spiritual things and preparing for their life after death. A person may spend 70-80 years living in the lap of luxury and power, but he's going to live in eternity separated from God, **what good will his riches/fame/intelligence do him then?**

Abraham knew the truth of this verse. He had been promised the richest of lands but still considered it nothing in comparison to Heaven. The person who places his hope in an eternal future with God in heaven, will gladly suffer the difficulties, trials and tests of this world in order to live lives pleasing to God. Their hope for eternity is much greater than their hope for their 70-80 years on this earth.

A good thing to realise is that God gave to Abraham the things he hoped for in the natural – a son, the land, a great family and ancestry. But to Abraham that was all secondary to knowing the promise and hope of eternal life.

Thought for today:

Are you willing to sacrifice what the world says is success to instead follow what God says is success?

The world hopes for riches, popularity, fame, and power - but that doesn't lead to eternal life. God – through a personal and intimate relationship and friendship with Him - offers us the promise and hope of eternal life.

What will you cling on to, the fading hope of worldly fame and fortune – or the eternal hope of a life in heaven?

Week 6: Men and women of FAITH have asked the YOU question.

Review

F = foundation of knowing God exists and establishing friendship with Him
A = acting in obedience and faith to Gods game-plan and strategy for our lives
T = testing and trials that shape in us the Character God wants for our lives
H = Hope of an eternity in heaven with God.
I = YOU

We have looked at some of God's heroes and what it was that made them stand out. Essentially they were people of FAITH - men and women who believed and trusted in God, even in odd and difficult circumstances and put their trust into action - willing to go through anything to honour God.

Because of their obedience and faith they have been honoured in Gods Hall of Fame in Chapter 11. We've highlighted three heroes but as this chapter goes on, many other names could also have been listed.

Take a moment to tell about some of the other heroes? Can you think of other heroes in the Bible?

Would you like your name to be listed on Gods Hall of Fame?

Today we would like you to answer the 'YOU' question

What are YOU going to do about your faith in God?

**Are you simply going to believe that there is a God who exists and not do anything about it?
Or – are you going to act on that belief and make God your closest friend?**

At times...

- It can be hard.
- You may have to sacrifice certain things.
- Others may think you're foolish.
- You may not see the full reward until after you die and pass away from this earth.

Are YOU willing and ready to make that step?

The Bible tells us that each person who makes that decision to follow Christ has his name entered into a special book in heaven – It's called the Lambs book of Life. **Revelations 20:12 & 21:27**
Every academy player would love one day to see his name written down:

- In the back pages of the Daily Mail / Express / Telegraph / Mirror,
- In the team line-up on a match-day programme
- Maybe written about in biography (Ronaldo or Messi)
- Maybe on the back of some kids club shirt

But at the end of the day the most important place for any persons name to be recorded is this book of life.

Do you want your name in God's book of life and to be part of His team? *Provide an opportunity for players to make a decision.*