

引言 INTRODUCTION

Our past experience determines our present, and our choices today will affect our future. The same principles apply to a country. I hated history when I was in school. There are so many dates, names, places and events to memorize. That explains why I often failed in the subject. However, I become interested in history after I grew up. I guess learning is fun when you do not have to prepare for any test. We will observe Memorial Day tomorrow. It is a time to remember the military personnel who lost their lives in previous battles. Regardless of how we look at wars, we should respect those who risk everything to preserve our safety. I am sure many people have stories about the war heroes in their families to tell. The author of Hebrews also presents a list of heroes in chapter 11. They did not fight for their country, though they went through challenges for what they believed. They are all pioneers of faith. Their faith in God motivated them to pursue God's promises. God is the ultimate hero in their lives. As the author goes through their names, it is like a senior figure sharing wonderful stories to some children. Let us be encouraged as we recall the experience of those Biblical characters. We all need faith every day, especially when things are not going as smoothly as we expect. Similar to those pioneers of faith, we need to wait patiently for God to fulfill His promises. But since God is always faithful, we must walk with Him by faith.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 信心的定義 Definition of Faith

The author begins by giving us a definition of faith. Let us read from **verse 1-3**. The term translated as “assurance” in verse 1 can mean a foundation. Then the term rendered as “conviction” can mean a proof. Putting everything in context, faith is the ability to foresee something as if it is already a reality. Faith motivates us to press on toward that goal. Of course, one's wishful thinking cannot make something impossible to become a possibility. Dreaming to become a bird cannot make you fly. The object of our faith is God instead of our capability or circumstances. The author uses God's creation as an example to illustrate his point. God made the universe before the beginning of time. No one was present to witness His work. Therefore, we need to accept it by faith that there is a Creator. However, we do see many proofs of God's creation. Think of God like an artist. You will notice a certain style in a painter, music composer or movie director by observing their works. Similarly, God displays His characters in creation. He is the Lord of beauty. No two sunset scenes are equal, just like no two autumn leaves have the same shade of colors. God is also the Master of order. Our body is a very complicated machine. Every cell, organ, nerve and chemical have to coordinate with each other to ensure proper functions. God loves diversity too. There are plants and animals with various looks. Even identical twins of human have distinct finger-prints. Police and FBI should thank God for that! It takes a much bigger faith to believe that there is not a wise designer behind the world. With the help of those and many other proofs, we know that God exists. Among all of God's creation, He only gave humans a soul, through which we can communicate with Him. He wants us to know Him and build an eternal relationship Him. Verse 6 says: **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. We need faith when we seek God. It is impossible to receive all of God's blessings if we do not acknowledge His existence. There are certain common grace that even non-believers can enjoy. For example, sunshine, air and rain. However, there are some specific blessings like eternal life that God will only give to those who believe in Him. God is mindful that we will have doubts. After all, we have a finite mind and we live in a material world, but God is spiritual. We must use faith to bridge across what is visible before we can accept an invisible God. Although we cannot see Him, we can feel His existence. After God created the world, He did not let it run by itself. Rather, He sustains everything by His mighty power. He uses natural laws to maintain the world. There are rhythms like sunrise and sunset, four seasons in a year, birth and death, etc. God is in full control of natural phenomena, world affairs and even everything that happens in our lives. He has a plan for His created world, and He has a unique plan for each of us. That is why people said history is His story. God allows certain things to take place to accomplish His will. We see plenty of examples from the Old to the New Testament. We will go through the stories of some pioneers of faith in this chapter. They walked with this sovereign God by faith. The same God is also working in your lives. You will realize that as you look back in your life. Have you wondered why you are sitting here today? Why did your ancestors or yourself choose to come to the U.S.? Why do you come to this city? Why do you pick a certain career? Why do you exist in the 21st century but not earlier or later? We can ask a lot of related questions. Some people attribute everything to the so-called chance or fate, thinking that everything happens randomly. They believe they just go through life, do certain things when opportunities come then close their eyes when it is time to go. According to the Bible our life is in God's hand. He reveals His presence through our circumstances so as to lead us to Him. Only by faith can we encounter Him.

