

Hebrews – Why Is It All About Faith? - Hebrews 11:6

Sign Title: If God's not on Facebook, where can I find him?

October 4, 2009

How many of us are on Facebook? After continuous “poking” from a few of my friends, I finally broke down and created an account. I haven’t done anything with it, my son David, tells me I am finally with it. Some of us are wondering what is Facebook? Facebook is a social networking web site that helps people stay in contact with their friends and family. On your Facebook page you share about your life and connect with your friends and their life.

Facebook is extremely popular because it is all about relationships. It helps us satisfy our need to connect. Relationships are really important. We are designed for relationships. It is part of our DNA. God created us to be connected. Facebook connects us with people we would usually lose track of. It seems you can find just about anyone of Facebook. But there is one person who still hasn’t created an account. One person who we are created to connect to with greater intimacy and satisfaction than any other.

The person we all desperately want to connect with is God. He doesn’t have a facebook account. How do we connect with God and how does that connect with God become close and personal? That is what we are going to look at this morning. We are studying Hebrews 11 which is about the relationship between faith and our relationship with God.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

I want you to notice there are two things this verse teaches us about connecting with God: Faith is the only way we can please God and furthermore, what faith that is pleasing to God looks like.

The *only* way to please God is living by faith.

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Living by faith is the only way to please God. It doesn't say that if we don't live by faith is it *harder* to please God. It doesn't say that without faith it *takes longer* to please God. It says that living by faith is the *only* way please God.

Let me clarify something. In our culture, when I say the word faith what many people hear is OK pastor, you are saying, I need to believe in something. That is not what the Bible is talking about. Faith in the Bible is not faith in anything. It is believing in God the father and his son Jesus Christ is who he claimed to be, that is, our only Lord and Savior. The faith we are talking about is everything we learned in the book of Hebrews for the past year. This is not the faith of Mohammed, it is not the faith of Buddha, it is faith in God the father and his son Jesus Christ as the once for all sacrifice for our sin.

This week I checked out Deepok Chopra's web site and he says that pleasing God involves yoga and meditation. When he talks about faith, it is not Biblical faith. He talks about having faith in yourself. The Bible says, it is not about faith in yourself, but about faith in God. Not any God but the one true God.

This is really important to understand. The object of our faith is not anything we want it to be. It is only faith in Christ that counts for anything. That is the only way to please God.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

So one way we mess this up is to have the wrong object of faith. Instead of focusing on who we trust, we think all that matters is that we trust something. One of the ways we get the object of our faith, our trust, messed up is that instead of placing our faith in Christ, we place it in ourselves. Did you ever wonder what Martin Luther and Deepok Chopra have in common? This is it. Martin Luther and Deepok Chopra both began by placing their faith in themselves. Deepok is still there.

Martin Luther was a brilliant young man on his way to becoming a successful lawyer in Germany, when in a moment of terror, during a lightening storm, he made a vow to become a priest. He began seeking God, and more than anything, he wanted to know God accepted him. How could a sinner, stand before a perfect God? He tried strict asceticism, he abused his body with sleep deprivation and cold and hunger thinking these would make him more acceptable to God. He kept wondering, was he doing enough? When he began teaching the book of Romans he ran across Romans 1:17 and he realized he had it all backwards.

“The righteous shall live by faith.” Romans 1:17 (ESV)

He realized depriving himself of food and sleeping on a cold stone floor without a blanket didn't make him *any* more acceptable to God. The only way to connect by God is to live by faith.

Why is faith the only way?

If you were to ask the average person on the street if they were going to heaven, many of them would say "Yes". When you ask them why, they will say something like, ... *because I am basically a good person* or ... *because I don't break the 10 commandments*. Here is the problem.

Our Actions Are Sinful - The Bible tells us we are not basically good people and that we all break God's commandments. No matter how good we are, none of us are good enough to come before God.

No one is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Romans 3:10b-12

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8

For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20

So obedience to God's commands, while not wrong thing to do, can not bring us into a relationship with God because the reason God's law are there are to show us how far short we fall, not to make us feel better about ourselves.

When was the last time the police officer pulled you over to pay you money because you were going the right speed? The speed limit signs are not to show us how good we are, they show us how bad we are. That is the purpose of God's law. It is a speed limit sign designed to guilt us down to speed.

Our Thoughts are Sinful - It gets worse. The Bible says that even when we get our act together and we aren't sinning, remember God looks at the heart and he knows when we want to speed.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. Psalm 139:1-4

So if we think we will obey our way to a perfect God, it is just out of the question.

Our Motives Are Not Pure - This is pretty unsettling. Our actions are sinful, our hearts are sinful, even our motives are mixed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)

When I was in college, the younger brother of our team captain was at my weight class. He was a great guy who lived across the hall from me as a freshman. We weren't close, but we were friends. The problem was that he was just as good wrestler as his older brother. I had little chance of beating him and getting a position on the starting lineup. I think it was our sophomore year when in the fall, Keith did not return to school. I heard he was sick and so he wouldn't be in school that fall semester. I felt really bad that he was sick and only later did I learn he had cancer. I am ashamed to admit it, when I heard he wouldn't be in the wrestling room, I had a twinge of excitement even though I felt bad. I had a chance for a position in the varsity lineup. Has anyone ever experienced something like that when they realized your heart was not as pure as you thought it was and even your purest motives were mixed?

