

Nineth Lesson

A Biblical Reading of Faith and Heroes (Hebrews 11:1 -12:2)

Moses: Moses is one of the most prominent figures in the Old Testament. While Abraham is called the “Father of Israel” and the recipient of God’s unconditional covenant of grace to His people, Moses was the man chosen to bring redemption to His people and he was called the “Leader of Israel”. God specifically chose Moses to lead the Israelites from captivity in Egypt to salvation in the Promised Land. Moses is also recognized as the mediator of the Old Covenant and is commonly referred to as the giver of the Law. Finally, Moses is the principal author of the Pentateuch, the foundational books of the entire Bible. Moses’ role in the Old Testament is a type and shadow of the role Jesus plays in the New Testament. As such, his life is definitely worth examining.

We first encounter Moses in the opening chapters of the book of Exodus. In chapter 1, we learn that, after the patriarch Joseph rescued his family from the great famine and situated them in the land of Goshen (in Egypt), the descendants of Abraham lived in peace for several generations until there rose to power in Egypt a pharaoh who “did not know Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). This pharaoh subjugated the Hebrew people and used them as slaves for his massive building projects. Because God blessed the Hebrew people with rapid numeric growth, the Egyptians began to fear the increasing number of Jews living in their land. So, Pharaoh ordered the death of all male children born to Hebrew women (Exodus 1:22).

In Exodus 2, we see Moses’ mother attempting to save her child by placing him in a basket and putting it into the Nile. The basket was eventually found by Pharaoh’s daughter, and she adopted him as her own and raised him in the palace of the pharaoh himself. As Moses grew into adulthood, he saw the suffering of his own people and began to empathize with the plight of his people when he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave. Moses intervened and killed the Egyptian. In another incident, Moses attempted to intervene in a dispute between two Hebrews, but one of the Hebrews rebuked Moses and sarcastically commented, “Are you going to kill me as you did the Egyptian?” (Exodus 2:14). Realizing that his criminal act was made known, Moses fled to the land of Midian where he again intervened—this time rescuing the daughters of Jethro from some bandits. In gratitude, Jethro granted his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage (Exodus 2:15–21). Moses lived in Midian for about forty years.

Moses’ Encounter: The next major incident in Moses’ life was his encounter with God at the burning bush (Exodus 3-4), where God called Moses to be the savior of His people. Despite his initial excuses and outright request that God send someone else, Moses agreed to obey God. God promised to send Aaron, Moses’ brother, along with him. The rest of the story is fairly well known. Moses and his brother, Aaron, go to Pharaoh in God’s name and demand that he let the people go to worship their God. Pharaoh stubbornly refuses, and ten plagues of God’s judgment fall upon the people and the land, the final plague being the slaying of the firstborn. Prior to this final plague, God commands Moses to institute the Passover, which is commemorative of God’s saving act in redeeming His people from bondage in Egypt.

After the exodus, Moses led the people to the edge of the Red Sea where God provided another saving miracle by parting the waters and allowing the Hebrews to pass to the other side while drowning the Egyptian army (Exodus 14). Moses brought the people to the foot of Mount Sinai where the Law was given and the Old Covenant established between God and the newly formed nation of Israel (Exodus 19–24).

The rest of the book of Exodus and the entire book of Leviticus take place while the Israelites are encamped at the foot of Sinai. God gives Moses detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle—a traveling tent of worship that could be assembled and disassembled for easy portability. God also gives Moses explicit instructions on how God is to be worshiped and guidelines for maintaining purity and holiness among the people. The book of Numbers sees the Israelites move from Sinai to the edge of the Promised Land, but they refuse to go in when ten out of twelve spies bring back a bad report about Israel's ability to take over the land. God condemns this generation of Jews to die in the wilderness for their disobedience and subjects them to forty years of wandering in the wilderness. By the end of the book of Numbers, the next generation of Israelites is back on the borders of the Promised Land and poised to trust God and take it by faith.

The book of Deuteronomy shows Moses giving several sermon-type speeches to the people, reminding them of God's saving power and faithfulness. He gives the second reading of the Law (Deuteronomy 5) and prepares this generation of Israelites to receive the promises of God. Moses himself is prohibited from entering the land because of his sin at Meribah (Numbers 20:10-13). At the end of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses' death is recorded (Deuteronomy 34). He climbed Mount Nebo and is allowed to look upon the Promised Land. Moses was 120 years old when he died, and the Bible records that his "eye was undimmed and his vigor unabated" (Deuteronomy 34:7). The Lord Himself buried Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5-6), and Joshua took over as leader of the people (Deuteronomy 34:9). Deuteronomy 34:10-12 says, "***Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.***"

