DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In our text, <u>Hebrews 11:17-22</u>, the writer lays out an overview of the faith of the way the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) demonstrated their faith in God and His promises.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

- 1. If you're not acquainted with the stories the writer of Hebrews refers to, here they are:
 - At God's command, Abraham takes his son Isaac, the "son of promise," to offer him as a sacrifice: Gen 22
 - Abraham's son Isaac blesses his two sons, Jacob and Esau: Gen 27
 - Isaac's son Jacob blesses his twelve sons: Gen 49
 - Jacob's son Joseph requests that when his people return to the Land promised to their fathers, his bones be carried back with them: Gen 50 (see also Ex 13:19)
- 2. In each instance, what was the act of faith that the patriarch performed?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

Several questions emerge from this text:

- It is not clear how old Isaac was in Gen 22. He might have been a man and not a child. But that doesn't blunt the horror of what God asked Abraham to do. How could God not just condone but command something so heinous as child sacrifice (Gen 22)? More to the point: what are we supposed to do with troubling questions like these in Scripture?
- 2. The four examples of the faith of the patriarchs are uneven: some are clear examples of trusting in God's promises, and some are not so clear. Especially, how do we handle Jacob blessing his sons when his preference (that he prioritize his favorite Esau) was taken away by subterfuge (Jacob and Rebekah's ruse)?



SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

The story of the patriarchs is an epic that spans multiple generations and involves the fate of nations. The thread that holds the saga together is the promises of God and the patriarch's uneven response to those promises. God was writing His own Big Story, and He invited Abraham and his sons to play a crucial role in the opening scenes of the grand saga of His plan to redeem the world.

It is the same for us. The Gospel is God's kind invitation to ordinary people – people like Abraham and his sons, people like you and me – to become part of that Story. Like Abraham and his sons, we too sometimes face circumstances that are overwhelming and bewildering; sometimes we cannot see the way clear, and the only thing we can hang onto is God's promises.

Was there ever a time (perhaps now) when you were overwhelmed by your circumstances and found it difficult to maintain your confidence in the promises of God?

- 1. What are some of the means God used to sustain your hope in those dark days (His Word, His people, the inner comfort of the Spirit)?
- 2. What did you need to hear from your Christian brothers and sisters during those dark days?
- 3. What did you not need to hear from them?
- 4. How can you best serve brothers and sisters whose hope is fading?

