

# CHARISMATIC MISREADINGS

## Hebrews 11:3

### Did God create by faith?



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**L**et's talk about the question if God created the world through faith. Particularly we want to look at the meaning of Hebrews 11:3, which the Faith & Prosperity Gospel interprets as God using faith to bring the universe into being. How you interpret this verse has great consequences on your beliefs about God and how you practice your Christian life. Brew yourself a cup of something warm and refreshing and let's get started.

The Faith & Prosperity Gospel bases many teachings and practices on the ultimate belief that God has faith and that God created the world by using His faith. Our text in Hebrews 11:3 is a key verse used as a foundation for this belief. The other text is Mark 11:22 and you can look at my other teachings on how to understand Jesus' words there. Once settling that God used faith to create, the Faith & Prosperity Gospel continues by saying that all believers have been given the same kind of faith. Because we are created in the image of God, we are to imitate God and so use the God-kind of faith to create by our own words. We are told to copy God's mode of operation: to create by faith-filled words. So, this particular interpretation of Hebrews 11:3 supports the practice of positive confession, decreeing, and declaring (or whatever we call using words to create). If you accept this belief that God has and uses faith, it will shape your view of God and

especially how you live your Christian life.

Millions of Christians all over the world engage in such speech practices but not everyone is aware of the Bible passages used to support them. So let us test the Faith & Prosperity Gospel interpretation of Hebrews 11:3 to see if it holds water. In our search for the meaning of the verse I begin with a general note on the importance of interpreting the Bible, I move on to examine the arguments supporting the Faith & Prosperity Gospel's interpretation and then we zero in on our chief task of interpreting the verse by looking at the usage of faith in the book of Hebrews. You will probably be surprised at what we will find.

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible”

Hebrews 11:3 New King James Version

### Good Emphasis

Before we get into the details of things let me first affirm the Faith & Prosperity Gospel's emphasis on the importance of faith and their love for Hebrews 11:3. This is a wonderful verse that inspires and challenges us to focus on God and it is good that the movement reminds Christians of it.

### The Bible Needs to Be Interpreted

We need to interpret the Bible. The Bible itself encourages us to interpret its meaning (see 2 Tim. 2:15). We have to do some heavy lifting of interpretative work and rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance. Jesus emphasized the need to interpret the Bible to get the right meaning. Listen to his question: "what is the meaning of that which is written...?" (Luke 20:17 NIV). What a great question to ask! This "Jesus question" is what we now will pose to Hebrews 11:3.

As we engage any particular Scripture we want to look for the inspired author's meaning as a start. We want to avoid as much as possible reading our ideas into the text, but rather draw meaning out of the text. So, the dynamic of good Bible interpretation is getting meaning from the text out, not putting foreign meaning into the text. This is not always as easy as it sounds because we all read the Bible through a set of "lenses" or "glasses"—whether we are aware of them or not. These glasses are made up of our upbringing, our cultural background, education, our ultimate beliefs, loves and desires, the stories we embrace, practices we regularly do (often without much thought), and so on. No one can read the Bible just as it is

(if you think so, I'm sorry to burst your bubble of innocence—but the sooner it pops, the better for you).

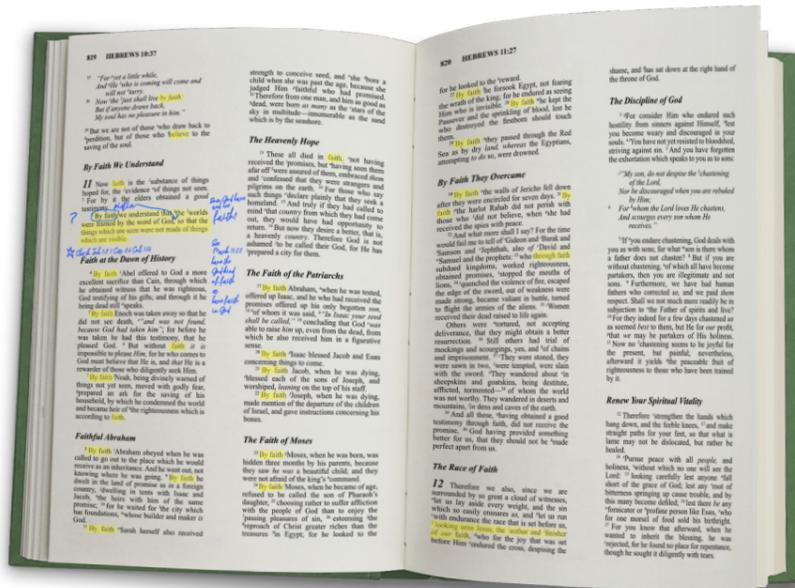
When I started out studying the Bible I thought that I could simply read the Bible and get the right meaning, just like that. When people spoke of interpreting the Bible, I thought they were just liberals who wanted to dodge some of the Bible's tougher messages. Yet what I didn't realize then was the power of perspective; that is, from which point of view I approach the biblical texts will shape what I see in them. Just think about how the Pharisees read the same Scriptures as Jesus but they came to very different conclusions about who the Messiah was, what his mission would look like, and so on. Jesus' discussion with them shows us that the Bible is not a self-interpretative book where the true meaning of the text simply comes to use automatically.