2. 信心的證明 Demonstration of Faith

After giving us a definition of faith, the author presents a list of pioneers of faith. Their lives is a demonstration of their faith in God. The phrase "by faith" appears in each story. Because of their faith and by relying on faith, they completed what God called them to do. We will focus on one person every Jew admires – Abraham. His stories are recorded in Genesis. We will read from [verse 8-12](#). The author recalls three major episodes of Abraham's life. The first snapshot is about God calling Abraham. Abraham had to overcome several challenges. First, God did not tell Abraham where to go. Second, Abraham was a wealthy man with a lot of livestock and servants. Third, Abraham was seventy-five years old already. He left his home country like people immigrating from one country to another. Most people at his age will prefer to enjoy their peaceful retirement. But Abraham accepted God's invitation anyway. Fourth, at that time Jehovah was a foreign God to Abraham. He did not ask God: "Based on what can I trust You?" He just believed and left home. The second snapshot of Abraham's life is about the birth of Isaac. God told Abraham that his descendants would be numerous. Abraham asked a legitimate question: "How can that occur if I don't even have a son?" Abraham trusted God anyway. He and Sarah kept trying to have a baby. Nothing happened for nine years. Being impatient, Sarah did what some ancient Chinese families would do: get a second wife for the man. The plan seemed to work. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. It turned out to be a disaster. Ishmael became the ancestor of Arabs, who have a long history of conflict with Israel to this day. God does not need our help to make short-cuts. His work will not be derailed by our unwise decisions either. But we

will bear the consequence of our mistakes. God continued His original plan. Sarah finally gave birth to Isaac when she was ninety years old. God proved to be the Lord of impossibilities. For the third snapshot about Abraham, we will read **verse 17-19**. It was the biggest test of Abraham's faith. He obeyed God just like he did before. He and Isaac walked three days to the mountain God indicated. Abraham might wonder how God would fulfill His promise if Isaac actually died. By this time, Isaac was a teenager. He could have fought back or even run away. But Isaac submitted to his father. Abraham tied Isaac up, put firewood around him and was about to kill him when an angel stopped Abraham. God prepared a ram to take the place of Isaac. Abraham passed the test! His faith in God was bigger than his reasoning. God told Abraham earlier that Isaac would inherit blessings. God also asked him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham could not reconcile both facts. He came to a conclusion that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead even if he died. In all three situations, Abraham demonstrated his faith through actions. He obeyed God when he did not have all the answers. A rich family moved to an unknown place. An old woman conceived a son. Sacrificing the only son who was supposed to be the heir. Abraham looked beyond the obstacles and focused on God. His faith grew as he passed one test after another. God gradually unfolded His plans to Abraham. Our faith in God is like exercising our muscles. You add distance to your run until you can finish a marathon. You start lifting a lighter weight then steadily add more to it. We will be encouraged when we experience God's faithfulness on small things. Then we have more confidence to trust Him on bigger things. God intervenes into our lives and interacts with us. Our subjective experience reinforces the objective truth about God. He is loving, gracious, merciful and patient. Each of us can also share our personal testimonies in a faith community to encourage each other. The same God who worked in the Bible is still working today. He is real and He has a plan for each of us. We should step out by faith knowing that God will continue to fulfill His will on us.

3. 信心的終點 Destination of Faith

We have looked at the definition of faith and the demonstration of faith. Thirdly, the author also tells us that there is a destination of faith. Let us look at **verse 13-16**. The destination of faith is heaven. Those pioneers of faith lived by faith, and they also died by faith. Verse 13 is a summary of their lives: **These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.** They walked by faith all their lives but they did not receive God's promise. How would you feel if you work hard on a goal but you do not get the result you expect? Perhaps it is a home improvement project, a professional certification or a dream vacation. Life is full of frustrations, is it not? However, those pioneers of faith did not leave this world heart-broken, but with joyful delight. They understood that God's best promises are up there: a heavenly sanctuary, an eternal rest and God's rewards. They visualize their destination of faith with spiritual eyes. As such, they could take the losses in this world lightly. They looked at themselves as strangers and exiles on the earth. The two words have a similar meaning such as foreigners, outsiders or travelers. They willingly abandoned their earthly and temporary home because they looked forward to a better and eternal home. A story was told about a tourist visiting a wise monk in another country. The visitor was surprised to see that the monk hardly had any décor in his home. The walls were empty. There were only a small table and a few chairs in the living room. He could not help but asked the wise man: "Teacher, where is the rest of your furniture?" The sage replied: "Mister, where is your furniture?" The young man found the question laughable:

“Sir, I left my belongings at home because I’m only here for a trip.” The monk answered: “And so am I.” Our worldview will change if we realize that we are but renters and God is the landlord. The world tells us that this is our final destination. We should work hard and play hard. We should try to extend our stay. I can understand that money and materials can give us certain comfort and security. I have gone through periods where I worried about paying bills. But thanks to God for His faithful provision. You may have a similar experience. We must trust God rather than what this world promises to offer. Otherwise, we will lose sight of the true and everlasting rewards God has prepared for us. No one likes to suffer in life. But the Bible clearly tells us that we will suffer to a certain degree for what we believe. People will dislike us because they hate God. They may take advantage of us because we live by a different moral code. But all that mishaps will only last for a short time. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 that: **17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.** Our earthly life is very short compared to our eternal life with God. The author uses the examples of some pioneers of faith to encourage his readers and us. His audience had to go through persecution, separation, humiliation and even death. But they would not receive all that God promised unless they finished their journey by faith. They must follow the footsteps of the pioneers of faith and fix their eyes on the destination. Abraham understood that he was not the final recipients of all God’s blessings. His role is like a runner in a relay race. He must pass the baton to his heirs. Even today, Jews say that the Lord is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. All their examples of faith will inspire future generations. Dr. James Dobson is the founder of the Focus on the Family. This organization helps many people apply God’s truth to their family life. Once Dr. Dobson shared about his expectation on his children. He summarized it with two words: be there! Nothing else matters if they do not end up in heaven. We as parents must also use our life stories to introduce God to our children. That is the most important task God has given to all Christian parents.

結論 CONCLUSION

We must walk with God by faith since He proves Himself to be faithful. The stories of all those pioneers of faith should encourage us. Faith helps us comprehend God’s work in our past. Faith gives us security in every day. Faith also assures us of God’s future blessings. As Jesus’ followers, we must be people of faith. I mentioned about Memorial Day at the beginning. When President Andrew Johnson established this special day in 1868, it was actually called the Decoration Day. He wanted people to set aside that day to decorate the tombstones of war heroes with flowers or wreaths, etc. As Christians, faith should not be a decoration of our life only. It is like having something beautiful, otherwise our life may be too plain. But since it is optional, we can live without it. That is not the reason God gives us faith. Rather, faith should be the declaration of our lives. It defines our relationship with God. Therefore, we should live by faith each and every day.

引言 INTRODUCTION

我們過去的經歷決定了我們的現在，而我們今天的選擇將會影響我們的將來。同樣的原則也適用於一個國家。我上學的時候討厭歷史。有很多日期、名字、地點和事件需要記住。我經常考試都不及格。然而，我長大後對歷史逐漸產生興趣。我想如果不用為考試而學東西時，是會更有趣味的。明天我們會過陣亡將士紀念日，目的是紀念在戰爭中喪生的軍人。無論我們如何看戰爭，我們都應該尊重那些付代價保護我們的人。很多家庭都有一些英雄故事和後代分享。希伯來書的作者在第 11 章中也列出一些英雄。他們不是為自己的國家而爭戰，他們是在信仰上受到挑戰。他們是一群信心的先鋒。他們對神的信心促使他們追求神的應許。神是他們生命中的幕後英雄。當作者陳述他們的事跡時，就好像一位長輩跟小孩分享他的故事。當我們回顧那些聖經人物的經歷時，讓我們受到鼓舞。我們每天都需要信心，尤其是當事情沒有我們預期的那麼順利時。就像那些信心的先鋒一樣，我們需要耐心等待神實現祂的應許。我們必須憑信心與神同行，因為神證明祂是信實的。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 信心的定義 Definition of Faith