The above is only a brief sketch of Moses' life. Some of his ways foreshadow Jesus Christ (his appearance at Jesus' transfiguration). So, now, what can we learn from Moses' life? Moses was a great leader and man of action, instrument of God, leading the people to the Promised Land. Moses essentially had responsibility over two million Hebrew refugees. When things began to wear on him, his father-in-law, Jethro, suggested that he delegate responsibility to other faithful men, a lesson that many people in authority over others need to learn (Exodus 18). We also see a man who was dependent on the grace of God to help with his task. Moses was continually pleading on behalf of the people before God. However, if we look at Moses' life in light of the overall panoply of Scripture, we see larger theological truths that fit into the story of redemption. In chapter 11 the author of Hebrews uses Moses as an example of faith. We learn that it was by faith that Moses refused the glories of Pharaoh's palace to identify with the plight of his people. The writer of Hebrews says, "[Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt" (Hebrews 11:26). Moses' life was one of faith, and we know that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Likewise, it is by faith that we, looking forward to heavenly riches, can endure temporal hardships in this lifetime (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). As mentioned earlier, we also know that Moses' life was typological of the life of Christ.

Apart from the above, we find some striking similarities between Moses and Jesus

Childhood: Pharaoh became worried of the increasing number of Israelites and wanted to kill all Jewish male babies including Moses. ***Herod wanted to kill all the Jewish babies of 2 years old and the baby Jesus was saved miraculously.***

The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush and called him Moses. ***The angel appeared to Mary and said, 'you will conceive in your womb a child and you shall name him Jesus***

Miracles: Moses did many extraordinary miracles in order to convince Pharaoh of the mighty power of God. *Jesus did many miracles to prove his divine sonship.*

Passover: Moses celebrated the Passover feast before their desert journey. *Jesus celebrated the Last supper before his departure from the earth*

Manna: God gave manna, the food from heaven. *Jesus said, “I am the true bread, coming down from heaven”*

Blood: Moses turned water into blood. Ratified the OT covenant by the sprinkling the blood of the animals. *Jesus changed water into wine and later wine to his blood. Jesus ratified the NT giving his own blood.*

Water: God provided water for the Israelites through Moses. *Jesus gave life giving water, the Holy Spirit.*

Twelve & seventy: Moses selected twelve men and sent them on a special mission. Moses gathered seventy leaders for special duties. *Jesus chose the twelve apostles for His great mission in the world. Jesus sent seventy disciples as missionaries.*

Ten commandments: Moses received the ten commandments from God at the mount Sinai. *Jesus gave the new laws of God at the mount of Beatitudes.*

Glory: When Moses descended from Mount Sinai, his face was shining with the glory of God (Exodus 34: 29, 30, 35). *During the transfiguration at Mount Tabor, the face of Jesus was shining like the sun* (Matthew 17: 1-4).

Moses was rejected by the Israelites and *Jesus was rejected by his own people*

Death: Moses died on the Mount Nebo and *Jesus died on the Mount Calvary*

How Jesus is greater than Moses? The book of Hebrews shows Jesus greater than Moses. (1) Jesus is greater than Moses in his person (Heb 3: 2-3). Moses was a servant of God but Jesus is the son of God. Jesus is God himself, the second person of the Most Holy Trinity. (2) Moses was a prophet of the Israelites in his time while Jesus is Lord of the universe. (3) Moses prefigured Jesus while Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

Rahab: In the book of Joshua, we are introduced to one of the most thought provoking and astonishing heroines of the Old Testament. Rahab, the prostitute of the Canaanite city of Jericho, ultimately is noteworthy for her great faith and for her place in the lineage of Jesus Christ. But a closer examination of the life of this remarkable Gentile woman can lead to deeper insights into God’s plan for His church and His dealing with individual believers in grace and mercy.

Rahab’s story is found in Joshua 2–6. This passage describes the conquest of the fortified city of Jericho by the Israelites. In its day, Jericho was the most important Canaanite fortress city in the Jordan Valley. It was a stronghold directly in the path of the advancing Israelites, who had just crossed the Jordan River (Joshua 3:1-17). Before entering the land west of the Jordan, Joshua sent two spies to look over the land. The king of Jericho heard that two Israelite spies were within his city and ordered them to be brought out to him. Rahab, the woman with whom the spies were staying, protected them by hiding them on her roof. She told them how the citizens of Jericho had been fearful of the Israelites ever since they defeated the Egyptians via the Red Sea miracle (some 40 years prior). She agreed to help them escape, provided that she

and her family were spared in the upcoming battle. The spies agreed to her request, giving her three conditions to be met: 1) she must distinguish her house from the others by hanging a scarlet rope out of the window so the Israelites would know which home to spare; 2) her family must be inside the house during the battle; and 3) she must not later turn on the spies.

