


# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 21



# JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 21  
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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

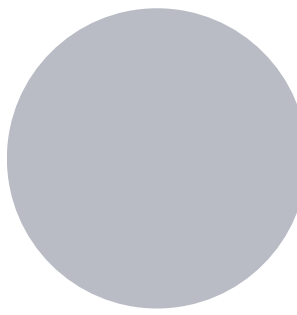
... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.




# WEEK 21

## HEBREWS 11:32-12:2



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# DAY 1 STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

## First read Hebrews 11:32-34.

As the writer continues to reflect on the “hall of faith,” we meet six “heroes” from Old Testament history. A quick glance at this summary causes us to face an age-old myth of the Bible. The myth is that the Old Testament is primarily a collection of stories about good and bad people. We’re meant to follow the good examples and learn from the bad ones. *Right?*

While there are good and bad examples, that’s not the primary function of the Bible. This list of heroes makes that abundantly clear. You see, Hebrews is celebrating these faithful men but their stories are complicated. Gideon doubted God (Judges 6:13). Barak lived in fear (Judges 4:8). Samson disobeyed God (Judges 16:17). Jephthah bartered with God (Judges 11:30-31). David committed adultery (2 Samuel 11:4). Samuel struggled to trust God (1 Samuel 16). And the prophets were constantly plagued by corrupt intentions (see Micah 3:5,6,11). They’re faithful, but they’re broken.

In our biblical mythology, our impulse is to emulate these historic expressions of faith, justice, and power. And yet the fact that they **“were made strong out of weakness”** complicates that instinct (v.34). We all want to be and follow heroes who are strong. Yet God’s people are always strengthened through weakness, brokenness, and dependency. Christ himself **“was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God”** (2 Corinthians 13:4). The Bible isn’t filled with good and bad people. The Bible is filled with broken and weak people whom Jesus is healing and making strong by his grace and for his purposes. That’s really good news.

# DAY 1 STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

1. How do these men and their stories point us to God's grace and power?
2. In what ways is God healing you? How is he strengthening you?
3. How does the gospel make us strong through weakness?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*I'm weak. I'm broken. But in you, I find strength and healing, just like your people throughout history. Help me today to neither be shamed by nor afraid of my weakness. Instead, cause me to look to your love and power when I face my limitations and sin.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 2

## LIFE THROUGH DEATH

### First read Hebrews 11:35.

Resurrection was an underdeveloped idea in ancient Hebrew thought. While Christians today see all of life through the lens of Jesus' resurrection, previous generations were simply given glimpses of this forthcoming glory through personal experience and faith in God's power.

For instance, ***"Women received back their dead by resurrection"*** in a couple of instances in the Old Testament (v.35a). When a widow's son died, the prophet Elijah cried to the Lord, ***"let this child's life come into him again"*** (1 Kings 17:21). His life returned. Another woman from the ancient town of Shunem refused to accept her son's death until the prophet Elisha showed up. Her son ***"got up again"*** (2 Kings 4:35). Not only so, but remember, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son because ***"He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead"*** (v.19). Their stories and developing theology led some even to refuse release from torture ***"so that they might rise again to a better life"*** (v.35b). They witnessed and believed that God could bring life through death.

Though the idea of resurrection was in its infancy, their faith was fully grown. They saw in part, but now we see fully through the resurrection of Christ—by faith, life comes through death.

# DAY 2

## LIFE THROUGH DEATH

1. What does this passage teach us about God?
2. In what ways do discomfort, suffering, and death cause fear and doubt to creep into your heart and mind?
3. How does the resurrection of Jesus Christ bring comfort and change our perspective of death?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Cause my faith in Christ's resurrection to mature into spiritual sight. Even in the face of death.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



# DAY 3 GLORY THROUGH SUFFERING

## First read Hebrews 11:36-38.

Biblical faith results in positive, delayed, and negative outcomes (Guthrie, 389). Some have faith and **“conquered kingdoms”** (v.33). Others waited patiently and **“received back their dead”** (v.35). Others still **“were stoned [and] ... killed with the sword,”** and left **“wandering about in deserts”** (v.37,38). Nevertheless, it’s not the outcome but the object of our faith that ultimately matters.