If you approach Hebrews 11:3

through the glasses shaped by a heart commitment to the belief that God has faith, that is also what you will find in the text (and vice-versa, of course). So, I don't blame the Faith & Prosperity Gospel for using Hebrews 11:3 for supporting its ultimate belief that God has and uses faith. Most Christians unintentionally read things into the Bible at some point or another (myself included). What's important is to be aware of this danger and constantly work on making our interpretations better. As I will show you, the Faith & Prosperity Gospel interpretation is the result of reading the verses through a particular lens shaped by the commitments that they have before reading the text; it is not what the verse actually says.

### Stating the Problem

Our text says this:



strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she trusted Him who had promised. Therefore from one man, and from one woman, were born as many as the stars of the sky innumerable—countable as the sand which is by the seashore.

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3 NKJV, emphasis added).

The problem before us is this: does "by faith" refer to "we understand" or to God creating? The phrase "by faith" translates the one Greek word *pistei*. Because it is in the dative it is translated "by faith" or "through faith". The translators of the New King James Version obviously read this as we understand by faith. But in the teachings of the Faith & Prosperity Gospel "by faith" is moved to the end, making the text say:

"We understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God **by faith**".

Or, in a bit more polished way:

"It was **through faith**, we understand, that the worlds were fashioned by the word of God".

Voilà! There you have it, you might argue. It says that the world was created by God's word through faith. This proves that God has and uses faith. But not so fast. Can we just take two words and move them to the back of the phrase? Does the original Greek text allow that? Yes and no.

### Word Order

Word order matters little in Greek, as words are made to relate to each other in other ways. In English, word order makes all the difference when interpreting the meaning of a sentence. If I said "the dog bit the girl" we feel sorry for the girl. But if I changed the word order to say "the girl bit the dog" we now feel sorry for the four-footed, furry friend (ok, I confess, I did enjoy the alliteration). So, in English, you cannot just take the first two words and put them somewhere else but in Greek it is often technically possible. Word order can be used for emphasis; at times a word that in English must come last can in Greek be put first for emphasis (think bold text in English). This is what happens in Hebrews 11 where almost every Greek sentence starts with "by faith" to bring out the emphasis on faith. However, when you encounter a word at the start of a Greek sentence, you have to follow certain rules of grammar and syntax (arrangement of words) to make sure that you get what the author meant to say, and if that still

leaves the options open the larger context of the chapter, book, and the biblical story and worldview need to be factored in. That's what we will do here.

### Grammatical Possibility Isn't Enough

When it comes to Hebrews 11:3 it is grammatically possible to do what the Faith & Prosperity Gospel does, i.e., putting "by faith" last and so make the verse to say that God created the world through faith.<sup>1</sup> But don't stop reading just yet; even if something is grammatically possible doesn't mean it is the meaning intended. One example from Hebrews 11 will suffice to settle this point that a grammatical possibility doesn't cut it. It would be utterly foolish to take the starting "By faith" (*pistei*) in Hebrews 11:29 and put it at the end of the sentence. Notice what happens:

"They passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned **by faith**" (Hebrews 11:29).

When "by faith" is moved to the end of the sentence it totally changes the meaning of the text. To say that the Egyptians drowned by faith is as grammatically possible as making Hebrews 11:3 say that God created the world by faith, yet nobody in their right

mind would argue that this is what Hebrews 11:29 really means. Why? Because it is obvious from what we learn in other places in the Bible that it was the Israelites who passed through the Red Sea by faith.

