



MOVING MOUNTAINS

(6 BIBLE STUDIES)

EXAMINATION APPLICATION

BIBLE STUDIES

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THE SMALL PRINT

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Your Commitment

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

Your Contribution

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

Your Preparation – Topical Studies

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading the group discussions but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials firstly provide you with a series of passages so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Secondly, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought and help you think through what the passages meant both at the time it was written and also what it means for us now. Because these studies are topical there is a much stronger progression of thought (than there would be in a passage based study). The dangers of such studies are that discussion can move quite far from the Bible. Yet this it is still the best way of covering broad subjects like this.

I would really encourage you to make use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are however only “tools”, they are there to help you and not to restrict you or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages and if the questions or notes do not help you, then don't use them!

I have included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

Your Leadership

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

Steve McClure, Spring 2019

Faith, hope and love

These are common ideas in the New Testament and the best known reference is probably in 1 Corinthians 13:13 where Paul is contrasting spiritual gifts with the glorious future that lies ahead of us. Paul is clear that it is faith, hope and love (and not spiritual gifts) which will remain. He then goes on to say that the greatest of these is love.

Paul writes a lot about these great three concepts and brings them together in several other places in his letters including:

*"...We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people – the **faith** and **love** that spring from the **hope** stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you." **Col 1:4b-6a***

*"We remember before our God and Father your work produced by **faith**, your **labour** prompted by **love**, and your endurance inspired by **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ." **1 Thessalonians 1:3***

Paul is thankful for what he hears about the faith of the Christians in Colossi. In Colossians 1:5 he says that faith and love spring from the hope stored up for them in Heaven. Then in 1 Thessalonians we read that Paul has been praying for them and specifically for their *work produced by faith*, their *labour prompted by love* and their *endurance inspired by hope*. In this study series we are going to tackle the notion of faith which Paul says leads to action.

The Challenge of Faith

In the 2004-2010 TV series *Lost* (a favourite of mine) there is a confrontation between Dr Jack Shepherd (the 'man of science') and John Locke (the 'man of faith'). The show is set in the aftermath of a plane crash on a deserted Island with no means of escape or communication with the outside world. They come across a hatch which leads to an underground station and in it is a computer. Desmond (who has been in the station for some years) tells them that the computer needs a code keyed in every 108 minutes to 'save the world'. John Locke has faith that this is what needs to be done but he knows that he cannot do it alone so he insists that Jack be the one to press it for the first time.

As they argue about this John Locke says to Jack, "*Why do you find it so hard to believe?*" to which Jack furiously responds: "*Why do you find it so easy?*" It's a classic moment because it perfectly encapsulates their characters, and because it points to something to which we can all relate. Some of us really struggle to accept things on faith, while others appear to find it much easier. There is much conflict between these characters because of their respective ways of looking at the world. The dialogue ends with John Locke telling Jack "*it never has been easy!*" Locke insists that Jack needs to make a 'leap of faith' of his own. With one second to spare, Jack presses the button and the clock resets. As we begin thinking about what it means to express faith in action let me ask you: do you most relate to Locke or to Jack? While I admit that it is a farcical idea to think that pressing a button would save the world, the scene really does set in motion a diversity of perspective that reflects how many of us see the world.

Defining faith

In these studies we're going to take Hebrews 11 as the vantage point from which to look out across centuries of people who by faith have done some incredible things. Faith is a significant theme throughout the letter to the Hebrews because its recipients were in danger of turning back to their Jewish roots. The nature and substance of their faith was under threat and they were facing persecution & poverty. Hebrews was written to remind them that they were enduring their struggles because they were looking forward to receiving what God had promised. In chapter 11 this is called "Faith" and the challenge in the words of Paul is to "live by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). We might therefore ask the questions: What is faith? What does faith actually believe? These are the questions that Hebrews 11 is all about! Nancy Missler describes faith like this:

"Faith is believing in Christ's promises; hope is trusting in His faithfulness to perform His promises in His timing and way, and love is the fulfillment of His promises. Our faith is built upon Christ's Word; our hope is built upon His Spirit bringing His Word to pass, and His love becomes the basis of our future inheritance". Against all Hope: The Anchor of Our Soul, © 2014 The Kings High Way Ministries

Experiencing Faith

God has been taking my family and I through some hard things over the past seven years. The challenge has been to believe God's promises to us (to focus not on the struggle but upon the God who is above all), to trust God's faithfulness to work out His promises (not to take away the struggle necessarily but to provide the grace to stand up under it) and to experience His love (as He proves Himself to be faithful). These years have been about God moving us to a place of trust amidst all that life brings our way.