Safely escaping the city, the two spies returned to Joshua and reported that the "whole land was melting with fear." The Israelites crossed the Jordan into Canaan where they laid siege to the city of Jericho. The city was completely destroyed, and every man, woman, and child in it was killed. Only Rahab and her family were spared. Ultimately, Rahab married Salmon, an Israelite from the tribe of Judah. Her son was Boaz, the husband of Ruth. Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, is her direct descendant.

Messages from Rahab: Rahab was not in an ideal circumstance to come to faith in the one true God, the God of Israel. She was a citizen of a wicked city that was under God's condemnation. Rahab was part of a corrupt, depraved, pagan culture. She had not benefited from the godly leadership of Moses or Joshua. However, Rahab heard the stories of their escape from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the wanderings in the wilderness, and their recent victory over the Amorites. She learned enough to reach the correct, saving conclusion: "For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Joshua 2:11). It is this change of heart, this faith—coupled with the actions prompted by faith—that saved her and her family.

It is often said that Rahab serves as a symbolic foreshadowing or "type" of the church and Gentile believers. She was, in fact, the first recorded Gentile convert. There are many ways in which Rahab depicts the church. First, she was part of a pagan world system, a prostitute, who by her conversion was enabled to become a legitimate bride. In like fashion, Israel was the first chosen people of God, but they were set aside temporarily so the Gentiles could be brought into the kingdom of God, and the church is now considered the bride of Christ (Romans 11; Ephesians 5:25-27). Second, Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was saved because of her faith in "God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Hebrews 11:31). Likewise, Christians are saved through faith in Jesus Christ. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Third, although Rahab and Christians are saved by an act of grace through faith, true faith requires and is exemplified by action (James 2). Rahab had to put the scarlet cord out of the window. Christians must accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and then go on to live in a manner that verifies that our faith is real. Fourth, Rahab could have indicated the location of her home in any number of ways. But the only way that she could be spared was to follow the directions given to her by the Israelite spies. The world tells us that there are many ways to God and salvation, all equally valid. But the Bible tells us, concerning Jesus Christ, that "salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Fifth, Rahab's faith enabled her to turn away from her culture, her people, and her religion and to the Lord. Commitment to a true faith in God may necessitate setting priorities that are contrary to those of the world, as we are exhorted to do in Romans 12:2.

Finally, once we come to Christ, our pasts no longer matter. The slate is wiped clean for all who believe and accept the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross on our behalf. Rahab was no longer viewed as an unclean prostitute, but as one worthy by grace to be part of the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as she was grafted into the line of Christ, so we become children of God and partakers in His inheritance (Romans 11). We find in the life of Rahab the inspiring story of all sinners who have been saved by grace. In her story, we learn of the amazing grace of God that can save even the worst of sinners and bring them into an abundant life in Christ Jesus.

David: We can learn a lot from the life of David. He was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:13–14; Acts 13:22)! David is believed to have been twelve to sixteen years of age when he was anointed as the king of Israel after king Saul. He was the youngest of Jesse's sons and an unlikely choice for king, humanly speaking. Samuel thought Eliab, David's oldest brother, was surely the anointed one. But God told Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel, but God had chosen none of them. Samuel asked if Jesse had any more sons. The youngest, David, was out tending sheep. So they called the boy in and Samuel anointed David with oil "and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David" (1 Samuel 16:13).

The Bible also says that the Spirit of the Lord departed from King Saul and an evil spirit tormented him (1 Samuel 16:14). Saul's servants suggested a harpist, and one recommended David, saying, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the lyre. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him" (1 Samuel 16:18). Thus, David came into the king's service (1 Samuel 16:21). Saul was pleased with young David, and he became one of Saul's armor-bearers.

Saul's pleasure in David vanished quickly as David rose in strength and fame when David slew the giant Goliath. The Philistines were at war with the Israelites and taunted Israel's military forces with their champion, Goliath from Gath. They proposed a dual between Goliath and whoever would fight him. But no one in Israel volunteered to battle the giant. David's older brothers were part of Saul's army; after Goliath had been taunting the Israelites for forty days, David visited his brothers at the battlefield and heard the Philistine's boasts. The young shepherd asked, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26). David's oldest brother became angry and accused David of pride and coming only to watch the battle. But David continued to talk about the issue.

