

**A Better Resurrection**  
Hebrews 11  
**Small Group Guide**

**Opening question:**

- Is there any experience that you're afraid of, or that just seems too risky to try?

**Optional Reading for Background:** The circumstances of the original readers were very difficult. Their circumstances were more comparable to Christians today in Pakistan or Iraq. They were Jewish Christians, probably who lived in Rome in the late 60s AD, and they've begun to experience incredible persecution (cf. 10:34).

The author of Hebrews is writing to these early followers of Jesus because they're beaten down, and afraid, and ready to give up, and they're turning back to traditional religious rituals to find some measure of comfort. And what the writer offers them in today's passage is the answer for a question that hangs over every one of our lives: *How do we endure the harsh realities of this life without caving in to fear and exhaustion?*

**As 1 Corinthians 13 is the "Love Chapter," Hebrews 11 is considered by some as the "Faith Chapter." TAKE TURNS READING HEBREWS 11:1 through 12:3 and note what you learn about faith.**

1. How does Hebrews 11 define faith?
  - a. What is your reaction to this definition? Agree, disagree, or learn anything new?
  - b. How is God described in v3? What is his relationship to our faith?
  - c. How is Christian faith different from secular "positive thinking"?
2. Josh talked about the fact that some of us have a commonality with the original readers of Hebrews, in that we can get crippled by fear or cave in to exhaustion. Is either of those true for you? If so, how?
3. Per pastor Josh, there seems to be a transition half-way through v35 that divides Hebrews 11 into two sections:

"35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison."

  - a. If both sections reflect faith, how would you describe the difference?
  - b. Have you ever trusted God to do the impossible in the face of your fear and He came through for you? Describe. How did that affect your faith?
4. Those in the first half of v35 who were raised from the dead would eventually die again. How does this inform your faith?
  - a. Those in v35b and following had faith in God (cf. v39). Yet, all suffered, many were murdered, and "none of them received what had been promised" (v39). Do any of you identify

with this second set of people? If so, how?

- b. Looking back at the definition of faith in vv1-3, how did the second set of people have faith?
- c. Pastor Josh quoted, and then added onto, Tim Keller: “Our problem is that often our faith is in our agenda for God, rather than in God himself”... We believe in God for what we want him to do, rather than trusting in him for who he is and for the sheer joy of knowing him.”

**Does this statement hit home for any of you? Describe please.**

- d. Tim Keller again states, “Faith that doesn’t require success IS the ultimate success.” That’s the goal, but how do we get there? Read v35 and v40 again and see if those verses help answer this question.

5. “Hope” is mentioned in 11:1.

- a. How is faith related to hope?
- b. We just celebrated Easter. How does Easter give us hope?

6. Reread 12:1-3

- a. Verse 1 uses the metaphor of running a race. How does this affect your “faith marathon” knowing you are being watched and cheered on by the great witnesses of Hebrews 11?
- b. How is shedding sin like shedding weight before a big sporting event?
- c. Interestingly, the author also allows for other “weight,” which may not be inherently sinful, but which hinders our “race.” Is there any excess weight that you need to shed so you can run your race faster and with more endurance? How can we pray for you?
- d. If Jesus is cheering from the finish line of a marathon race, what aspects about Jesus in vv2-3 are you supposed to focus on?
- e. Does this help you to “not lose heart”? Why or why not?

7. **Share and Pray:** Among our prayer requests, let’s pray for each other that we will shed our sin and fears and fix our focus on what Jesus has done for us in order to run this faith marathon with endurance and joy. Is there anyone who has something holding them back in the faith?