



CENTERPOINT
CHURCH



A CENTERPOINT CHURCH
SERIES STUDY GUIDE
PART TWO (WEEKS 8-13)

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INTRO: WE CONTINUE

This is the Part 2 Study Guide for the Hall of Faith series. We are continuing our look into the book of Hebrews chapter 11, where the author lists individuals from Old Testament history. These figures were known by name throughout generations. They were famous and listed as such.

In this half, we'll cover Joseph, Moses, Samson, Rahab, Gideon, and a touch about David; just a few more people from the Bible being celebrated for their trust in God. They're included in this Hall of Faith.

WEEK 8

BY FAITH, JOSEPH

Hebrews 11:22

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

Genesis 50:24-25

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” 25 And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.”

Joseph’s story is a curious one. Joseph is the first born son from Jacob’s favorite wife. Jacob had more than one wife and his favorite one, Rachel, had trouble having kids. But in Jacob’s old age, God allowed Rachel to have two sons. Joseph and Benjamin.

Jacob loved Joseph the most of all of his sons. And he didn’t pretend that it wasn’t true. He quite obviously gave more gifts to Joseph than the others. So Joseph had a target on his back and his brothers didn’t miss when they aimed.

Eventually his brothers made a plot to kill him, but they didn’t; they were going to abandon him. Finally they ended up selling him into slavery to some travelers heading to Egypt.

God used what Joseph's brothers had meant for evil, for good. Joseph eventually flourished in Egypt while his brothers and father struggled in famine in Canaan.

And when his family came to Egypt asking for food, Joseph was able to forgive his brothers and bless his family. They didn't know what had happened to Joseph, where he was, or how his life was going. As far as they knew he was dead just like they had told their dad.

Joseph gives us a great example of what it looks like to use power for good instead of bad. Many of us when given new power abuse it for our advantage. Joseph didn't take his new power out on his family and he didn't take it out on those who had taken advantage of him while he was in Egypt. That had to be the presence of God with him for that to be true. We don't naturally function that way.

Joseph also trusted God and predicted the Exodus. He maybe didn't predict the 400 years of slavery after his death but he did give them hope that they would get to go to the land God had promised their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Joseph also didn't avoid the idea of his death. He didn't pretend like it wasn't happening. He was prepared for it and he prepared his family as well.

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from the passage above?

How have you approached forgiveness as it comes to family matters?

Think about the last time you were put in a position of power. How did you handle the new power? With grace and mercy? With revenge in mind?

How do you speak about your death? Do you avoid the thought at all costs? Do you talk freely about it? Do you have a plan? Have you talked with your family about your plan? Will you? What's stopping you?

WEEK 9

BY FAITH, MOSES

The first image that comes to mind when I hear the name, Moses, is that of Charlton Heston – younger humans, Google it!

When it comes to people who belong in the Hall of Faith, Moses is certainly one of them.

Hebrews 11:23-30 – By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry ground; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army marched around them for seven days.

Every person who has had the pleasure of raising a child – or children – has been smitten. There is no other way to describe what a parent feels for their child.

The refrains are familiar, aren't they?

"She is just precious!"

"Isn't he the cutest thing you have ever seen?"

"There is something special about him."

This week we look at one such human being. Moses was one of the all-time greats of the faith. Turns out, his parents were right – the list of accomplishments is quite impressive.

Check out this narrative from Exodus 14:19-31 – 19 - "Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, 20 coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so, neither went near the other all night long. 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 23 The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. 24 During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. 25 He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." 26 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." 27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. 28 The water flowed back

and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

29 But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 30 That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. 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.

There truly was something extraordinary about Moses. His faith gave him immense courage and a willingness to risk looking foolish. Can you imagine trying to convince people to follow you, you get to the Red Sea, stretch out your hand – and nothing happens? You'd be a laughingstock...but Moses trusted the Lord, his faith enabled him to faithfully fulfill his calling and spare the people of Israel certain death.

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from the passage above?

Is there anyone in your life that you would say has the faith of Moses? Because of her/his faith, you have seen miraculous things take place? Who are they and what did you witness

What leadership traits do you see exhibited in this passage of scripture?

What meaning do you make of God in this passage of Scripture? When you read this narrative, what judgments do you make about God's character? Share the first thoughts that come to mind.