Saul heard what David was saying and sent for him. David told Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him" (1 Samuel 17:32). Saul was incredulous; David was not a trained soldier. David provided his credentials as a shepherd. David had killed lions and bears that went after his sheep, and he claimed the Philistine would die like them because he had "defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:36–37). Saul acquiesced, provided that David wear Saul's armor into the fight. But David was not used to the armor and left it behind. David took with him only his staff, five smooth stones, his shepherd's bag, and a sling. Goliath was not intimidated by David, but neither was David intimidated by the giant. "David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands' (1 Samuel 17:45–46). David's trust in God and his zeal for God's glory are remarkable. David did kill Goliath. He also entered into Saul's service full-time, no longer tending his father's sheep.

It was at this time that Saul's son, Jonathan, "became one in spirit with David" (1 Samuel 18:1). David and Jonathan's friendship is instructive to friendships today. Though his father was king and Jonathan would have been a natural heir to the throne, Jonathan chose to support David. After the incident with Goliath, David continued to grow in fame. The chant in the camp of Saul was taunting as the people sang out the praises of David and demeaned King Saul, causing a raging jealousy in Saul that never subsided (1 Samuel 18:7–8).

Saul's jealousy of David turned murderous. He first tried to have David killed by the hand of the Philistines by asking David to become his son-in-law. The king offered his daughter in return for David's military service. David, in humility, refused, and Saul's daughter was given to another (1 Samuel 18:17-19). Saul's other daughter, Michal, was in love with David, so Saul asked again. David again refused due to his lack of wealth and inability to afford the bride price for the daughter of a king. Saul asked for a hundred Philistine foreskins, hoping David would be slaughtered by the enemy. When David killed two hundred Philistines, doubling the required payment, Saul realized he was outmatched, and his fear of David increased (1 Samuel 18:17-29). Jonathan and Michal warned David of their father's murderous intent, and David spent the next years of his life fleeing from the king. David wrote several songs during this time, including Psalms 57, 59, and 142.

Although Saul never stopped pursuing him with the intent to kill him, David never raised a hand against his king and God's anointed (1 Samuel 19:1-2; 24:5-7). When Saul eventually died, David mourned (2 Samuel 1). Even knowing that he was God's anointed, David did not force his way to the throne. He respected God's sovereignty and honored the authorities God had currently in place, trusting that God would fulfill His will in His timing.

While on the run, David raised up a mighty army and with power from God defeated everyone in his path, always asking God first for permission and instructions before going into battle, a practice he would continue as king (1 Samuel 23:2-6; 9-13; 2 Samuel 5:22-23). Once king, David remained a powerful military commander and soldier. 2 Samuel 23 recounts some of the exploits of David's so-called "mighty men." God honored and rewarded David's obedience and gave him success in everything he did (2 Samuel 8:6).

David began to take other wives. He married Abigail, a widow of Carmel, during the time he was fleeing from Saul (1 Samuel 25). David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel. Saul had given David's first wife, Michal, to another man (1 Samuel 25:43-44). After Saul's death David was publicly anointed king over the house of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4), and he then had to fight against the house of Saul before being anointed king over all of Israel at the age of thirty (2 Samuel 5:3-4). Now king, David took Michal back to be his wife again (2 Samuel 3:14). David also conquered Jerusalem, taking it from the Jebusites, and became more and more powerful because the Lord Almighty was with him (2 Samuel 5:7).

The Ark of the Covenant had been previously captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). Upon its return to Israel, the ark was housed at Kiriath Jearim (1 Samuel 7:1). David wanted to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. Three months later, David resumed the plan to bring the ark to Jerusalem. This time, he followed instructions. He also danced before the LORD with all his might (2 Samuel 6:14). When Michal saw David worshiping in that way, "she despised him in her heart" (2 Samuel 6:16). She asked David how he, as king, could have acted so undistinguished in front of his people. "David said to Michal, 'It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes'" (2 Samuel 6:21-22). David understood that true worship is intended for God alone.

After David was settled in his palace and had peace with his enemies, he wanted to build a temple for the Lord (2 Samuel 7:1-2). The prophet Nathan first told David to do as he wanted. But then God told Nathan that David would not be the one to build His temple. Instead, God promised to build a house for David. This promise included a prediction that Solomon would build the temple. But it also spoke of the coming Messiah, the Son of David who would reign forever (2 Samuel 7:4-17). David responded in humility and awe: "Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?". Before he died, David made preparations for the temple. God's reason for not allowing David to build the temple was that he

had shed so much blood, but David's son would be a man of peace and not a man of war. Solomon would build the temple (1 Chronicles 22).

