

NOAH: A FAITH THAT SAYS, “YES” (Hebrews 11:7)

It was 1989 when this motion picture was released. It earned three Academy Award nomination and went on to become what one writer called “a cultural phenomenon.” Maybe you remember the movie *Field of Dreams*. It tells the story of a financially embattled farmer who hears a voice that tells him, “Build it, and they will come.” In time, he becomes convinced that he is to transform a large amount of his Iowa cornfield into a baseball diamond. Against the objections of his level-headed brother-in-law, he does so. In a matter of just months, he clears the land, grows the grass, prepares the infield, lays the baselines, installs the bases, builds the backstop and bleachers. He even erects lights so that the field can be used at night.

Through a series of strange events, great players of the past emerge from his corn field to play baseball on this field of dreams. At the end of the movie, sure enough, people from all over stream to this Iowa farm to watch these men play baseball.

As outlandish as the plot of that movie may seem, today we are going to consider a man who did something far more remarkable. We are told about him in Hebrews 11:7. This is the third man whom the writer holds up as an example of what it means to live by faith. He has already told us how Cain worshiped by faith, how Enoch walked by faith, and now, we are going to see how Noah worked by faith.

True faith is a faith that enables us to say “yes” to God. It has been said that there are two words that simply do not go together. Those words are “no” and “Lord.” If Jesus is the Lord of your life and my life, we have no right to ever say, “No,” to Him when He calls us to serve Him in a particular way. When Jesus speaks to us, we are to say, “Yes, Lord,” and do whatever He tells us to do.

We are going to examine four truths related to a faith that says, “Yes.”

A Faith That Says Yes Helps Us to Obey Completely

The most important words concerning Noah in this 7th verse are the three words “constructed an ark.” The verse does not tell us that Noah drew up plans for building the ark. We are not told that Noah contemplated the matter of building an ark. We are not told that Noah assembled the materials needed for building an ark. The NLT reads, “It was by faith that Noah built an ark . . .”

To better appreciate what Noah was commanded to do, and what Noah did, let’s take a closer look at the instructions God gave him. Look at Genesis 6:13-21. We are told of Noah’s response in Genesis 6:22 and 7:5. Noah did not mostly obey God. He did not do the majority of what God told Him to do. He did it all. He obeyed God completely.

Noah serves as great example for us as to what complete obedience looks like. From his example, we can draw a couple of lessons.

1. We Are to Obey God Despite the Strangeness of His Commands.

Noah lived in Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. He lived

hundreds and hundreds of miles from an ocean. Noah had very likely never seen a ship, and certainly had never built one.

It certainly seems odd that God would call a man like Noah to build a huge boat. Then, again, God has a history of issuing rather odd commands.

- God commanded Ezekiel to lie on his left side for 390 days and then his right side for 40 days.
- God commanded Isaiah to walk stripped and barefoot through the streets of Jerusalem for three years.
- God commanded Joshua to march with the army around the city of Jericho one time each day for six days and then on the 7th day to walk around the city seven times, and then the priests, who were accompanying the ark of the Covenant and who each had a ram's horn, were to blow their trumpets. That was the battle plan God gave Joshua to take Jericho.
- Peter, who had strictly obeyed the dietary laws of the OT all of his life, was given a vision of all kinds of unclean animals. In that vision, he heard a voice, presumably the voice of God, and the voice instructed him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." That command, no doubt, sounded rather strange to Peter's ears.

Has God ever called upon you to do something odd, something strange, something unexpected and out of the ordinary? I am sure He has. And when you heard that command, what did you do?

2. We Are to Obey God Despite the Enormity of the Task.

The boat that Noah was told to build was approximately 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Such a boat would be 1 and ½ football fields long. It would be three stories high. Such a boat would have 96,000 square feet of surface.

It may have taken Noah as long as 120 years to build that ark. We don't know exactly how old he was when he started it, but we do know that he was 600 when he finished it.

Whether or not you realize it, you and I have been given an enormous task. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He looked at His disciples and said, "Go into all the world and make disciples." Those were the marching orders that He gave to us. Our job is to take the gospel throughout the world and make disciples. By the end of this year, the population of the world will reach 8 billion people, and more than two-thirds of that number are not Christians.