作者首先給我們一個信心的定義。讓我們先來讀第 1-3 節。第 1 節中「實底」的意思是基礎，而「確據」是指證明。從上下文來看，信心是預先看見一件事情的能力，似乎那件事情已經發生了的一樣。信心激勵我們朝著那個目標邁進。當然，一個人不能憑空想像使不可能的事情變成可能。夢想成為一隻鳥不能讓你飛翔。我們信心的對像是神，而不是我們的能力或環境。作者以神的創造為例來說明他的論點。神在時間開始之前創造了宇宙。沒有人在場見證祂的工作。因此，我們需要憑信心接受有一位造物主。但是我們看到了許多神創造的證據。我們可以把神想像成一位藝術家。通過觀察畫家、作曲家或導演的作品，你會發現他們的風格。同樣，神在創造中顯示出祂的性情。祂是美麗之主。沒有兩個日落的情景是相同的，就像沒有兩片秋天的樹葉有相同的顏色一樣。神也是有次序的主。我們的身體是一台非常複雜的機器。每個細胞、器官、神經和化學物質都必須相互協調以確保正常運作。神也喜歡多元化。有各種各樣的植物和動物。就算是人類的雙胞胎也有不同的指紋。警察和聯邦調查局應該為此感謝神！相信世界背後沒有聰明的設計師需要更大的信心。透過這許多證據，我們知道神的存在。在神的所有創造物之中，祂只給了人類靈魂，使我們可以藉此與神交流。神希望我們認識祂並與祂建立永恆的關係。第 6 節說：人非有信，就不能得神的喜悅；因為到神面前來的人必須信有神，

且信他賞賜那尋求他的人。當我們尋求神之時，我們需要信心。如果我們不承認神的存在，就不可能得到神所有的祝福。有一些普遍的恩典，即使是非信徒也能享受。例如，陽光、空氣和雨水。然而，有一些特別的祝福，比如永生，神只會賜給那些相信祂的人。神知道我們會有疑問。畢竟，我們的智慧有限，我們也生活在物質世界中，但神是屬靈的。我們必須用信心跨越可見的事物，才能接受一位看不見的神。雖然我們看不見神，但我們能夠感覺到祂的存在。神創造世界之後，並沒有讓世界自生自滅。神卻以祂的能力託住萬有。祂用自然法則來維護世界。有日出和日落、一年四季、出生和死亡等節奏。神完全掌握著自然現象、世界事務，甚至我們生活中發生的一切。神對於祂所創造的世界有一個計劃，祂對我們每個人也有獨特的旨意。因此人們說歷史是神的故事。神允許某些事情發生以成就祂的目的。我們看到很多從舊約到新約的例子。我們將在本章中講述一些信心先鋒的故事。他們憑信心與這位擁有主權的神同行。同樣的一位神也在你的生活中工作。當你回顧你的過去時，你便能夠察覺到這一點。你有沒有想過你今天為什麼會坐在這裡？為什麼你的祖先或你自己選擇來美國？你為什麼來這個城市？你為什麼選擇某個職業？為什麼你生存在 21 世紀而不是更早或更晚？我們可以問很多相關的問題。有些人把一切都歸咎於所謂的偶然或命運，認為一切都是隨機發生的。他們相信他們漫無目的地度過一生，在機會來臨時做某些事情，然後在該走的時候閉上眼睛。根據聖經，我們的生命是在神的手中。祂透過我們的環境顯明祂的同在，以帶領我們認識祂。只有憑著信心，我們才能遇見祂。