WEEK 10

BY FAITH, SAMSON

Judges 15-16

Later on, at the time of wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat and went to visit his wife. He said, "I'm going to my wife's room." But her father would not let him go in. 2 "I was so sure you hated her," he said, "that I gave her to your companion. Isn't her younger sister more attractive? Take her instead." 3 Samson said to them, "This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines; I will really harm them." 4 So he went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, 5 lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves. 6 When the Philistines asked, "Who did this?" they were told, "Samson, the Timnite's son-in-law, because his wife was given to his companion." So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death. 7 Samson said to them, "Since you've acted like this, I swear that I won't stop until I get my revenge on you." 8 He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Then he went down and stayed in a cave in the rock of Etam. 9 The Philistines went up and camped in Judah, spreading out near Lehi. 10 The people of Judah asked, "Why have you come to fight us?" "We have come to take Samson prisoner," they answered, "to do to him as he did to us." 11 Then three thousand men from Judah went down to the cave in the rock of Etam and said to Samson, "Don't you realize that the Philistines are rulers over us? What have you done to us?" He answered, "I merely did to them what they did to me."

12 They said to him, “We’ve come to tie you up and hand you over to the Philistines.” Samson said, “Swear to me that you won’t kill me yourselves.” 13 “Agreed,” they answered. “We will only tie you up and hand you over to them. We will not kill you.” So they bound him with two new ropes and led him up from the rock. 14 As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. 15 Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men. 16 Then Samson said, “With a donkey’s jawbone I have made donkeys of them.[a] With a donkey’s jawbone I have killed a thousand men.” 17 When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi.[b] 18 Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the Lord, “You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” 19 Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En Hakkore,[c] and it is still there in Lehi. 20 Samson led[d] Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines.

One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her. 2 The people of Gaza were told, “Samson is here!” So they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate. They made no move during the night, saying, “At dawn we’ll kill him.” 3 But Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all.

He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron. 4 Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. 5 The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, "See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels[a] of silver." 6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued." 7 Samson answered her, "If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I'll become as weak as any other man." 8 Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. 9 With men hidden in the room, she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered. 10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied." 11 He said, "If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I'll become as weak as any other man." 12 So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads. 13 Delilah then said to Samson, "All this time you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied." He replied, "If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I'll become as weak as any other man." So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric 14 and[b] tightened it with the pin. Again she called to him, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"

He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric. 15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when you won't confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven't told me the secret of your great strength." 16 With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it. 17 So he told her everything. "No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother's womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man." 18 When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, "Come back once more; he has told me everything." So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. 19 After putting him to sleep on her lap, she called for someone to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him.[c] And his strength left him. 20 Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had left him. 21 Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison. 22 But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

The Death of Samson

23 Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands." 24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, "Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain." 25 While they were in high spirits, they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars,

26 Samson said to the servant who held his hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them." 27 Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. 28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." 29 Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, 30 Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived. 31 Then his brothers and his father's whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led[d] Israel twenty years.

All of the stories that involve Samson are full on crazy. Or at the very least, quite unexpected. It's a little surprising that Samson is considered a hero of the faith. He didn't always make the best decisions.

But maybe that's exactly what we need to see - Samson, a hero of faith, who wasn't anywhere in the neighborhood of perfect. We aren't perfect. Hopefully that wasn't breaking news for you. You aren't perfect and no one, especially God expects you to be.

The things that got Samson into trouble are really similar to the things that get us into trouble. Taking out revenge on those who have hurt us rather than leaving that to God,

letting anger get the best of us. How angry do you have to be to catch 300 foxes and tie their tails together in pairs? The amount of time that would take, means the hate and anger had to be at an all time high.

The feats of Samson seem so remarkable and unbelievable, but what's most wild is how deep his anger ran. It's one thing to respond in the moment with an angrier response than you would like. But it's a whole other thing to "burn" for hours as you prepare a fox terror attack.

Samson was dedicated to God beginning in the womb. He was set apart and his mom had to live a different life than normal. He was required to as well.

It's not too different than what following Jesus means for us. We are called to live a different life. A life that stands out from what the rest of the culture is living.

Craig Groeschel is a pastor who has written a few books. One of the books he wrote is called *Weird: Because Normal Isn't Working*. This book was written in 2012, but maybe it was inspired by Samson's day. Because Samson was weird.

The point of Groeschel's book is this: there should be a noticeable difference between how followers of Jesus live and how the rest of the world lives. No one should have to guess. It should be obvious that we intentionally live different.

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from this passage?

Name some of the mistakes of Samson.