In these studies, we are going to think about the nature of genuine faith; what it looks like, how it's expressed in action and how it responds to the trials of life. We will think about periods of waiting or disappointment. We will think about idolatry and the consequences of misdirected faith. We will think about doubt and how we walk by faith & not by sight. It is going to be a whistle stop tour that could never do more than scratch the surface on a subject like this. Still I hope and pray that all of us will be challenged by God through these studies to live out "faith in action".

To God be the glory

Steve McClure Autumn 2020

STUDY 1 – THE NATURE OF FAITH – THE UNSEEN REALITY

INTRODUCTION: In this study we will draw on the Bible’s teaching about faith as we think about ‘what is faith’, ‘what does faith believe’ and ‘why is this faith reasonable’. To ground this in reality, we will consider what we can learn from the examples of Creation, Cain & Abel, Enoch and Noah.

SETTING THE SCENE: What is your reaction to Mark Twain’s definition of faith as “trying to believe what you know ain’t so”? Would you describe faith as more like an ‘irrational leap’ or an rational conclusion based on evidence (see Additional Quotes 1&2)? Why?

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CONTEXT (HEBREWS 10:19-39): Look briefly at these verses and identify the things in these verses that we are told to do in order to persevere (nb: look for the “Let us...” statements)? What specifically do verses 36-39 say about the nature of faith?

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FAITH IN THE UNSEEN & NOT YET (HEB 11:1-2): What do these verses say about ‘what faith is’ and ‘what faith isn’t’? Why is faith so important for us as we hope for what we have not yet received (see Romans 8:24-25)? Which of God’s promises do you find yourself most hoping for (e.g. Eph 1:3, Phil 1:6, 4:6-7, 2 Cor 1:3-4, 1 John 1:9, Jer 29:13, Heb 13:5, Isaiah 43:2-3, Matt 6:33, Phil 4:19)?

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In terms of faith what is the difference between the *unseen* and the *unreal*? Os Guinness (in his 1976 book *Doubt*) said that “Living is faith’s reality test”: how do you respond to the tension between what we see around us and the unseen reality of faith (See also Additional Quotes 3)?

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LIVING BY FAITH (HABAKKUK 1:2-4, 3:17-19): Habakkuk complains to God about the evil around him and God’s inaction. Then he is shocked at God’s plan to send the Babylonians to exert judgement: how do you understand God’s response that the ‘righteous person will live by his faithfulness’ (2:4)? What might explain Habakkuk’s shift in perspective from his complaints (1:2-4 & 1:12-2:4) to 3:17-19?

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EXAMPLE 1. VISIBLE & INVISIBLE (HEB 11:3): What does the writer say in this verse about what faith believes about the creation of the world? Paul speaks about this in Romans 1:20: to what extent do you agree that God's invisible qualities have been made known through what has been made?

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EXAMPLE 2. APPROACHING GOD (HEB 11:4 & GEN 4): Why was Abel's offering was better and more commendable than Cain's (Gen 4)? What do you understand by the idea that Abel acted in faith (Heb 11:4) and that he still speaks? On what basis can we approach God in faith (Heb 10:19-22)?

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EXAMPLE 3. WALKING IN FAITH (HEB 11:5-6 & GEN 5:21-24): Why do you think Enoch was commended and taken away by God (Gen 5:24)? What do you think it looks like in practice to walk faithfully with God? Why can we not please God without expressing faith (Hebrews 11:6)?

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4. BUCKING THE TREND (HEB 11:7 & GEN 6-9): In the light of what could be seen (nb: it was a mammoth task to build a 135m long, 23m wide & 14m high boat in the middle of the desert) what impresses you about Noah's willingness to believe God about what was unseen? In what way did Noah's faith condemn the world and make him an heir of righteousness?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: In what situations or experiences have you observed 'faith' to be most evident in your life? To what extent do you agree with J.C. Ryle that our actions will always be in proportion to our faith (Additional Quotes 4)? How would you describe the extent of your own faith?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for what we have learned about the nature of faith. Ask God to help you to have confidence in what we have not yet received (God's promises) and assurance in what is unseen (but not unreal). Pray that you would increasingly act and respond to life's realities with faith.

