

# Things unseen (Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16)

**There is much more to Hebrews 11 than a definition of faith and a litany of Bible stories.**

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Growing up in the 90s and 2000s, my siblings and I were obsessed with Harry Potter. We read the books; we saw the movies in theaters (I still remember being terrified of the basilisk from *Chamber of Secrets*); we pretended we were Hogwarts students and played with paper wands.

Sometimes we would pretend to have an invisibility cloak like Harry's, pulling blankets over our heads and insisting we couldn't be seen. There's a lot of fun in pretending to be invisible—less like hiding away from the world and more like having a whole world to yourself. We all grew up and moved on from Harry Potter. But there's something powerful about that childhood sense of wonder and mystery.

Ask a US adult what things are invisible, and they might name abstract concepts like love, or the too-small-to-see parts of our world, such as bacteria or atoms. A brave, superstitious few might name ghosts. But for the most part, the spirit of science has taught us that what is observable, tangible, and detectable is what's most real. Seeing is believing.

Hebrews 11 makes a stranger, far more exciting claim: invisible, intangible, unobservable things are not only more real but also more beautiful, more true, more

lasting.

Most of us know Hebrews 11 as “the faith chapter,” and for good reason. But there is much more going on here than a simple definition and a litany of Bible stories. It’s about living among the visible, the things that decay and fall apart, while still having confidence in the greater, invisible things. We are “strangers and foreigners on the earth,” the metaphor goes, making our journey towards the “city” God “has prepared” for us. The list of biblical characters is like an encyclopedia of wayfarers who came before, kindred spirits who offer wisdom for living in a place that can be lonely and painful. We find ourselves, somehow, in the visible and invisible at the same time. Faith isn’t just believing in what you can’t see; it’s our only way of touching what cannot be touched.

What would it mean to live as if the invisible were just as real, if not more so? To admit that what we can perceive, observe, and grasp is not everything—maybe not even the most important thing? It might give us back something of the childhood wonder most of us lost ages ago. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith does not need to be a cold, intellectual assent, a yes or no to a given teaching. It can be a vibrant, animating force, like a child discovering a whole new world.

As Dorothy Sayers put it, “the dogma is the drama.” The unseen is absolutely thrilling—and we should act like it.