

## Awe-inspired Obedience

“By faith Noah...” - Hebrews 11

“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”  
Hebrews 11:7

What is your general perspective of authority?

- They're all just power hungry.
- They have no right to tell others what to do.
- They are necessary, but irritating.
- They always have our best in mind and can never do wrong.

It was Noah's faith in and attitude toward God's authority that qualified him for inclusion in the list of giants of faith in Hebrews 11 along with Abraham, Moses, and other well-known individuals from Scripture.

For many of us it is a familiar story, even one we have heard since we were children, but let's look at it again. God had warned Noah about the upcoming flood that He was going to send, even though, at that point in time, it had never rained. He told Noah that He would save Noah and his family, and gave him specific instructions about building an ark in preparation for the storm.

What would your response have been in this situation?

- “Yes, Lord. I will do whatever you command.”
- “This is crazy- I'm not building a gigantic boat in the belief that water is going to fall from the sky.”
- “But what will people think of me?”
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Instead of dismissing God's warning as ridiculous, or slowly and begrudgingly beginning the project with a less-than-enthusiastic attitude, Noah exhibited an attitude toward God that prompted his complete and respectful obedience. He did exactly as God commanded him to do.

What do you think prompted Noah's actions of faith and respect for God?

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The courage and perseverance that Noah exhibited stemmed from a deep sense of awe. He had confidence in God's ability to care for him and that what He said would happen. Noah knew Who God really is.

We use the word awesome so frequently in our culture, but do the things we say that about really inspire awe in us? And are we really in awe of God, the only One worthy of our awe?

For example, does your perspective of God allow for building a ridiculously large boat at His request? Hmm- mine probably doesn't. We say that we have faith and that we will be obedient if God gives us direction, but is that really true?

Think about the position that Noah was in. He had never even seen rain, yet he was obedient in building a giant boat in preparation for a flood-

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."  
Hebrews 11:1

"Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did."  
Genesis 6:22

"Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him"  
Genesis 7:5

causing rain storm. Surely this seemed ludicrous. But Noah's mind was not set on his own (or anyone else's) opinion of what made sense- he was concerned only with what he had been told by God.

The things that God asks of us are not required to be logical—that's part of faith—if everything made complete sense to us, would it require us to have any faith? When God warned Noah, He warned him about "things not yet seen." "Things not seen"- this is part of the very definition of faith given in Hebrews 11:1. Yet how often do we fight this? We only want to "have faith" in things that we can see or that make sense to us at the time. We do not want to have faith in the things that seem uncertain or illogical. But that is not really faith.

Another thing that we can learn from Noah is about complete and precise obedience. Genesis chapters 6 and 7 tell us a little about how Noah obeyed. Genesis 6:22 and 7:5 say that he did *all* that God commanded him. Noah's reverence for God compelled him to do everything that God said, right down to the smallest detail. I don't know about you, but most of the time I demand an explanation for doing something that doesn't make sense to me, or else I am pretty reluctant in my efforts.

While we may not be able to understand a given situation, God desires us to get to know Him and His trustworthiness. Noah wasn't really stepping out blindly. He had a secure knowledge of God's character. He had learned that God was faithful. That God was true. That God would be his provider. This is what enabled Noah to do what he did, and it is also what made his decision a wise one instead of a foolish one. He was not trusting a stranger. He was trusting the One who is ultimately trustworthy.

What is your reaction when someone asks you to do something?

- I'll do it, but I will do it my own way.
- I will gladly do the task exactly as I have been told with a good attitude.
- I do what I am told, but while grumbling and rolling my eyes.
- I argue about how it should be done.

In a way, it can save us a lot of trouble to simply obey, without questioning and fighting. How much time and energy do we waste with our questions, our arguments, our worry?

That is the joy of submission. We give up our control of the situation, but we also give up the ultimate responsibility for how the situation turns out. Noah's job was simple- not necessarily easy, but simple- to follow God's directions. He was not responsible for the outcome of the situation, the rain, the safety of the animals or his family, the decision of who should be allowed to come on the ark, or even of how to get the door of the boat shut (Genesis 7:16). These were God's responsibilities. Noah's responsibility was to obey.

How often do you try to take on God's responsibilities rather than focusing on your own?

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"...and the LORD  
closed it behind him."  
Genesis 7:16

Noah had an incredible amount of respect for God to do what he did. The thing is, God deserved every bit of that respect, and more!

How would our lives be different if we had the awe for God that He deserves? Radically different. How would your life be different if you lived with the awe for God that He deserves?

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What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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