2. 信心的證明 Demonstration of Faith

作者定義了信心之後，他便列出一個信心先鋒的名單。他們的生平證明了他們對神的信心。「因著信」這句話出現在每個故事中。因著他們的信心，靠著信心，他們完成了神呼召他們去做的事。我們集中看每個猶太人都敬佩的一個人：亞伯拉罕。他的故事記載在創世記。我們來讀第 8-12 節。作者回顧了亞伯拉罕一生中的三件重要的事件。第一個片段是關於神呼召亞伯拉罕。亞伯拉罕必須克服幾個挑戰。首先，神沒有告訴亞伯拉罕去哪裡。其次，亞伯拉罕是一個富有的人，有很多牲畜和僕人。第三，亞伯拉罕當時已經七十五歲了。他離開了自己的祖國，就像人們移民到另一個國家一樣。大多數在他這個年紀的人可能寧願享受平靜的退休生活。但亞伯拉罕還是接受了神的邀請。第四，當時耶和華對亞伯拉罕來說是個陌生的神。他沒有問神：「我憑什麼相信祢？」他就單純地相信神，離開了家。亞伯拉罕生平的第二個片段是關於以撒的出生。神告訴亞伯拉罕，他會有很多的後裔。亞伯拉罕問了一個合理的問題：「這怎麼可能發生？我連一個兒子都沒有。」但亞伯拉罕始終相信神。他和撒拉繼續嘗試生孩子，過了九年仍然沒有動靜。不耐煩的撒拉做了一件中國古代家庭會做的事情：為先生娶小老婆。這個計劃似乎奏效了。夏甲生了以實瑪利。但結果是一場災難。以實瑪利成為阿拉伯人的祖先，他們直到今天仍然是以色列人的世仇。神不需要我們的幫助來走捷徑。祂的計劃也不會因我們愚昧的決

定而出軌。但我們必須承擔我們錯誤引起的後果。神繼續祂原來的計劃。一直等到撒拉九十歲時生下了以撒，證明神是使不可能變成可能的主。亞伯拉罕的第三個片段，是記載在**第 17-19 節**。這是對亞伯拉罕信心的最大考驗。他像以前一樣順服神。他和以撒走了三天，到了神指定的山。亞伯拉罕可能心裡想，如果以撒真的死了，神會如何實現祂的應許？此時，以撒已經是一個青少年。他絕對有能力反抗，甚至逃跑。但以撒順服了他的父親。亞伯拉罕把以撒綁起來，在他周圍放柴火，正要殺他時，天使攔住了亞伯拉罕。神準備了一隻公山羊來代替以撒。亞伯拉罕通過了這個考驗！他對神的信心勝過他的邏輯推理。之前神告訴亞伯拉罕，以撒將承受祝福。同時神也要求他獻上以撒。亞伯拉罕無法調和這兩個事實。他得出的結論是，即使以撒死了，神也能使他從死裡復活。在三次事件中，亞伯拉罕都以行動證明他的信心。當他沒有所有的答案時，他仍然順服了神。一個富有的家庭搬到了一個未知的地方。一位年老的婦人懷孕生子。獻上本來要繼承家業的獨生子。亞伯拉罕跨越障礙，定睛在神的身上。當他通過了一個又一個的考驗時，他的信心隨之而增加。神同時逐漸向亞伯拉罕展示祂的計劃。我們對神的信心就像鍛煉肌肉一樣。你逐漸延長跑步的距離，直到你可以完成馬拉松。你舉重時也慢慢增加重量。當我們在小事上經歷神的信實時，我們會受到鼓勵。然後我們更有信心在更大的事情上相信祂。神介入我們的生活並與我們產生互動。我們的主觀經歷驗證了關於神的客觀真理。祂充滿愛心、恩典、慈悲和忍耐。我們可以在信仰群體中分享我們的個人見證，以相互鼓勵。在聖經中工作的神今天仍在工作。祂是真實的，祂對我們每個人都有獨特的計劃。我們應該憑信心走出去，知道神會繼續在我們身上實現祂的旨意。