In 1900 the five largest cities in the world were London, New York, Paris, Berlin, and Chicago. All of those cities were predominantly Christian at that time. In 2050 four of the five largest cities will be less than friendly to Christianity unless something dramatic happens. Those cities will be Mumbai, India; Delhi, India; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Calcutta, India. None of those cities will have less than 33 million people. Mumbai will have more than 42 million people.

We have an enormous task, and God expects us to undertake that task. Our job is not to study disciple-making, or think about disciple-making, or preach and listen to sermons

about disciple-making. Our job is to make disciples. If you and I are not helping other people become Jesus followers, we are disobeying God.

In his book, *Moments with the Savior*, Ken Gire contrasts the priest Zechariah with Mary, the mother of Jesus. From the time of Malachi to the time of Zechariah there had been over 400 years of silence from God. Finally, God sent an angel with a message. Gire wrote, “He was sent to the most holy city in Israel, Jerusalem. To the most holy place in Jerusalem, the temple. To a most holy man, a priest named Zechariah.”

Zechariah, however, didn’t believe what the angel said. He challenged the angel, by saying in effect, “Prove it.” The angel did. He struck Zechariah mute. He wasn’t able to speak until his son John was born.

That same angel then went to Mary with a message. Gire wrote, “The next word from heaven was sent not to Jerusalem, the most sacred of Jewish cities, but to Nazareth, the most common. Again, the messenger was Gabriel. This time, though, the message was delivered not to a priest but to a peasant. Not to a holy man but to a humble woman. A woman named Mary.”

Unlike Zechariah, she didn’t doubt the message, she simply wondered aloud, “How?” She was mystified by the mechanics. Mary said *yes* to God, and her *yes* of faith brought about the birth of our Savior.

Gire wrote, “When Mary submitted to God’s will, she subjected herself to great risk . . . At worst, she would be stoned. At best, she would be ridiculed . . .

“Her faith was courageous. We know that because her decision was quick, and her obedience complete.”

May God gives us a courageous faith, and I pray that our obedience would be quick and complete, as well.

A Faith That Says *Yes* Helps Us to Serve Reverently

Look again at Hebrews 11:7. Noah obeyed God out of holy fear or reverence. He didn’t obey God grudgingly. He didn’t drag his feet. He didn’t try to talk God out of it. Unlike Moses, he didn’t come with all kinds of excuses as to why God should get someone else.

John MacArthur wrote:

We would have done our best to talk God out of the whole idea, or at least convince Him to get someone else for the job.

But Noah, who had but a fraction of the divine light that we have, did not argue, quibble, make excuses, complain, or procrastinate. He did not question God, but simply began obeying Him. He spent over one hundred years fulfilling this single command.

Do you ever have excuses as to why you can’t do what God calls you to do?

Leonard Sweet, a seminary professor, told a story about one of his students who received an appointment from a bishop, and the student did not feel the placement exactly suited his abilities. Sweet overheard him complaining about it to another student, and

then the other student said, “You know, the world’s a better place because Michelangelo did not say, ‘I don’t do ceilings.’”

Sweet went on to write:

Her comment stopped me dead in my tracks. I had to admit she was right.

If you and I are going to be faithful to the ministry God is calling us to, then we had better understand that. I reflected on the attitudes of key people throughout the Scriptures and the history of the church.

- The world’s a better place because a German monk named Martin Luther did not say, “I don’t do doors.”
- The world’s a better place because an Oxford don named John Wesley didn’t say, “I don’t do preaching in fields.”
- The world’s a better place because Moses didn’t say, “I don’t do Pharaohs or mass migrations.”
- The world’s a better place because Noah didn’t say, “I don’t do arks and animals.”
- The world’s a better place because Ruth didn’t say, “I don’t do mothers-in-law.”
- The world’s a better place because David didn’t say, “I don’t do giants.”
- The world’s a better place because Peter didn’t say, “I don’t do Gentiles.”
- The world’s a better place because John the Baptist didn’t say, “I don’t do deserts.”
- The world’s a better place because Mary didn’t say, “I don’t do virgin births.”
- The world’s a better place because Paul didn’t say, “I don’t do correspondence.”
- The world’s a better place because Mary Magdalene didn’t say, “I don’t do feet.”
- The world’s a better place because Jesus didn’t say, “I don’t do crosses.”

And the world will be a better place only if you and I don't say, “I don’t do . . .” you fill in the blank.