This funny example shows us that just because something is grammatically possible doesn't say anything about the right meaning. Rather, we have to especially factor in context (in what setting the statement is made) and the full testimony of Scripture. An interpretation must fit the context of not just the verse but the whole chapter, the whole book, and the biblical story and worldview. When we pay attention to these dimensions, four arguments surface that show why the Faith & Prosperity Gospel interpretation is not what the verse means.

“An interpretation must fit the context of not just the verse but the whole chapter, the whole book, the biblical story and worldview.”



## Faith in Hebrews

Because Hebrews 11:3 itself doesn't give sufficient pointers to settle our question (whether it is by faith we understand or God created by faith) we have to look beyond the verse and turn to how the author is using the term "by faith" in similar situations. Context and usage will lead us to a probable interpretation. And—spoiler alert—when we do, there is no convincing argument for the Faith & Prosperity Gospel interpretation. But don't take my word for it, let's dig in together. We start with looking at the phrase "by faith" in Hebrews and then we look at all usages of "faith" in the epistle.

We remind ourselves that "by faith" translates the one Greek word *pistei*, since it is in the dative it is translated "by faith" or "through faith". And we don't have to look long for clues on how to best understand this because the author uses the exact same

word *pistei* nineteen times in Hebrews (eighteen times in Hebrews 11 and only once outside that chapter, in 4:2). Scan your Bible and you will find some kind of translation of *pistei* in the following verses of chapter 11: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. In addition to these, "faith" (*pistis* in all other forms than dative) is found thirteen times in Hebrews: 6:1; 6:12; 10:22; 10:38–39; 11:1; 11:6; 11:7; 11:13; 11:33; 11:39; 12:2; 13:7. If you want to understand how the author uses faith, we need to study these verses since they set the parameters for how we are to understand "by faith" in our verse. After investigating all these in the original Greek we learn the following two insights that are relevant to settle our question if God created by faith or if we understand by faith:

1. **faith is always used to speak of our human stance toward God.**
2. **faith is never used for something God has and uses.**

Let's examine each of these two insights a bit closer.

## #1 Faith Is Our Stance Toward God

The author wants to establish that God is the object of faith. When you work through the whole chapter of Hebrews 11 you see that all the persons mentioned are noted for their faith in God—that faith is something they exercised toward God, so to speak. A key verse that explicitly shows how faith is directed toward God is Hebrews 12:2 which says:

"looking unto Jesus, **the author and finisher of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2 NKJV, emphasis added).

A quick side note: the Greek doesn't say "our faith" as the NKJV translates it. Rather it says simply "faith", as captured by the NIV translation: "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of **faith**" (Hebrews 12:2 NIV, emphasis added).

Why is this verse so significant for our understanding of faith? Because it comes just after chapter 11 and serves as a summary of what faith is and as such it makes clear that faith is our human stance of trusting faithfulness towards God. We see here that Jesus stands as faith's ultimate expression. Jesus—though fully God—in his humanity expressed faith as our example. That's why we look to him as our role model of faith. That Jesus stands as the ultimate example of faith comes out wonderfully in how one Bible scholar translates the verse:

"fixing our eyes upon **Jesus, the champion in the exercise of faith** and the one who brought faith to complete expression".<sup>2</sup>

What a great way of translating this verse. Of course, Jesus is more than the example of faith; being fully God—as Hebrews 1:3 establishes—he is also the object of our faith (and you can see more on this in other studies I've made). But the point I want you to see here is that the faith Hebrews 11 speaks of, and which is summarized in Jesus, is the faithful trust humans exercise toward God. That is what was perfectly exemplified in Jesus (see also Heb. 2:13; 3:2). If God had faith, then the summary would bring



that out. Instead, the summary of the faith chapter is to point to Jesus being the epicenter of faith in that he showed genuine faith in God. Faith is always directed toward God.

## #2 Faith Is Never Attributed to God

We must not miss the significance of the fact that no single usage of faith in the thirty-two times in Hebrews (apart from possibly our verse in 11:3) supports the belief that God has and uses faith. Not one. Nada. Zero. Faith is used without exception in Hebrews as our human stance toward God.

So, if the inspired author's meaning was to open up a great new insight into the nature of God and into how God created the world by faith—not just by speaking as all of Scripture has said—then it is utterly strange why that amazing insight would be tucked away in just one verse. God doesn't hide his truths like that. If you read the Bible to find hidden mysteries, the Bible will turn out to be a mirror—i.e., it will simply reflect your thoughts back to you, making you find whatever you are looking for. But our goal as Bible readers is to draw the meaning out of the text, not to read a foreign meaning into it. Faith is never attributed to God.