So the idea that we are basically good people, who can connect with God because of our own moral goodness is tragically flawed. It is impossible to please God when we live any other way than faith in Jesus Christ as the king of creation and who deserves to be the king of my life.

But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. Romans 3:21-22 (NLT)

The question is, do you have a relationship with God? The only way you can please him is by placing your faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other way to connect with God. It doesn't matter how sincere you are. It doesn't matter how devoted you are in worship actions. It doesn't matter how religious we act. Apart from faith, it is impossible to please God.

How do I draw near to God through faith?

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

Drawing near to God is a big theme in the book of Hebrews. Under the Old Covenant, it was always about distance. It was about God being holy, we are not so back off and keep away. With Christ, it is not about distance from God, it is about intimacy with God. We can draw near. Isn't it great that God wants us in a close relationship with him. Through Christ, God has made it possible to satisfy the deepest longing for intimacy in our heart with him. What kind of faith in Christ draws us close to God.

I must believe God exists

Faith is about seeing with the eyes of our spirit things that are unseen with the eyes of our flesh. By faith, we believe in God's existence. I can't please God if I don't believe he exists. There are a lot of rational arguments to prove God exists. Some are:

- **Causal Argument** - Everything known in the universe has a cause. Therefore, the universe must have a cause, which can only be God.
- **Beauty and Complexity Argument** - The complexity and beauty of the universe argues for an intelligent designer, creator, and sustainer, which can only be God.
- **Moral Argument** - There is a universe sense of right and wrong and concern for justice shared by humanity. This argues for the existence of a transcendent standard, which can only be God.

Now I want to warn you, none of these arguments will argue anyone into faith. This is why in the debates between an atheist and a Christian, the atheist doesn't walk convinced God exists. Where does faith come from? Faith comes from God.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is a gift of God... Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)

God is the one who enables us to believe and these arguments help overcome some faith barriers and confirm in our heart the faith we feel.

What is important is this verse doesn't stop here. Simply believing in God's existence is not enough to draw us near to God. A recent Gallup poll showed that 95% of American adults believe in God. Yet, it is clear, belief in God's existence is making little difference in the way people live.

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that... James 2:19

You believe in God, so do 95% of American and 100% of the demons. Experiencing closeness to God takes more than just belief in God's existence. If belief in his existence is all it took then Satan and the demons would be fine because they definitely believes in God. There won't be anyone in heaven who doesn't believe in God's existence but there will be many people in hell who believe in God's existence.

I must believe God is a generous rewarder

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Did you realize there is a lot of reward language in the Bible.

[Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. Hebrews 11:26

Faith that pleases God is faith that believes God's promises about rewards. Some rewards we may receive on earth but the real rewards come in eternity. Faith that believes the sacrifices I make now for Christ I can make joyfully because I will be reward in eternity is faith that is please to God. It is faith that draws us near to God.

See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. Isaiah 41:10

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. Matthew 16:27

since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:24

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.
1 Corinthians 9:25

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10

But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 (NLT)

God wants us to know he is a generous and rewarding God. God will reward every act of service offered to Him and for Him. Don't think in terms of payment, think in terms of rewards. God doesn't owe us anything, but he loves to reward us for living to honor him.

If we really believed this, wouldn't we be more willing to give up things in this life to gain for the next? Faith is taking God at his word that anything we give up for Christ now is not really giving up. What we give up now we will gain even more in the end. Jesus told a parable that went like this...

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.
Matthew 13:44

This is the Beverly Hillbillies parable. Think about it. If you knew there were massive oil reserves in a field priced at \$20,000 an acres, wouldn't you sell everything you had to buy as much of the field as you could and we would be happy to do it. We wouldn't be giving up just for the sake of giving up but we are giving up to gain something even better in the end. There is nothing new about this. We live a lot of our lives this way.

- A student gives up 4 years of their life to gain a college degree, which in the end is gain for the rest of their life.
- An athlete disciplines her body to gain a trophy.
- A man or a woman gives up independence for marriage believing that in the end it will be gain.
- A couple gives up financial security to have and raise children believing that in the end it will be a worth it.

Faith that pleases God is faith that gladly gives up comfort and security now knowing God will not only make up the loss but will generously reward us for every sacrifice we make for Christ, down to even giving a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus.

Since faith that draws near to God is faith that lives not for rewarding ourselves now but for the day when we will be rewarded in eternity, how close to you feel to God? Are we living to be rewarded by God in his time or are we more interested in rewarding ourselves in our own time.

Earnestly Seeks Him

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The devil believes God exists. Cults believe God will give eternal rewards but God given faith has something more to it. We experience God not just by believing he exists, not just by living for his reward but by desperately wanting to be close to him with our hearts. Wanting intimacy with God and earnestly seeking it. This is where Satan's faith can't make it. Satan believes God exists.

Satan know God is a rewarder who loves to honor those who honor him. But Satan has no love for God.

A Christian is not someone who simply believes God exists and believes God rewards. If that is what you thinks it means to be a Christian, congratulations, you have the same set of belief's as the devil. Satan affirms everything we believe but Satan has no affections for God. He hates God. Faith that pleases God doesn't just affirm truths but it wants God more than anything else this world has to offer.

Remember the feelings when you were first dating and the feelings of affection and connection? Real God given faith is like that. It is filled with that heat, drive, and passion that says, I want to know God deeper and to love God more. Obedience to God doesn't come out of obligation but out love for what God has done for us. You know what a heart that earnestly seeks God looks like?

My soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1

May God continually stir up in us heat and drive to know our God.



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