MEMORY VERSES: HEBREWS 11:1&6

STUDY 2 – AUTHENTIC FAITH – WAITING AND DISAPPOINTMENT

INTRODUCTION: In this study we will consider what a “model faith” faith looks like and think about how this contrasts with the authentic model of faith lived out by Abraham. We will see how he walked the path of disappointment as he waited for God to work out His promises in and through his life.

SETTING THE SCENE: In this study we see Abraham facing long periods of waiting and a number of disappointments: at what times have you experienced such things in your life? What was particularly difficult about these times and how did you respond (positively or negatively)?

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CALLED BY GOD (GEN 11:27-12:9): Based on what we know about Abram and Sarai what do you think would have hardest for them in light of God's call to go (12:1)? How do you understand God's promises (12:2-3) and how might they be subsequently fulfilled? What impresses you about their faith (Abram was 75 years old) and their willingness to obey God's leading (12:4-9, Heb 11:8-10)?

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DISAPPOINTMENT WITH GOD (GEN 15:1-5): After defeating various Kings, God appears to Abram in a vision: why do God's encouraging words (v1) seem to evoke a response of disappointment from Abram (v2-3)? What impresses you about Abram's honesty and God's reiteration of His promise (v4-5)?

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BELIEVING GOD (GEN 15:6): Why do you think Abram believed God? How do you understand God saying that it was “credited it to him as righteousness”? This phrase is quoted in the New Testament 4 times (look up one of Rom 4:3, 22, Gal 3:6 & James 2:23): how are we also saved through faith?

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NO SHORTCUTS (GEN 16:1-6): Abram is now 86 years old (16:16) and Sarai talks him into sleeping with her servant to bring her a family. When you've been waiting, what shortcuts have you ever tried (or have been tempted to try) in order to bring that waiting to an end?

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WAITING IS NEVER EASY (GEN 17:17-19, 18:9-15, 21:1-6): Abram (now Abraham) & Sarai (now Sarah) both laugh to themselves at the thought of God now giving them a son (Abraham now 99 years old): to what extent can you identify with their responses here? How does God reassure them of His intentions? How does their laughter contrast with that enjoyed in 21:1-6? See also Additional Quotes 5

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BY FAITH (HEBREWS 11:11-16): What do these verses from Hebrews have to say about Abraham and Sarah's faith? In what ways did they see God's promises to them fulfilled and in what ways are those promises still being fulfilled today (see also Gal 3:8-9)? Verse 11 says that *Sarah "considered him faithful who had made the promise"*: to what extent could you express this sentiment?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Why might God sometimes take us the long way rather than the short way? What did faith in the waiting require of Abraham & Sarah? What about you? (Additional Quotes 6). What steps of faith have you been challenged to take amidst times of waiting and disappointment?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the authenticity of their faith and ask God to help each of you to wrestle through your own struggles in this area with Him. Pray for one another as you seek to believe God as He continues to work out His promises in and through your life.

MEMORY VERSE: ROMANS 4:18

STUDY 3 – MISPLACED FAITH – TESTING AND IDOLATRY

INTRODUCTION: The climax of the Abraham story is not Isaac's birth but God's shocking command to go and sacrifice Isaac to Him (Gen 22:1-18). We will think about how even the best of things can become idols in our lives and illustrate this through the story of lovesick Jacob (Gen 29:15-35).

SETTING THE SCENE: In *'The Lord of the Rings'* the "One Ring" corrupts anyone who tries to use it, taking the hearts fondest desires and magnifying them extremes: in what ways does this illustration help us to grasp the nature of an idol (see also Additional Quotes 7)? To what extent do you agree with Tim Keller that the human heart is an "idol factory" (see also Ezekiel 14:3)?

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ANYTHING CAN BE IDOLATRY (EXODUS 20:3-5): How do these verses help us to build up a picture of what the Bible means by idolatry? What would be your definition of an idol (contrast this with Additional Quotes 8)? The Bible pictures God as our true *Love*, true *Saviour* and true *Lord*: how do these three pictures help us expand our understanding of what idolatry means for us today?

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CASE STUDY 1: ABRAHAM (GEN 22:1-2): What is your initial response to God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son (for whom he'd waited 25 years)? What do you notice from what Abraham does (and doesn't) say and do? In what ways might Isaac himself have become a source of idolatry for Abraham?