How did God use those mistakes?

Do you believe you have to be perfect? What might God do the with the mistakes you make?

In what ways are you weird? Or do you live weird?

WEEK 11

BY FAITH, RAHAB

Hebrew 11:31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

Joshua 2

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.” So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

2 The king of Jericho was told, “Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land.” 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: “Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land.”

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. 5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don’t know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them.” 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) 7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. 8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them, “I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you

completely destroyed.[b] 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

12 "Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death."

14 "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land."

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way."

17 Now the men had said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us 18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. 19 If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. 20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear."

21 "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say."

So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

22 When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. 23 Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them.

24 They said to Joshua, “The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us.”

Have you ever heard the song, I Love This Bar by Toby Keith? It lists out all the different people who you would find at a bar or at this specific bar. All kinds of people. Bars have over taken churches as the place where everyone in the community is welcome all the time.

Some of the people listed in the song, yuppies, bikers, hitchhikers, cowboys, truckers, fighters, dancing girls and hookers.

Does that sound like a group of people you’d expect to see at church? Absolutely.

Church’s are filled with all sorts of people, all the time. Pretending this isn’t true makes churches museums of righteous people rather than hospitals for sinners in need of a Savior.

The story of Rahab continues all the way through to Jesus. She is listed in the genealogy of Jesus. She is in the Hall of Faith because God can use all of us to do His work and bring glory to His name.

God does unexpected things through unexpected people. That’s how He likes to roll.

Rahab was just minding her own business. Living her life. Not really connected to God at all. God uses sinners all the time. That is His only option.

Have you considered the situation Rahab was in? How could she be confident to go out on her own and do her own thing? To take control of her situation and make a change. Normally someone in Rahab's position wouldn't be able to change her reality.

Normally she would be stuck. But she was used by God to help God's people and He rewarded her by changing her reality.

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you in this passage?

What is hardest for you to believe about this story?

How might God use you?

WEEK 12

BY FAITH, GIDEON

Judges 7:11-8:21

11 The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. 12 When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.”

13 “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

14 The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

15 “Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

16 The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

17 Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. 18 Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.”

And the Lord said, “I will wait until you return.”

19 Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah[a] of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

20 The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And Gideon did so. 21 Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared. 22 When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, "Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!" 23 But the Lord said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." 24 So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. 25 That same night the Lord said to him, "Take the second bull from your father's herd, the one seven years old.[b] Tear down your father's altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole[c] beside it. 26 Then build a proper kind of[d] altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second[e] bull as a burnt offering." 27 So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime. 28 In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar! 29 They asked each other, "Who did this?" When they carefully investigated, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it." 30 The people of the town demanded of Joash, "Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal's altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it." 31 But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, "Are you going to plead Baal's cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar." 32 So because Gideon broke down Baal's altar, they gave him the name Jerub-Baal[f] that day, saying, "Let Baal contend with him."

33 Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. 34 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. 35 He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them. 36 Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— 37 look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." 38 And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew." 40 That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

8 Now the Ephraimites asked Gideon, "Why have you treated us like this? Why didn't you call us when you went to fight Midian?" And they challenged him vigorously.

2 But he answered them, "What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren't the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer? 3 God gave Oreb and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?" At this, their resentment against him subsided.

4 Gideon and his three hundred men, exhausted yet keeping up the pursuit, came to the Jordan and crossed it. 5 He said to the men of Sukkoth, "Give my troops some bread; they are worn out, and I am still pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

6 But the officials of Sukkoth said,

“Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your troops?”

7 Then Gideon replied, “Just for that, when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will tear your flesh with desert thorns and briers.” 8 From there he went up to Peniel[a] and made the same request of them, but they answered as the men of Sukkoth had. 9 So he said to the men of Peniel, “When I return in triumph, I will tear down this tower.” 10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with a force of about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of the armies of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand swordsmen had fallen. 11 Gideon went up by the route of the nomads east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the unsuspecting army. 12 Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian, fled, but he pursued them and captured them, routing their entire army.

13 Gideon son of Joash then returned from the battle by the Pass of Heres. 14 He caught a young man of Sukkoth and questioned him, and the young man wrote down for him the names of the seventy-seven officials of Sukkoth, the elders of the town. 15 Then Gideon came and said to the men of Sukkoth, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me by saying, ‘Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your exhausted men?’” 16 He took the elders of the town and taught the men of Sukkoth a lesson by punishing them with desert thorns and briers. 17 He also pulled down the tower of Peniel and killed the men of the town. 18 Then he asked Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?”

