



# STUDY GUIDE

SERMON TOPIC:

## "Move Faith Forward"

WEEK 5

### 1. READ

#### Rev. Smith's Selected Scripture: Hebrews 12 : 1 – 3 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

#### Further Reading: Hebrews 11 : 1 – 12 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. <sup>2</sup>This is what the ancients were commended for.

<sup>3</sup>By *faith* we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

<sup>4</sup>By *faith* Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

<sup>5</sup>By *faith* Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. <sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>By *faith* Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

<sup>8</sup>By *faith* Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. <sup>11</sup>And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him



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faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

### 2. REFLECT

[Make sure to view this week's sermon!]



As we enter our final week of Pastor Watley's sermon series entitled "Forward," we've discovered many of the ways God is calling us to move forward in this difficult season. Although we continue to witness dramatic shifts and changes in our environment, we can be assured that God is our ever-present help in times of trouble. We can confidently walk into our next season knowing that the spirit, presence, and Word of God is able to guide us.

In our lesson for week five entitled "Move Faith Forward," we had the privilege of hearing a dynamic and powerful word from our very own Rev. Kendra Smith. In her message, she provided us with one of the possible answers to Pastor Watley's question last week: "How are you planning to move forward?" Rev. Smith's response was a reminder and a call-to-action at the same time:

*"My faith, moves me forward!"*



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This important response causes us to realize that faith is not stationary. In fact, faith was intended to be the exact opposite. As Rev. Smith mentioned, faith is meant to be practiced, demonstrated, and utilized in our lives. This requires constant growth and development as we move forward on our Christian journey. However, there are many times when practicing our faith comes with great opposition.

In fact, in our scripture for this week (Hebrews 12:1-3), we are introduced to a community that was facing their own season of opposition and uncertainty. Constantly persecuted for their faith, this community of believers began to grow weary and tired waiting for God's promised kingdom. Thankfully, they received these words of encouragement just as they began to drift away from their faith. Verse one begins, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us..."

As Rev. Smith points out, the word "perseverance" can also mean "endurance." However, unfortunately for us, endurance is not usually developed over night. No matter how talented of an athlete we may be, we will still need to train to develop endurance. Thankfully, Rev. Smith reminds us that *"the more we run, we begin to realize, the further we can go!"* The more we develop our spiritual endurance, the further our faith can take us. The more we step out in faith, the more we can rely on our training and our muscle memory to sustain us in seasons of difficulty.

While we are developing our endurance, we must also be sure to develop our focus. In order for us to run the "race marked out for us," we have to be able to see and focus on our own race. If we are not careful, we can easily bypass the boundaries of our own lane and veer off into areas that God has not designed for us. However, even if we cannot see the finish line of our own race, verse two tells us that we can focus on Jesus as we run. Perhaps this is because we cannot focus on Jesus and entertain chaos at the same time. When we "fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith," we have to look away from everything else that can distract, hinder or entangle us. And yet, as we focus on Jesus on our path forward, Rev. Smith urges each of us to identify: *What is your everything else?*

### 3. RESPOND

#### Introspective Questions

- **What is your *everything else*? What are those things that seek to slow you down, distract, hinder, or entangle you?**



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- Now that you have identified some of those things, how can you let them go?

### Discussion Questions

- How do you think this community responded to these words of encouragement? How would you have responded?
- Why do you think the author uses the metaphor about running a race to describe moving forward in faith?