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TESTED (GEN 22:3-8): What are the implications of God's command for Abraham? How might he have felt as he and Isaac made the three-day hike to Mt Moriah? How did Abraham's faith enable him to obey (notice the 'we' in v5)? What do you make of Abraham's reasoning in Hebrews 11:17-19?

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FAITH PROVED GENUINE (GEN 22:9-18): What did God learn about Abraham's faith from this challenging time of testing (esp. v12 & 1 Peter 1:6-7)? Why does Abraham call the place '*God will provide*' (v8 & 13)? What is the significance of the promises God then makes to Abraham (v14-18)?

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CASE STUDY II: JACOB (GEN 29:15-35): Jacob (mentioned only for his dying act in Heb 11:20-22), makes an interesting case study on love: why is this such a dangerous area for idolatry?

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LOVESICK JACOB (GEN 29:15-29): Jacob went to his Uncle Laban in fear of his brother Esau: why do you think that Jacob is so smitten (e.g. v18 & 20) with Laban's younger daughter Rachel? What do you see here that is both healthy and unhealthy about Jacob's pursuit (contrast v20 with v21b)?

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CRAFTY LABAN (GEN 29:22-29): How does Laban exploit Jacob's weakness to marry off his older daughter Leah? What does Jacob's failure to notice that it was Leah (v25) tell us about what was in Jacob's heart? Why is love like a drug to us and how can we bring that to God (Additional Quotes 9)?

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UNWANTED LEAH (GEN 29:30-35): What do you think it would be like for Leah to be the daughter and wife no-one wanted (v31)? Contrast Leah in v32 with v35: what evidence do you see here that Leah was able to work through her own issues of idolatry and instead find satisfaction in God?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: John Piper wrote "God is most glorified by us when we are most satisfied in Him." What are your biggest sources of idolatry and how can we learn to instead be satisfied in God? How has this study challenged you to 'let go' of things that have taken God's place in your life?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for some of the things we have been learning from these case studies. Ask God to help you to develop a healthy understanding of idolatry and help you to find your satisfaction and sense of worth in Him alone.

MEMORY VERSES: HEBREWS 11:17-18

STUDY 4 – SUBSTANCE OF FAITH: CHOICE AND ACTION

INTRODUCTION: Faith involves a choice to follow and the life of Moses is a great case study on this. We will think about the implications of the choices to follow God taken by Moses and his parents. We'll also look at James' teaching on the relationship between faith and action.

SETTING THE SCENE: How would you describe the life of an intelligence officer working in the field (i.e. a spy)? What would be the upsides and downsides of such a role? In what ways does this concept resonate or jar with the idea of living out an authentic faith (See Additional Quotes 10)?

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MOSES PARENTS (HEB 11:23, EXODUS 1:22-2:10): Given that Pharaoh was trying to suppress the growth of the Israelite nation living within Egypt (1:22), why were the actions of Moses' parents so courageous? How could they see that Moses was no ordinary child? How do you understand the relationship between risk and faith (Additional Quotes 11)? What kind of risks has faith asked of you?

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WARRING IDENTITIES (EXODUS 2:11-25): What might it have been for Moses (a Hebrew) to be raised at the Palace and what might the future have held for such the 'son' of Pharaoh's daughter (2:10)? What motivated Moses to (a) kill the Egyptian and (b) to settle the fight between the two Hebrews? To what extent can you identify with the tension Moses was clearly feeling?

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PLEASURES & TREASURES (HEB 11:24-27): Hebrews says Moses was presented with a choice: how much do you think Moses was motivated by faith here (esp. v27b)? What was faith asking Moses to say both 'yes' and 'no' to through this choice? How does faith present us with the same question?

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THE PASSOVER (HEB 11:28, EXODUS 12:1-13): The final reference to Moses here relates to the Passover: why did it involve faith to follow God's instructions for this celebration? To what extent do you think Moses felt these faith choices were proved right when Pharaoh finally let them go (v31-42)?

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A FAITH THAT WORKS (JAMES 2:14-20): Why does James ask what good is it if *someone claims to have faith but has no deeds* (v14)? Why is such faith dead (v17) and useless (v20)? What is James trying to teach us here about how faith and deeds work together?

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BY FAITH ALONE? These verses have created much debate! How does James' emphasis on deeds contradict Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone (e.g. compare v24 with Romans 3:28, 5:1, Galatians 3:26 or Ephesians 2:8-10)? What is the relationship between faith and action?