Jesus said, **“faith like a grain of mustard seed”** was all it took to move a mountain (Matthew 17:20). But the outcome (moving a mountain) isn’t the point of his lesson. Jesus’ instruction comes after his disciples lamented that they were unable to heal a demon-possessed boy. They’re frustrated with the negative outcome. Paradoxically, Jesus says their faith is **“little”** but then encourages them to have faith **“like a grain of mustard seed.”** That’s odd. Unless Jesus isn’t simply drawing on the size of a mustard seed but also its nature.

You see, when placed in the right conditions a seed grows into a vibrant plant. The same is true with faith—placed in a worthy object, namely Jesus, faith moves mountains and endures suffering. **“In me, you may have peace,”** Jesus said, **“In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33). No matter the sufferings of this life, in the end, all faith in Christ results in glory.

# DAY 3 GLORY THROUGH SUFFERING

1. Why is it hard to trust God with negative outcomes?
2. What disappointment, pains, or problems are causing you to doubt the Lord?
3. How does Jesus work to “overcome the world” give you confidence and encouragement?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*I'm struggling with the delay or negative outcome of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. It seems wrong. It seems unfair. It seems like you don't care. But I want to trust. I desire to have faith in you. Help my unbelief.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 4 COMMENDED THROUGH FAITH

## First read Hebrews 11:39-40.

Though faith was expressed in a myriad of complex ways and though the outcomes of the faithful are unique, the writer tells us they're all ***"commended through their faith"*** (v.39). That word, *commended*, means to testify or witness. Their faith told the truth about their lives. This final note in the chapter serves as a second bookend to the beginning, ***"faith is the assurance of things hoped for"*** (v.1). Faith is our assurance of the life to come and faith bears witness in this life.

Faith carries us in the space between the already and the not yet. God makes promises and faith empowers us to wait for those promises to be realized. To be sure some received what they were waiting for and some didn't (see vv.32-38). But the writer has in mind what he's been mindful of from the start, ***"in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world"*** (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is ***"what was promised"*** (v.39). Jesus is the ***"better"*** promise God has provided for us (v.40).

As faith told the truth about our spiritual forebears who were waiting for the Messiah's coming, so too our faith bears witness about us as we long for his return. We are all commended through faith in Jesus.

# DAY 4 COMMENDED THROUGH FAITH

1. Why is Jesus the true and better promise?
2. Why is it hard to wait for the Lord? What are you waiting for?
3. How does the cross help us wait with faith?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*It's hard to wait. It's hard to have faith that the fullness of your promises will really come true. Graciously meet me in my impatient. Mercifully share in my sufferings. Lovingly heal my wounds. Help me to wait with faith.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

# DAY 5 INTIMACY THROUGH ATTENTION

## First read Hebrews 12:1-2.

Mother Teresa once said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other" (*Spiritual Gems from Mother Teresa*, 10). She certainly lived in light of this virtue, drawing near to the sick and suffering. There's something deeply human about being together—especially in sorrow. Intimacy carves a pathway between souls so that what's true about one person becomes true of another. We truly become ourselves only when we are deeply united with other image bearers (see Genesis 1:27).

As the people of God, we're enveloped in a **"cloud of witnesses"** (v.1a, see also v.11:1-40). Their faithful example empowers us to **"lay aside every weight, and sin"** so that we can **"run with endurance the race set before us"** (v.1b). Their lives give shape to ours. It's a beautiful union forged not simply by our shared struggles or even our common religious tradition. It's deeper than that.

This spiritual connection is all about our attention. You see, whatever has our attention has our hearts. God's people are all looking at the same thing, the same person--Jesus (v.2a). He's **"the founder and perfecter"** of our shared faith because he despised the shame of the cross for us (v.2a). In other words, he tore down what separated us from the Heavenly Father and what separated his children from each other (see Ephesians 2:14). Intimacy with Jesus fosters intimacy with all God's people ... past, present, and future.




# DAY 5 INTIMACY THROUGH ATTENTION

1. What does it mean to “look to Jesus”?
2. What weight or sin is burdening you this week? What’s burdening the people around you?
3. How does Jesus’ death relieve us of sinful burdens? What do you think it means that he *perfects* our faith?

*Heavenly Father ...*

*Thank you for this “cloud of witnesses.” Thank you that I’m not alone, isolated, or left to deal with the weight of sin by myself. Thank you for Jesus; keep my eyes and the attention of my sisters and brothers fixed on him.*

*In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*



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