## Insights from the Letter and the Whole Bible

In addition to these two arguments, I want to bring out two general observations from the book that will help us settle our problem of interpretation. We will consider the overall message of Hebrews and the role of the Old Testament in the epistle.

## #3 The Message of Hebrews

The main subject matter of Hebrews is to speak to Christians under persecution not to give up on their faith in God. The author speaks from various angles with the goal of inspiring believers to hold fast to faith during their trials. Chapter 10 of Hebrews speaks of faith as a preserving confidence in God (10:22–23; 35–36) and this is the point further developed and exemplified in chapter 11. It would be very strange if the author changed his train

of thought and introduced a new and random topic about God having faith and creating by faith. It would totally break the flow of the argument that God is worthy of our trust because He can create by His mere command. What would be the reason for breaking this line of argument? An author is of course free to introduce a new topic but why would he never pick it up again later, particularly when it is a radically new point? To break the flow of the letter and just throw in a new teaching and never develop, explain, or reconnect with it just doesn't make any sense.

## #4 The Old Testament Witness

A general observation that will help us interpret Hebrews 11:3 is that the author of the book draws a lot from the Old Testament, either by direct quotations (just browse through and you will see how almost every chapter includes passages from the Old Testament) or by referring to Old Testament persons, events, and so on (all of Hebrews 11 is about Old Testament men and women). How can this help us settle the problem of interpreting Hebrews 11:3? Because nowhere in the Old Testament does it say that God has or uses faith and especially that God created the world by using faith; you cannot find that in any passage from Genesis to Malachi. This is a huge insight. The Old Testament witness is that God created by His word. Just listen to these examples:

"**By the word of the Lord** the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...<sup>9</sup>**For He spoke**, and it was done; **He commanded**, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:6,9 NKJV, emphasis added).

"Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! <sup>10</sup>Let them praise the name of the Lord, For **He commanded** and they were created" (Psalm 148:4–5 NKJV, emphasis added).

The longest exposition of creation is found in the book of Job chapter 38. It is of particular importance because God Himself speaks and goes into great detail of creating the world. What is of great significance for us is that God never mentions that He used faith. Since this was the time when God was clearing out misunderstandings and setting the record straight about who He really is and how He acts God had the perfect opportunity to bring out the role of faith. That there isn't the slightest hint of faith playing a part in creation should really make us think twice

“**Nowhere in the Old Testament does it say that God has or uses faith.**”



before we accept the Faith & Prosperity Gospel's interpretation of Hebrews 11:3.

Another vital insight is that when Isaiah and Jeremiah challenged beliefs in false gods, they did so by emphasizing that God is the only Creator. The point is clear: none of the idols can create, only God can (see e.g., Isa. 40:18–28 and Jer. 10:11–13). What is of great significance for us is that the prophets never say that God used faith in creating. But if the Faith & Prosperity Gospel is right that God created by faith and that is of great importance that we get that insight into God's nature and activity, why didn't God say so when He used the prophets to show Himself as the one and only Creator God?

So, my argument is this: because the author of Hebrews was deeply influenced by the Old Testament and used it to teach faith, it is highly unlikely that he would introduce such a new and foreign belief as God using faith in just one verse and doing so through a complicated Greek construction that most would have missed anyway. It just doesn't make any sense.

We can note as well that the New Testament follows the Old by affirming that God created by His word. It is very important to recognize that nowhere in the New Testament does faith appear as part of creating the world. Listen to how Peter puts it:

“For this they willfully forget: that **by the word of God the heavens were of old**, and the earth standing out of water and in the water...<sup>7</sup>But the heavens and the earth which are now **preserved by the same word**, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:5, 7 NKJV, emphasis added).

Neither the Old nor the New Testaments attribute faith to God. For those who disagree, the burden of proof rests upon them and I'm yet to see any convincing biblical argument in favor of God having and using faith.

## Shift in Focus

The Faith & Prosperity Gospel has an inherent problem in its belief system that surfaces in their interpretation of Hebrews 11:3. I speak to this problem in other teachings but it needs to be pointed out here too. Their theology contains a slight movement of focus away from Jesus to the believer. Let me explain. The author of Hebrews writes to inspire believers to hold fast to their Jesus-centered faith and starts off the letter by emphasizing the uniqueness of Jesus. For our purposes the key insight from this is the point that God created the world through Jesus. Listen to this:

“[God] has in these last days spoken to us by **His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the worlds**” (Hebrews 1:2 NKJV, emphasis added).