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EXAMPLES OF FAITH IN ACTION (v21-26): How does James use the examples of Rahab and Abraham to illustrate this (v21-26)? How do you respond to James' challenge to work out our faith in practical love (v15-16) and sacrificial obedience (v21-24)? See also Additional Quotes 12-14.

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: There is plenty more on the subject of faith in action: if you have time, look at the teaching of Jesus (see Matthew 7:15-23, 23:31-46), Paul (Galatians 5:6, 22-25, Romans 13:8-10, Philippians 2:12-13) and John (1 John 3:10, 17-19).

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share, and pray through, some of the apparent choices to live by faith in your own lives. Ask God to help you live out an authentic faith in Him which is seen clearly, without duplicity and demonstrated by action and endeavour.

MEMORY VERSES: JAMES 2:17-18

STUDY 5 – FAITH AND DOUBT: FAITH THAT HOLDS FIRM

INTRODUCTION: The people of Israel are a great case study in faith and doubt. Despite the wonders God performs in the Exodus the Israelites journey through the wilderness is characterised by stories of both faith and doubt. We will examine what it means to believe without seeing.

SETTING THE SCENE: What would be your working definition of doubt (in relation to belief)? In your experience what is the relationship between faith and doubt? How do you respond to Os Guinness' definition of faith and doubt in Additional Quotes 15? Is doubt always negative? Why?

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DOUBLE-MINDED AND UNSTABLE (JAMES 1:5-8): These verses come across quite strongly: how do you understand the dangers James refers to here (nb: context is about asking for wisdom)? What kind of person do these word pictures describe (esp. v6 & 8)?

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THE VALUE OF DOUBT: Francis Bacon wrote "*If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties*": what do you see as the value and role of doubts in our lives? (See Additional Quotes 16-18)

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CROSSING THE RED SEA (HEB 11:29, EXPDUS 13:17-14:31): What is especially commendable about the way that the Israelites followed God out of Egypt (esp. 13:17-22)? What was God doing here (14:1-9) and how does this provide Israel with an opportunity to exercise faith (v10-31)? Hebrews 11:29 commends Israel for their faith: how do their doubts (v10-12) play a part in this (v29-31)?

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JERICHO'S FALL (HEB 11:30, JOSHUA 5:13-6:27): Why do you think God sets about to defeat Jericho in the way that He does? In what ways did the Israelite army exercise faith (which they are commended for in Heb 11:30)? What was God teaching here about how to claim God's victories?

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COURAGEOUS RAHAB (HEB 11:31, JOSHUA 2:1-21): Rahab welcomes the spies and then protects them from her King: what do you think motivated such action (esp. v9-11)? What was it about Rahab (who was both a woman and a prostitute) that was so astonishing that she is later included in Jesus' genealogy (Matt 1:5)? What additional things do we learn here in Hebrews 11:31 & James 2:25?

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DOUBTING ISRAEL (EXODUS 16:1-17:7): Despite trusting God in 14:31 we soon find Israel grumbling (16:2-3, 17:3) and wishing they had died in Egypt: to what extent can you relate to and/or understand these extremes of faith and doubt? Even in light of God's provision (for which they had to trust God day by day) why do you think some still refused to listen (16:20, 27)?

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SEEING AND BELIEVING (JOHN 20:24-31): Why do you think Thomas was so slow to believe? Can you relate to Thomas either in relation to his doubts or his expression of faith *My Lord and my God* (v28)? To what extent do you think *seeing* leads to *believing* (see example of Israel above)? What does Jesus mean when He says that *blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed*?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: "The shame is not that people have doubts, but that they are ashamed of them" (Os Guinness): to what extent can you relate to this and why? How have your doubts helped you to grow in faith? In what ways has God proved Himself to be faithful to you (Additional Quotes 19)?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for His faithfulness to us in spite of our unfaithfulness and doubt. Ask God to help you to believe Him at His Word and trust in the invisible realities of faith.

MEMORY VERSE: EXODUS 14:31

STUDY 6 – FAITHFUL COURAGE: WALKING BY FAITH

INTRODUCTION: In this session we will consider many more of the great cloud of witnesses who surround us; courageous people who have walked by faith and not by sight despite the cost and opposition. We will also identify the things that stop us walking this life of faith and putting it into action.

SETTING THE SCENE: In study 2 we saw that the testing of our faith is to be expected (see Additional Quotes 20). What might make the difference between a faith that collapses like a deck of cards and a faith that courageously steps up to keep going and do the extraordinary?

