

Flourishing FAITH

CLOUD OF WITNESSES | 01:: FAITH IN ACTION

PRAYER: Before you start this study, take some time with just you and Jesus. Tell Him about your day, how you're feeling, anything you'd like to say to Him. Then ask Him to use what you're about to study to reveal something new to you about Himself or about you. Use your words. They don't need to be fancy. Here is a prayer to use as a guide:

Dear Lord, God: Thank You for this time. Thank you for the quiet. I'm so grateful to just sit here and spend some time with You. Before I begin this study, I pray that you will open my heart to hear anything You'd like to say to me today. I know you are a personal God and You care about the details of my life. Please meet me here and if You would, please share something specific that will touch me where I am right now. I want to grow in faith. Thank You for teaching me. Amen.



Earlier in the year, our pastor, Louie Giglio led a series of talks called "By Faith." Around that same time, one of the girls posted in our group text that she was inspired by Hebrews 11 and wanted us to check it out. She didn't know that Passion City was currently going through a series on Hebrews 11, but I love when God has certain verses circulate around in our world and they pop up over and over again. Stay alert to those times, girls. It's possible the Lord is trying to tell you something!

That was the same month that Flourishing Faith was starting to take form. And I was already personally inspired by the talks in the Passion City series, but soon it became clear that Hebrews 11-12:3 should be the cornerstone of our first series of studies. So, buckle up! We're about to take a fun ride through the Old Testament and see how God is faithful to His promises.

Before we begin, open your Bible and read all of Hebrews 11 and then read Hebrews 12:1-3. In my Bible, that is a whole section titled "Faith in Action."

READ HEBREWS 11-12:3

Hebrews 11-12:3 is a passage on walking by faith. In verse 1, the writer – who, fun fact: by the way, is anonymous – starts off by defining faith: "Faith is being sure about what we



hope for, being convinced about things we do not see.” (EHV) Let’s pick this apart.

WHAT HOPE IS THE AUTHOR SAYING ARE WE SURE OF? WHAT INVISIBLE THINGS ARE WE CONVINCED OF?

Well! I’m glad you asked! Let’s look into a verse in Chapter 10 to help us out.

READ HEBREWS 10:23

...for He who promised is faithful. So, we are hoping in a promise from God. And God is trustworthy, so we can be sure that He will make good on His promises. The writer is explaining that when we have faith in God, we are expressing confidence in Him and even though we can’t see Him – and His work often seems impossible – we are sure He will come through.

This is not a hope that the Lord is going to do everything you ask like a genie. This is trust that the Lord is going to do what HE SAYS He will do. After He’s decided and He’s promised that He will do something, we can trust that it will come to pass, even if what He says seems impossible.

The writer of Hebrews was encouraging his audience to persevere (see Hebrews 10:36).

READ HEBREWS 10:32-39.

WHY WOULD THE HEBREWS AUDIENCE NEED ENCOURAGEMENT TO PERSEVERE?

The Hebrews had been attacked for their faith. And not like we might be bullied over being a Christian, they were thrown in jail, had their property taken away, had to stand by as their friends and family were mistreated – and all because they were following Jesus... life was hard.

The writer of Hebrews is saying, “Despite all the hardship, it’s worth it!” And we can receive that truth as well. Life is hard and there is a pull to give up when we face hard seasons. Maybe we’re tempted to walk away from God or tempted to not obey him. But keep walking by faith! Keep trusting the Lord and obeying Him. It is worth it!

Just in case anyone would read this passage and need a little extra assurance that God is mighty and capable and faithful to His word, the Hebrews writer adds in a whole list of people from the Old Testament who walked by faith. In Hebrews 12:1, he calls them the



“great cloud of witnesses.”

We’ll study a few of these people in greater depth throughout the series, but Grant put it best in his message earlier in the year when he noted this group of people is not up in Heaven with a clip board grading you on your performance. They’re not checking a box that you made it to church on Sunday or listened to Christian music in the car on the way to school. This cloud of witnesses is more like a group of cheerleaders. “Do you feel lost in life like you have no idea where you’re going? I did too! Keep going!” says Abraham. “Do you feel betrayed by people who are supposed to love you? So did I. Trust in the Lord!” shouts Joseph. “Do you feel like you have enemies on every side? There was a time I did too. The Lord is your refuge,” David encourages. The lives of everyone we’re about to study in this series are all yelling back to us from the cloud to trust in the Lord and follow Him. ¹ He is faithful. He is good. And He has our best at heart.

Here’s where the rubber meets the road. There are several things you can do if you’re confused or upset about something:

- * **PRAY** | Pray about it. Tell Jesus what you are going through. Tell Him how you feel. He already knows everything, but He wants a relationship with you. Ask the Lord to guide you and give you discernment about what to do. Listen for the Holy Spirit to share something in your heart about your specific circumstance.
- * **READ** | Look up scriptures that display God’s faithfulness and how He’s come through in the past. Note His character. He is unchanging, so the God you read about in the Bible is the same God you know.
- * **REMINDE** | Look up God’s promises found throughout scripture and write some meaningful ones on a post-it. Place the post-it where you will see it every day or put an alert with the verse on your phone and set it to go off several times a week.
- * **LISTEN** | Pay attention to Jesus Stories in the lives of people around you to see how He has come through for them.
- * **WRITE** | Keep a journal of your prayers and be sure to write down how God has answered them or how you’ve seen Him working. When you come back to the journal months or years later you will be amazed at all God has done.



DIG A LITTLE DEEPER:

- * Is there anything specific to your life that the Holy Spirit has promised you? Take time to write it down in your journal. Be sure to put the date so you can look back and remember the details.



* The Bible is filled with hundreds of promises from God. Below are just a few. Take some time to look these up. Then write the reference in your journal and beside it, write what God is promising you in each one. Make it personal and think about how it applies to your life. I've done the first one for you:

Jeremiah 29:11 | God has a plan for my future. Plans to prosper me and not to harm me. I can take comfort knowing that He is in control and my future is bright even if I can't see it yet!

Mark 10:27 + Philipians 4:13 |

Deuteronomy 31:8 |

Matthew 11:28 |

Philippians 4:6-9 |

Romans 8:28 |

Romans 10:9 |

Romans 8:31, Romans 8:38-39 |

* Now that you've written down a few promises from God, write a prayer asking God to reveal to you when He is working and pray for yourself that God will open your heart to see.

* If you'd like to check out Louie's talk "The Power of a Promise" or Grant's talk "The Promise that Fuels Perseverance" you can find links to them on the Flourishing Faith website under this post.

Reference Notes

¹ Message from Passion City Church (Grant Partrick), The Promise That Fuels Perseverance, Feb. 2022

