DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In our text, <u>Hebrews 11:32-40</u>, the writer summarizes several more characters who displayed trust in the promises of God, highlighting both their victories and their sufferings (v. 32-38). He then makes a closing observation about the incompleteness of their experience (v. 39-40).

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

If you're not familiar with the stories of the characters mentioned, here's where you can find them:

- 1. Gideon (Judges 6-8)
- 2. Barak (Judges 4-5)
- 3. Samson (Judges 13-16)
- 4. Jephthah (Judges 11-12)
- 5. David (the books of 1 and 2 Samuel)
- 6. Samuel (1 Samuel)

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

This entire chapter glitters with stellar personalities, people who trusted in the promises of God and saw glorious victories. None of them could be described as perfect; they all failed to trust and obey God at some points, yet the entire trajectory of their life was oriented toward God and His promises.

Except for one.

How does Samson, the judge of Israel with the self-control of a toddler, get a place on this list? How can the writer cite Samson as an example of the life of faith in God?

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SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

Verse 39 summarizes not just the final section but the entire chapter: "And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised."
We like to think that it is our behavior that matters most to God (and He does care about our behavior), but it is actually the posture of our hearts that He cares about most deeply.

The one question that defines the entire course of our lives is how consistently and to what extent we trust God. Everything else is details. And consequences.

- How has God proven Himself faithful to you and your loved ones?
- What are you triggers for doubt? Under what circumstances are you most often tempted to fail in your trust in God and His promises?
- 2. This is not a text that will support the agenda of the prosperity gospel. If we trust God to keep His promises, what are we to make of those episodes in Scripture (and in our own lives) where He has allowed catastrophe to fall on His people? What do you say to a man who trusted God and yet saw his life fall apart?
 - Have you experienced a moment when God provided miraculously to meet your needs? What is that story?
 - Have you experienced a time when God did not deliver you from your troubles? What is that story?
 How did your trust in God survive intact?
 - How can we say we should put our faith in God when we know that sometimes He allows awful things to happen to His people? What are we to say to the cynics (and to our own cynical selves) when faith "doesn't work"?