Note well that it says nothing here of God using faith in creating. This is significant because if that was his point in 11:3 surely he would have at least mentioned something of it here as well. The Faith & Prosperity Gospel's interpretation of Hebrews 11:3 stands in direct opposition to the message of Hebrews 1:2.

But not just against the opening of Hebrews; the entire New Testament emphasizes the same point: God created all things by Jesus—not by faith! Look at these key Scriptures:

“All things were made **through Him [not faith]**, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3 NKJV, emphasis added).

“yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **through whom [not faith]** are all things, and through whom we live” (1 Corinthians 8:6 NKJV, emphasis added).

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created **through Him [not faith]** and for Him” (Colossians 1:16 NKJV, emphasis added).



Check out the video “The Big Story of the Faith & Prosperity Gospel” on our YouTube channel.



You can see that the message of the New Testament is overwhelmingly clear: God created the world through Jesus and by consequence not through faith.

This truth exposes a very disturbing problem, which is that when the Faith & Prosperity Gospel speaks of God creating through faith, it moves our attention away from the biblical truth that God created the world through Jesus. What happens is a shift of focus away from Jesus to faith. We must be extremely careful with any teaching that makes Jesus less significant—even if ever so slightly. This shift of focus in the Faith & Prosperity Gospel ends up placing the believer in center stage as the one who is to act in the same faith as God did in creation.

## Faith as Spiritual Substance

I need to speak to a variant of the Faith & Prosperity Gospel interpretation that appears every now and then in their teachings and that is to understand faith as a substance that God used to create the world. As one very influential Faith & Prosperity Gospel preacher put it: God didn't create the world out of nothing (as classical Christian belief always has insisted) but that He created out of faith—out of what you can't see. In this interpretation, faith is not just something that God has within Himself but also becomes some external sort of spiritual substance or matter that God made use of to create the world. Faith turns out to be like invisible supernatural clay that he shaped into the form of the world.

## Categorical Mistake

You must be aware of what happens in this reading of faith as a spiritual sort of material or stuff. Of greatest importance is that you know that this belief has no foundation in Scripture and the biblical worldview whatsoever. In fact, to say that faith is a substance is a categorical mistake; it is mixing two things that cannot be mixed. Let me exemplify categorical mistakes: it is like saying that the number 4 is orange or if I were to reply “two hours” when you asked me “what do you want for dinner?” It just doesn't make sense because these are a mix-up of categories (numbers and colors are obviously different categories as are food and time). But this is precisely the mistake done in the Faith & Prosperity Gospel when they claim that faith is a substance. After years of researching

the Bible and Christian beliefs, I can tell you that faith is never spoken of as a substance in the biblical worldview. What you need to know is rather that biblical faith is always a relational entity—like love. If you want to learn more about this, look at my studies on what faith is and isn't.

## Invites Serious Problems

To think that God used faith-matter to form the world is an import from outside the biblical worldview. We must be careful with any such imports because these only bring in loads of other problems to those who embrace it. Let me show you the major issues that come in the wake of thinking of faith as a spiritual substance.

“**To say that faith is a substance is a categorical mistake. It is like saying that the number 4 is orange.**”

## What If God Used Faith to Shape the World?

Since, as the Faith & Prosperity teachers claim, the faith stuff was before creation, is faith then eternal, without a beginning like God? That would go contrary to the opening of Hebrews, which emphasizes how only God is eternal and creation is not (Heb. 1:10–12). Or did God first create the faith-stuff and then create the world? When did God create faith? Trying to answer these questions will demand that you move away from the Bible because it only says that God created the world.

## If Faith Originates in God...

Sometimes the Faith & Prosperity teachers imply that the faith-stuff originates in God Himself and was taken out of God to shape the world. If so, then faith shares in God's own being, thus making faith the fourth member of the Trinity. And if faith came out from God, in consequence so does the world, which then makes creation partly divine and therefore worthy of worship. That moves us far away from the biblical view which makes a clear distinction between Creator and creation (see e.g., Rom. 1:25). (You can check out the non-Christian belief called “pantheism”).