A Faith That Says *Yes* Helps Us to Witness Faithfully

Look again at our text—Hebrews 11:7. Noah lived in a wicked world. The very fact that Noah was building an ark to save himself and his family was a sign of judgment to those who saw him and who asked Noah what he was doing.

We read in 2 Peter 2:5 that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He preached both by his lips and by his life.

How many converts did Noah have? There were only seven other people with Noah on the ark when the flood came: Noah’s wife, his three sons, and their wives. That’s it. You can’t judge a preacher by the number who heeded his messages. Listen to what God

told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 14:13-14. This comes from the NLT:

Suppose the people of a country were to sin against Me, and I lifted My fist to crush them, cutting off their food supply and sending a famine to destroy both people and animals alike. Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, their righteousness would save no one but themselves declares the Sovereign LORD.

We are to be faithful witnesses.

In an article published in *Moody Monthly*, a lady by the name of Jan Johnson wrote:

Many believers are “rabbit hole” Christians. In the morning they pop out of their safe Christian homes, hold their breath at work, scurry home to their families and then off to their Bible studies, and finally end the day praying for the unbelievers they safely avoided all day.

Let’s not do that. Instead, let’s be audio/visual Christians. Let’s speak and live a message that honors Christ and gives hope to those who need Him.

A Faith That Says Yes Helps Us to Receive Abundantly

According to v. 7, Noah *became an heir of righteousness*. We are told in Genesis 6:9, “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation.” Noah was the first person in the Bible to be called *righteous*. How did Noah obtain this righteousness? Was he declared righteous because he obeyed God and built an ark? No. He built an ark in obedience to God because he trusted God. It was because of his faith that he was declared righteous.

Satan tries to get us to seek righteousness by some means other than faith. He attempts to convince us that to be rightly related to God, we have to work for it.

If a person does trust Christ for his/her salvation, Satan then seeks to convince that person of one of two extremes. The first extreme is that one must do good works to keep his/her salvation. That is legalism. The second extreme is the belief that once one is saved, he/she can live however he/she wishes. That is license. Satan is a liar, and he will be pleased if he can get you to believe in either of those two extremes, because either way, you will be off track, and your witness will be compromised.

There is no possession you or I could receive that would be more valuable than righteousness. Righteousness has value for both time and eternity. The remarkable thing is that this valuable possession cannot be earned or bought. It can only be received as a gift by faith; yet the faith that saves is also a faith that works.

In his letter to the Church at Ephesus, Paul uses the phrase, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” That serves as good summation as to what that letter is about. Early in the letter, Paul claims, “In Him we have redemption through His blood.” It was because of Jesus’ death on the cross that we can receive His righteousness.

In 1971 a resident of London made a documentary on the homeless people who lived in certain areas of London. His film captured the daily rituals of the homeless, their trials as well as their joys. It gave an honest and gritty portrayal of

life on the streets of London.

He recruited a fellow Londoner to compose the sound track. This man was watching the footage that had been taken. Some of the men shown were drunk, others were suspected of being mentally ill. Some were articulate and others were unintelligible. There was one man who caught the attention of the composer. This man sang quietly to himself. He would do so for hours, singing the same words of a chorus over and over again. The homeless man's pitch was perfect, but his rhythm was irregular.

The composer looped the audio onto a continuous reel. He left it running while he went to get a cup of coffee. He worked at the Fine Arts department of a university, and the studio where he worked opened up to a painting studio. When he returned with his coffee, he noticed that it was unusually quiet in this normally busy environment. He even noticed that some were crying quietly. He realized the people were listening to the homeless man who was singing on the looped reel. The man's voice was not strong, but it was sincere. Listen to the words of the chorus the man sang over and over:

Jesus' blood never failed me yet
Never failed me yet
Jesus' blood never failed me yet
There's one thing I know
For He loves me so.

Jesus' blood never failed me yet
Never failed me yet
Jesus' blood never failed me yet
There's one thing I know
For He loves me so.

Jesus' blood never failed me yet

Are you trusting in the unfailing blood of Jesus? I hate to say it, but your friends will fail you. Your family will fail you. Your health will fail you. Your instincts, however reliable they normally are will fail you.

Jesus' blood will never fail you. Put your trust in Him. Put your faith in Him. May He grow your faith to the point that when He speaks to you, you will say *yes* to Him without fail.