

## **Study Guide: “Faith that Longs for a Better Country”**

*Carter Sanger, Nov-09*

### **Introduction**

Do you remember the last time you were angry at God? Do you remember a time when you thought Christianity would be a fun spoiler?

Read Hebrews 11:8-16. The writer of Hebrews addresses a people that have been through persecution and are on the brink of another period of difficult persecution. Things don't seem to be working out well for the Christian. It is in this context that he encourages them to stand firm in their faith. In his encouragement he points them to many key people in the Old Testament that had faith exemplifying different aspects of the faith his readers need to have. All of these key aspects are built, ultimately, on God's faithfulness.

### **I. Leaving without Knowing Where**

Read verse 8 again.

- What is it that Abraham is called to do? According to archeology and other historical accounts we know some things about the country Abraham was from. He was from a land that was making significant advances technologically that made life easier. Cities were governed by laws righteous laws, remarkably similar to the 10 commandments (though this was centuries before the 10 commandments were given). Abraham was from a prosperous family within this burgeoning society. Leaving would not have been easy.
- How does this give you a picture of what you are called to do as a Christian? What aspects of society are difficult for you to leave?

### **II. Living as Foreigners in the Promised Land**

Read verses 9-10.

- Where did Abraham end up after God told him to leave?
- Read Genesis 12:10-12, 13:7, 14:14-15. Was life easy for Abraham in the Promised Land?
- Read Genesis 14:21-24. Why was Abraham unwilling to accept the plunder? Who is it that would make Abraham prosper in the Promised Land?
- Read Hebrews 11:13. Did this happen during Abraham's lifetime?
- So many people are deceived by the “health and wealth” gospel that leads them to expect the promised land to be a present reality. Like Abraham, we live between the time of God's promise and God's fulfillment for this land. The Promised Land is the new heavens and the new earth that God will accomplish when he returns. The writers of the Old Testament often write with pictures of what life would look like in this land – prosperous and blessed and in peace. That is often how life in ancient Israel is depicted when kings were faithful (see especially King Solomon). But this kingdom was only a foreshadowing of the Promised Land that God will deliver in the future.

### **III. Laughing at the Faithfulness of God**

Read verses 11-12.

- In order to make God's promise a reality she gave Hagar, her maidservant, to Abraham so that she might have children through her. Read Genesis 18:9-14. Would it be Hagar's son that God would give the Promised Land? What is so unique about Sarah having a son?
- When you consider your own life, do you ever feel that God has abandoned you? When you look at the state of our country, particularly from a religious perspective, does it appear things are progressing nicely for Christianity? What is the lesson from Sarah for you?

### **IV. Longing for a Better Country**

Read verses 13-16.

- When Abraham struggled in this new land, why did he not turn back to his old country? Who is preparing a country for them? Can you think of how he might be doing this? Can you see how Jesus' work is understood by the work of Joshua in the Old Testament?

**Wrap-up**

- Does your faith bear these characteristics: leaving, living, laughing, and longing? What is God challenging you to give up? What is God challenging you to confess? What is God challenging you to hold onto?