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FAITH THAT ENDURES (HEB 3:14): One of the key messages of Hebrews is don't give up: why is a perseverance such an important characteristic of authentic faith? What would you say are the key reasons why some people give up on their faith and drift away?

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FAITH ENABLES US TO DO GREAT THINGS (11:32-35a): In what ways did God work great things through the weakness of the people mentioned in these verses? Look up two of the examples below:

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- **David** (contrast his victory of 1 Samuel 17 with his sinfulness in 2 Samuel 11)
- **Samuel** (contrast his godliness in 1 Samuel 3:19-21 with his failure with his sons in 8:1-5)
- **Gideon** (contrast his reluctance in Judges 6 with his victories in Judges 7)
- **Jephthah** (contrast his victory with the mess his vow got himself into in Judges 11)
- **Samson** (contrast his victories with his weakness for women in Judges 13-16)

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SEEING THE IMPOSSIBLE: What impresses you from the Hebrews verses about what these weak men were able to do 'in faith (2 Corinthians 4:7 & Additional Quotes 21 & 22)? To what extent do you believe that with faith, we can do the impossible?

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FAITH ENABLES US TO PERSEVERE (11:35b-38): In contrast to the previous list, things did not go so well for others! What do you think it would take to demonstrate faith in the midst of such suffering? In what sense was the world not worthy of them? How might 2 Cor 12:9-10 (grace in weakness) & Isaiah 43:2-3 (God promise to be with us) offer some comfort in the face of such difficult trials?

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FAITH LEADS TO GOD'S ETERNAL BLESSING (11:39-40): What do these verses have to say about the relationship between faith and reward? How did this promise of future blessing help motivate them to act in faith (see also 2 Cor 4:17, Matthew 25:21 & Luke 18:8)? How does it motivate you?

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RUNNING WITH PERSEVERANCE (HEBREWS 12:1-3): In what ways should we be encouraged by this great cloud of witnesses? What are the things that hinder us? How does the metaphor of a race help you to think about *running with perseverance* (see also 10:38)? What practical steps can we take to *fix our eyes on Jesus* and how does the example of His life inspire you to run this race?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What kind of faith do we have? Is it a private, comfortable affair or is it practical, adventurous and audacious? As we draw this series to a close what lessons have you learned that will help you grow in faith and step out in action?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for what He has been doing in your life over these past years. Ask Him to help you respond with faith amidst all that life brings. Pray that your legacy would be as a person of faith to whom God will say "well done faithful servant."

MEMORY VERSES: HEBREWS 12:1b-2

APPENDIX – ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

QUOTE 1: “Christian theism must be rejected by any person with even a shred of respect for reason.”
George H. Smith (Atheist)

QUOTE 2: “Christian faith is not an irrational leap. Examined objectively, the claims of the Bible are rational propositions well supported by reason and evidence.” *Charles Colson (Christian)*

QUOTE 3: “Faith is always meeting a mountain, a mountain of evidence that seems to contradict God’s Word, a mountain of apparent contradiction in the realm of tangible fact...and either faith or the mountain has to go. They cannot both stand.” *Watchman Nee (Chinese evangelist)*

QUOTE 4: “In walking with God, a man will go just as far as he believes, and no further. His life will always be proportioned to his faith. His peace, his patience, his courage, his zeal, his works – all will be according to his faith.” *J.C. Ryle*

QUOTE 5: “Joseph waited 13 years. Abraham waited 25 years. Moses waited 49 years. Jesus waited 30 years. If God makes you wait you are in good company.” *Nicky Gumbel*

QUOTE 6: “We can be in our day what the heroes of faith were in their day but remember at the time they didn’t know they were heroes.” *A.W. Tozer*

QUOTE 7: “Don’t tempt me Frodo! I dare not take it. Not even to keep it safe. Understand Frodo, I would use this Ring from a desire to do good. But through me, it would wield a power too great and terrible to imagine.” *Gandalf, The Lord of the Rings*

QUOTE 8: “What is an idol? It is anything more important to us than God, anything that absorbs our hearts and imagination more than God, anything we seek to give us what only God can give. A counterfeit God is anything so central and essential to your life that, should you lose it, your life would not be worth living. An idol has such a controlling position in your heart that you can spend most of your passion and energy, your emotional and financial resources, on it without a second thought.” *Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods, Introduction pg. xviii*