“Men like you,” they answered, “each one with the bearing of a prince.” 19 Gideon replied, “Those were my brothers, the sons of my own mother. As surely as the Lord lives, if you had spared their lives, I would not kill you.” 20 Turning to Jether, his oldest son, he said, “Kill them!” But Jether did not draw his sword, because he was only a boy and was afraid.

21 Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Come, do it yourself. 'As is the man, so is his strength.'" So Gideon stepped forward and killed them, and took the ornaments off their camels' necks.

Do you remember the old Saturday Night Live sketch Daily Affirmations with Stuart Smalley? His tagline was: "I'm good enough, I'm smart enough and dog gone it, people like me." A life believing in himself was a challenge for Stuart.

He talked himself into and out of a number of different things with his tagline. Gideon sounds a little bit like Stuart in these passages.

God calls Gideon, but Gideon spends the first few days trying to make sure he was hearing Him correctly. Trying to convince God that maybe it should be someone else. There had to be a better candidate. He wasn't good enough. His family wasn't good enough. His tribe wasn't important enough.

Would any of us actually believe God is calling us to something, especially something of such huge magnitude? We would all be double and triple checkers as well.

God's response to Gideon's questioning was to leave no doubt who was in charge of the victory in the battle. It had to be God as 300 men defeated tens of thousands.

Gideon thought the job was too big for him, but once he was in the midst of it, he showed up.

God knows we are capable of much more than we believe. That's true because with Him, anything is possible. With God, total domination of the people that had been ruling them was possible.

DISCUSS:

**Can you think of a time when you questioned if God was with you?
What made you think that?**

When was a time when you were most clear that God was with you?

What excuses do you make for why you can't do something God asks of you?

What stands out for you from the passages above?

WEEK 13

SERIES SUMMARY

We have come to the final week of this series and Canton, OH – home of the National Football League Hall of Fame – has nothing on our Hall of Faith.

God, and the way faith in God has been demonstrated throughout the people in the Hall of Faith has been quite inspiring throughout history – and in this series.

The list is so grand, in fact, that the author did not have time to tell about David and Samuel – among others. The list is so spectacular that there was not time to talk about David – a man after God's own heart.

Hebrews 11:32-40 – 32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—

38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

That's quite a Hall – and as we shall see in this reading – the mercy and grace of God are spectacular.

Let's look together at one chapter in David's life.

1 Samuel 21:1-15 – David went to Nob, to Ahimelek the priest. Ahimelek trembled when he met him, and asked, “Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?” 2 David answered Ahimelek the priest, “The king sent me on a mission and said to me, ‘No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.’ As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place. 3 Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find.” 4 But the priest answered David, “I don't have any ordinary bread on hand; however, there is some consecrated bread here—provided the men have kept themselves from women.” 5 David replied, “Indeed women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men's bodies are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!” 6 So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the Lord and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away. 7 Now one of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the Lord; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief shepherd. 8 David asked Ahimelek, “Don't you have a spear or a sword here? I haven't brought my sword or any other weapon, because the king's mission was urgent.”

9 The priest replied, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want it, take it; there is no sword here but that one.” David said, “There is none like it; give it to me.” David at Gath. 10 That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. 11 But the servants of Achish said to him, “Isn’t this David, the king of the land? Isn’t he the one they sing about in their dances: “ ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands’?” 12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. 13 So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard. 14 Achish said to his servants, “Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? 15 Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?”

These are not David’s finest moments. Here we have two occasions where David lied – once to Ahimelech in verses 1-9 and once to Achish in verses 10-15. I am mindful of the prophet Isaiah who wrote: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord (Isaiah 55:8) when I read 1 Samuel 21.

Later in his life – praise the Lord, there were later moments in David’s life – David would learn to wait on the Lord and seek God’s will. Here, at this stage in his journey, David seems in a hurry and willing to trust himself over and against trusting the Lord’s plan. And yet, David is mentioned in the Hall of Faith.

DISCUSS:

Have you had times in your life when you got out ahead of God? Take a moment to remember the details and what you experienced.

What are some reasons you can think of that lead human beings to trust themselves, or other people, or our own plans over trusting what God seems to desire?

Are you currently facing a situation where you need to slow down, take a breath, and wait for the Lord?

How do you understand David's inclusion in the Hall of Faith? What sense do you make of it? How might you describe it as good news for people?

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