3. 信心的終點 Destination of Faith

我們看過信心的定義和信心的證明。第三，作者還告訴我們，信心是有終點的。讓我們看**13-16 節**。信心的終點是天堂。那些信心的先鋒因信心而活，也因信心而死。第 13 節是對他們生平的總結：**這些人都是存著信心死的，並沒有得著所應許的；卻從遠處望見，且歡喜迎接，又承認自己在世上是客旅，是寄居的。**他們一生都憑信心而生活，但他們沒有得到神的應許。如果你為一個目標而努力，但是卻沒有得到你期望的結果，你會有什麼感覺？也許是家裡的裝修工程、專業考試或是一個夢想假期。生活是充滿挫折，不是嗎？然而，那些信心的先鋒離開世界時，並沒有遺憾，而是充滿喜悅。他們明白神最美的應許是在上面：天上的聖所、永恆的安息和神的獎賞。他們用屬靈的眼睛看見信心的終點。於是，他們便能夠輕看這個在世界的損失。他們將自己視為地上的客旅和寄居者。這兩個用詞有相似的含義，就像外國人、局外人或遊客。他們甘願放棄塵世和臨時的家，因為他們期待著一個更美和永恆的家。有一個故事是關於一位遊客到一個國家拜訪一位有智慧的修士。這位訪客驚訝地發現，修士的家中幾乎沒有任何裝飾。牆壁是空的。客廳裡只有一張小桌子和幾把椅子。他忍不住問智者：「老師，你其他的家具呢？」老人回答：

「先生，請問你的家具又在哪裡呢？」年輕人覺得這個問題很可笑：「我把東西留在家裡，因為我只是過路的。」修士回答：「我也是。」如果我們明白我們只是房客而神才是房東，我們的世界觀就會改變。這個世界告訴我們，這裡是我們的終點。我們應該努力工作，拼命玩耍。我們應該盡量延長我們的逗留時間。我可以理解，金錢和物質可以帶給我們一定的舒適和安全感。我也經歷過擔心支付賬單的日子。但感謝神信實的供應。你可能有類似的經歷。我們必須相信神，而不是相信這個世界所提供的一切。否則，我們會忘記神為我們準備真實和永恆的獎賞。沒有人喜歡受苦。但聖經清楚地告訴我們，我們會因為信仰而受苦。人們會不喜歡我們，因為他們痛恨神。他們可能會佔我們便宜，因為我們遵循不同的道德準則。但所有這些不幸只會持續很短的時間。保羅在哥林多後書 4:17-18 中說：**17 我們這至暫至輕的苦楚，要為我們成就極重無比、永遠的榮耀。18 原來我們不是顧念所見的，乃是顧念所不見的；因為所見的是暫時的，所不見的是永遠的。**和我們與神同在的永生相比，我們在地上的生命真的是非常短暫。作者用一些信心先鋒的例子來鼓勵他的讀者和我們。他的讀者必然會經歷迫害、分離、羞辱甚至死亡。但除非他們憑信心完成旅程，否則他們不能得到神應許的一切。他們必須跟隨信心先鋒的腳步，定睛在終點。亞伯拉罕明白他並不是得到神所有祝福的人。他的角色就像接力賽中的運動員，把接力棒交給他的繼承人。一直到今天，猶太人仍然稱主是亞伯拉罕、以撒和雅各的神。他們的信心榜樣將會激勵後代。杜博森博士 (James Dobson) 是美國愛家協會的創辦人。這個組織幫助許多人將神的真理應用到家庭生活中。有一次，杜博森分享他對自己孩子的期望。他用三個字來概括：到那邊！如果他們最終上不了天堂，其他一切成就都不重要。作為父母，我們也必須用我們的生活經歷向孩子介紹神。這是神給所有基督徒父母最重要的任務。

結論 CONCLUSION

我們必須憑信心與神同行，因為神證明祂是信實的。那些信心先鋒的故事能夠激勵我們。信心幫助我們理解神在我們過去的作為。信心使我們每一天都有安全感。信心也向我們保證神在未來的祝福。作為耶穌的跟隨者，我們必須是有信心的人。我一開始就提到了陣亡將士紀念日。當安德魯·約翰遜 (Andrew Johnson) 總統在 1868 年設立這個特別的日子時，他稱這一天為裝飾日。他希望人們在這一天留出時間，用鮮花或花圈等裝飾士兵的墓碑。作為基督徒，信心不應該只是我們生活的裝飾。就像一些漂亮的東西，裝飾品使我們的生活變得多采多姿。但它是可有可無的。這不是神給我們信心的原因。信心應該是我們生命的宣告。信心定義了我們與神的關係。因此，我們應該每天憑信心而活。