QUOTE 9: “Our fears and inner barrenness make love a narcotic, a way to medicate ourselves, and addicts always make foolish, destructive choices. That is what had happened to Jacob. Rachel was not just his wife, but his “saviour.” He wanted and needed Rachel so profoundly that he heard and saw the only things he wanted to her and see. That is why he become vulnerable to Laban’s deception. Later Jacob’s idolatry of Rachel created decades of misery in his family. He adored and favoured Rachel’s sons over Leah’s spoiling and embittering the hearts of all his children and poisoning the family system.” *Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods, pg 33-34*

QUOTE 10: “By definition spies are duplicitous. They appear to be one type of person when they are actually someone else altogether. They pursue one agenda while pretending to serve another. A spy simply cannot be trusted. To varying degrees the same can be said of all of us, spies or not. We all present a face to the world that is not exactly the person we are inside. Because part of us always remains hidden, none of us is truly knowable - not our parents, siblings, spouse or friends. It’s not

surprising we all yearn to be surrounded by people we can trust. And fear betrayal. That for me is what spy stories do so well. Spies live in a world of deceit and distrust. Their stories externalise our deepest fears. By design *Hunted* plays on these fears in the most intimate way I could imagine." *Frank Spotnitz, writer and Executive Producer, Hunted (BBC Drama)*

QUOTE 11: "Without risk, faith is an impossibility...For without risk there is no faith, and the greater the risk, the greater the faith." *Soren Kierkegaard*

QUOTE 12: "Faith in action is love, and love in action is service. By transforming that faith into living acts of love, we put ourselves in contact with God Himself, with Jesus our Lord." *Mother Teresa*

QUOTE 13: "Hope is putting faith to work when doubting would be easier." *Thomas S. Monson*

QUOTE 14: "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. Only in the darkness can you see the stars." *Martin Luther King*

QUOTE 15: "What is doubt? And how is it related to faith and unbelief? Our English word *doubt* comes from the Latin *dubitare* which is rooted in an Aryan word meaning 'two'. So we can start by defining our terms like this: to believe is to be '*in one mind*' about accepting something as true; to disbelieve is to be '*in one mind*' about rejecting it. To doubt is to waver between the two, to believe and disbelieve at once and so to be '*in two minds*'. This two-ness or double-ness is the heart of doubt and the deepest dilemma it represents. *The heart of doubt is a divided heart*. This is not just a metaphor. It is the essence of the Christian view of doubt, and human language and experience from all around the world also bear it out." *Os Guinness, Doubt, © 1976, pg 17.*

QUOTE 16: "As soon as we ask what faith is and what sort of mistreatment of faith causes doubt, we are led to the first major misconception about doubt-the idea that doubt is always wrong because it is the opposite of faith and the same thing as unbelief. What this error leads to is a view of faith that is unrealistic and a view of doubt that is unfair." *Os Guinness, God in the Dark: The Assurance of Faith Beyond a Shadow of Doubt, © 1996*

QUOTE 17: "Faith that does not doubt is dead faith." *Miguel de Unamuno*

QUOTE 18: "A man may be haunted with doubts and only grow thereby in faith. Doubts are the messengers of the Living One to the honest. They are the first knock at our door of things that are not yet, but have to be, understood." *George Macdonald*

QUOTE 19: "Faith involves certain beliefs. Faith involves an attitude of hope and confidence. But at its core, faith is trusting a person." *John Ortberg, Faith & Doubt, pg. 51*

QUOTE 20: "An important characteristic of genuine faith is that it doesn't collapse when it is tested." *Alistair Begg*

QUOTE 21: "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them." *Hudson Taylor*

QUOTE 22: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." *Jim Elliot (an entry in his journal)*

MEMORY VERSES

STUDY 1 – THE NATURE OF FAITH: THE UNSEEN REALITY

¹ Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see...⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:1&6

STUDY 2 – AUTHENTIC FAITH – WAITING AND DISAPPOINTMENT

¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' **Romans 4:18**

STUDY 3 – MISPLACED FAITH: TESTING AND IDOLATRY

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

Hebrews 11:17-18

STUDY 4 – SUBSTANCE OF FAITH: CHOICE AND ACTION

¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. **James 2:17-18**

STUDY 5 – FAITH AND DOUBT: FAITH THAT HOLDS FIRM

³¹ And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. **Exodus 14:31**

STUDY 6 – FAITHFUL COURAGE: WALKING BY FAITH

¹ ...And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Hebrews 12:1b-2**