

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL

STUDY THREE

Fleshing Out the Will of God

Hebrews 11:4–10

As children of God, our desire is to do His will. In our most rational moments, as His people, we want to do His will. We find delight in doing His will. How wonderful it would be if we could be fully responsible and fully yielded.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

MEMBERS of the Clayton family had been pillars and benefactors in their township, Lysander, for four generations. Clayton's Dirt Works was *both* profitable *and* God-honoring. The eldest son, Walter, would soon take the reins and continue the proud family legacy—blessing, bonding, and building the community. It was expected, familiar, and comfortable. The future felt certain.

Then, it happened.

Just before Bill, the patriarch, was to hand over the leadership mantle, Walter shared with the family that he sensed a strong, persistent impression that he and his wife and children should move to a nearby town devastated by a tornado a year earlier to launch a charity that builds affordable housing. Silence ensued.

Then the questions and comments came: "How do you know God wants you to do this?" "Can't you help them from here?" "What about our family?" "People count on us here." "But the staff look to you to lead them."

God moved upon only one heart, but the entire family faced a crisis of belief requiring faith and action. They all had to come to terms with *releasing* the familiar and *risking* the future.

This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study considers the faith journeys of four individuals recorded in Hebrews 11, known as the "hall of faith" chapter. Fleshing out God's will is rarely simple because we don't know everything God knows, but following God into the unknown is a thrilling adventure. What a way to live!



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Offer this prayer as you prepare to engage with God through His Word.

Father, as I open Your book today, teach me through the powerful lives of Old Testament men of courage, men who dared to trust You for hard things. Through Your Spirit, give me the faith to boldly embrace the unexpected, the unfamiliar, and the potentially uncomfortable. Teach me to seek You at all times because I want to please You. In Jesus' faithful name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Most Christians desire to please God. To discern the mystery of God's ways, we must distinguish between God's:

- **Decretive will:** God's sovereign plan determined in eternity past
- **Permissive will:** what's allowed by God even if it pains or saddens Him or others
- **Declarative will:** what God directs us to do as expressed in Scripture
- **Revealed will:** what God has revealed in Scripture about what has been or will be

Now, let's turn from knowing God's will to doing it . . . *fleshing it out*.

Hebrews chapter 11 contains more than a dozen examples of men and women who exhibited great faith in God's promises. They *lived* what they believed. Read [Hebrews 11:4–10](#) twice, once in the NLT and once in the NASB, considering and comparing their words.

What word is repeated? _____

[Hebrews 11:6](#) functions as a thematic summary within this chapter. Read it carefully. Put in your own words what the writer is saying.

Let's consider four Old Testament heroes of faith who powerfully *fleshed out* God's will amid trying conditions.

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Observation: By Faith . . .

Observation is the first phase of a *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study. You simply want to read very carefully what the passage says.¹

Abel

In *Hebrews 11:4*, what contrast was made between Abel and Cain? How did God view Abel's faith, and how does the author relate his faith to believers today?

Enoch

Hebrews 11:5 recounts something unusual. What happened to Enoch? Turn to *Genesis 5:22*. What does it state about Enoch's faith? What is the connection between our faith and God's response?

Noah

According to *Hebrews 11:7*, Noah's faithful obedience pleased God. List the two results of Noah's faith.

1. _____
2. _____

Abraham

The writer of Hebrews devoted more space to Abraham. *Hebrews 11:8–10* provides a time sequence of events. What three tests of faith did Abraham experience?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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God reached into the lives of Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham with a specific desire, request, or warning. They met the challenge through obedience, and God rewarded them for their faith.

Doing the will of God is usually difficult and convoluted. We don't know the way He's taking us. But you cannot stay where you are and go with God at the same time. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: God Rewards Faithfulness

When interpreting a passage, Pastor Chuck considers what the passage *means*. Let's review our passage more closely.

Faith is the brick and mortar with which we build our relationship with God. He longs for intimate fellowship with us, and He eagerly invites us to partner with Him in accomplishing His plans. When we submit to His will and step out in faith, God rewards us. “There certainly is a reward for the righteous,” David affirmed (Psalm 58:11).

Reread [Hebrews 11:4–10](#) and specify below each person's test and reward. Then, write a principle you can follow. Find help and dig deeper into your Bible study with resources like Dr. Constable's notes at netbible.org or by grabbing Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on Hebrews*.

Scripture	The Test of Faith	The Reward of Faith	A Principle for Faith
Abel <i>Hebrews 11:4</i>			
Enoch <i>Hebrews 11:5</i>			
Noah <i>Hebrews 11:7</i>			
Abraham <i>Hebrews 11:8–10</i>			

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At the crisis of belief, faith and obedience must prevail. Releasing and risking will be required. Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Expectation, Surprise, and Illustration of Faithfulness

Abel and Noah met with rebuke, ridicule, and rejection when they lived by faith. What did Jesus say we should expect in [Matthew 5:10–12](#)?

Sometimes, faithful living is met with *surprise*. Enoch's sudden disappearance is an example. When the death of loved ones surprises us, what comfort does [Psalm 116:13–15](#) offer as we grieve?

The faith of those in the past and the events surrounding them are sometimes *illustrations* (or patterns) of biblical truth revealed later. Bible scholars call these illustrations, *types*. For example, the global flood in Noah's day is a type of God's judgment to come at the end of days. If you'd like, read an overview of the biblical use of "*type*" in your Bible dictionary. For free, you can access the [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) online. Summarize below highlights that stood out to you.

Two New Testament passages reveal how Enoch and Noah established patterns of biblical truths. First, read [1 Thessalonians 4:13–18](#), focusing on 4:17. How might this prophetic truth serve as a type of Enoch?

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Next, read [Romans 9:27–29](#). How might Noah and his family serve as an illustration of this future event?

Navigating this sinful, fractured world, believers will encounter headwinds of opposition. Within His sovereign orchestration of affairs, God surprises us with rewards for our faith, favorable currents that move us forward and remind us that He is with us all the way.

That's what it's all about . . . our having a deep peace, a satisfying sense of fulfillment, because we are in the circumference of His plan.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Walking by Faith

Discovering and embracing God's will may lead us to a *crisis of belief*. Do we trust God enough to leave our way and go His way? If we do, then *life adjustments* inevitably follow—changes to our thinking, circumstances, relationships, commitments, actions, and maybe even our geography.

Describe how your study of this portion of Hebrews 11 has sharpened your understanding of the relationship of faith and obedience.

Did you find encouragement, or were you emboldened in your faith through the stories of these men? In what ways, specifically?

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Fleshing out faith with obedience will often be misunderstood by others, especially those closest to you. Are you facing a personal decision which may invite disapproval? If so, how? As you reflect and respond, invite the Holy Spirit to provide you with His grace, peace, power, and perspective.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham are exemplars of faithful obedience to the revealed will of God. We, too, serve the same God who invites us on His journey of faith, adventure, blessing, and reward—reward in this life and in the life to come.

The point of it is, in a glorified state, when we are with Him, it all falls together. We will be then what we have always wanted to be. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Close your study by making Pastor Chuck Swindoll's prayer below your own:

Our Father, the longer we walk with You the more we realize that we really don't know what a day may bring forth. There's no safer, there's no better, there's no more rewarding place to be than in the very nucleus of Your will. In our redeemed hearts, there's something within us that craves to know Your smile, Your rewards, and the joy of obeying, knowing we pleased our Father. In Christ's dear name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1998, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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