Regardless of how we choose to phrase the questions generated by the belief that God shaped the world out of faith, you can easily see what big problems arise (and there are more problems than I mentioned here). These problems quickly move us beyond the Bible. And that in



itself will show you that the claim that God created the world through faith-stuff is just unbiblical. To follow the belief that faith is a substance, a force, a sort of stuff is to take off from the biblical path to a road that has a big red sign saying “Warning: heresies ahead”—there are only problems down that direction. Trust me; I’ve been there. The further you steer away from that path, the better for you.

Having said this I also need to point out that all of what the Faith & Prosperity Gospel teaches is not wrong. Many believers have filtered the teachings and found great encouragement and help. So don’t throw out the baby with the bathwater.

## The Meaning of Hebrews 11:3

So where does all this leave us on how to interpret Hebrews 11:3? Is the point that we understand by faith or that God created by faith? We start by ruling out the Faith & Prosperity Gospel option. There is simply no supporting data for it and it creates a host of (unintentional) problems. So, we have to ask what the message of Hebrews 11:3 is. Let’s look at it again:

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3 NKJV).

The main point the author wants to make here—which is also a theme in the book and particularly stated at the start of the chapter—is that faith is to trust in what the human eyes cannot (yet) perceive—faith is “assurance about what **we do not see**” (Heb. 11:1b, emphasis added). This is exactly what is repeated in verse 3: that faith brings assurance—a knowing through faith—that God created the world by His command even though that is something we cannot see or prove to the physical eye. That faith brings another kind of seeing that goes beyond our physical vision is repeatedly spoken of in chapter 11. Noah was “warned of things not yet seen” (v.7), the heroes of faith died in faith “having seen them [the promises] afar off” (v.13), Moses “endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (v.27). This vision that faith gives has its center on Jesus, to whom we are to “look” (12:2) or as the NIV translates this, “fixing our eyes on Jesus”. Hebrews 11:3 teaches us that faith gives a particular vision that goes beyond what the physical eyes can see.

Our verse also speaks about the greatness of God, who can speak the world into existence out of nothing and as such forms the basis for our trust in Him. It is the same

basic point that Paul makes in Romans 4:17 about Abraham’s faith (by the way, this is speaking about God and not Abraham as many in the Faith & Prosperity Gospel claim):

“(as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—**God**, who gives life to the dead and **calls those things which do not exist as though they did**” (Romans 4:17 NKJV, emphasis added).

Hebrews 11:3 makes the point that the foundation of our faith is the God who can call things into existence that do not exist and create the visible world out of nothing. Of this we have assurance through faith.

Lastly, we can also note that the verse teaches us that faith in God will not only generate certain behaviors (as exemplified by the giants of faith in chapter 11) but also certain convictions—that God is the creator is a key belief for Christians. Faith in God builds on God being the creator of the world is something mentioned several times in the Old Testament and is what sets Him apart from idols. If God could create the world by His mere word, surely we are to keep setting our eyes on Him—even in hard times—and stop looking to any false gods for help.

## Notes

1.If you want some more meat, here is a lengthy exposition from a well-respected New Testament scholar: “The translation presupposes that πίστει [*pistei*] modifies the main verb νοοῦμεν [*noumen*] (it is by faith that “we understand”; so Moule, *Idiom-Book*, 168, and all major English translations). This interpretation has been challenged by Widdess, *JTS* ns 10 [1959] 327–29, and by Haacker, *ZNW* 60 [1969] 279–81 (who shows no awareness of Widdess’ earlier article). Both scholars construe πίστει [*pistei*] with the inf κατηρτίσθαι [*katertisthai*] (it is by faith that God “formed” the universe) instead of the main verb. The resultant translation attributes πίστις [*pistis*] to God, who exercised faith by uttering the creative word: “It was through faith, we understand, that the worlds were fashioned by the word of God” (Widdess, 327), or “Through faith, as we infer, the world was created through God’s word” (Haacker, 280). This construction of the syntax, it is argued, brings the initial example of πίστις [*pistis*] into line with the general theme of the entire passage and with the examples that follow. The fact that πίστις elsewhere is posited only of individuals or of Jesus in his humanity calls into question this radical proposal. More importantly, it is untenable because it fails to account for the expression ῥήματι θεοῦ [*rhemati theou*] (“by means of the word of God”), which is clearly intended to modify the inf κατηρτίσθαι [*katertisthai*]” William L. Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, vol. 47B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1991).