Much of David's shedding of blood had been a result of war. But, in a sordid incident, David also had one of his mighty men killed. Though David was a man after God's own heart, he was also human and sinful, falling in love with Bathsheba who he married (2 Samuel 11). This incident in David's life shows us that everyone, even those we highly esteem, struggle with sin. It also serves as a cautionary tale about temptation and the way sin can so quickly multiply.

The prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin with Bathsheba. David responded in repentance. He wrote Psalm 51 at this time. Here we see David's humility and his true heart for the Lord. Though Nathan told David that his son would die as a result of his sin, David pleaded with the Lord for his son's life. David's relationship with God was such that he was willing to persist in faith and to hope that God might relent.

David is the author of many of the psalms. In them we see the way he sought after and glorified God. He is often thought of as a shepherd king and a warrior poet. Scripture calls him "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1). David's life seemed filled with the range of human emotions—a common shepherd boy with great confidence in God's faithfulness who honored authorities, fled for his life, and became the king against whom all future kings of Israel would be measured. He saw many military victories. He also fell into grave sin, and his family suffered as a result. But through it all David turned to God and trusted Him. Even in the Psalms when David is downcast or despondent, we see him lift his eyes up to his Maker and give Him praise. This reliance on God and continual pursuit of relationship with God is part of what makes David a man after God's own heart. God promised David a descendant to rule on the throne forever. That everlasting king is Jesus, the Messiah and Son of David.

Samuel: Samuel was dedicated to God by his mother, Hannah, as part of a vow she made before he was born (1 Samuel 1:11). Hannah had been barren and prayed so fervently for a child. God granted Hannah's request, and, true to her promise, Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord. After Samuel was weaned, he was brought to the tabernacle to serve under Eli the priest (1 Samuel 1:22–25). Even as a child, Samuel was given his own tunic, a garment normally reserved for a priest as he ministered before the Lord in the tent of meeting at Shiloh, where the ark of the covenant was kept (1 Samuel 2:18; 3:3). Traditionally, the sons of the priest would succeed their father's ministry; however, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked in that they were immoral and showed contempt for the Lord's offering (1 Samuel 2:17, 22). Meanwhile, Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men (1 Samuel 2:26).

At a time when prophecies and visions were rare, Samuel heard what he first believed to be Eli calling him during the night. Though the young Samuel was ministering in the tabernacle, he still didn't know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him (1 Samuel 3:7). The first three times the Lord called Samuel, the boy responded to Eli. Eli then understood what was happening and instructed Samuel to respond to the Lord if he called again. Then, "The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'speak, for your servant is listening'" (1 Samuel 3:10). God gave him a message of judgment to relay to Eli. The following day, Samuel took his first leap of faith, telling Eli everything, even though the message was bad news for Eli and his family (1 Samuel 3:11–18). Eli responded with acceptance. Samuel's credibility as a prophet spread throughout Israel, and God continued to reveal His Word to His people through Samuel (1 Samuel 3:20–21).

The elders of Israel told Samuel that because he was too old and his sons did not walk in his ways, they wanted Samuel to appoint a king to rule like other nations had (1 Samuel 8:1–5).

Samuel's initial reaction to their demand was one of great displeasure, and he prayed to God about the matter. God told Samuel that they had not rejected him, but had rejected God as their king. God gave Samuel leave to permit their request but warned the people what they could expect from a king (1 Samuel 8:6–21).

In time, Saul, a Benjamite, was anointed by Samuel as Israel's first king (1 Samuel 10:1). After a time, Samuel learned that Saul had been rejected by God to lead His people because of Saul's disobedience (1 Samuel 13:11–13). Samuel immediately warned Saul that God had already sought out a replacement for him (1 Samuel 13:14). After Saul continued to disobey, Samuel denounced him as king (1 Samuel 15:26). God instructed Samuel to choose another king from the family of Jesse (1 Samuel 16:1), and Samuel anointed Jesse's youngest son, David (1 Samuel 16:13). Samuel died before David was made king, though, and "all Israel assembled and mourned for him" (1 Samuel 25:1).

The life of Samuel was pivotal in Israel's history. He was a prophet, he anointed the first two kings of Israel, and he was the last in the line of Israel's judges, considered by many as the greatest judge (Acts 13:20). Samuel is cited alongside Moses and Aaron as men who called on God and were answered (Psalm 99:6).

There is much to learn from the life of Samuel. We can imagine how daunting it must have been for the young Samuel to give an honest account of his first vision to Eli. However, it appears that, even from a young age, Samuel's absolute allegiance was to God first.

Though Samuel had deep reservations about letting the people have a king, he was quick to consult God about the matter and abided by His decision (1 Samuel 8:6–7). Many of us may consult God about important decisions in our lives, but how many of us are ready to accept His counsel and abide by it, especially when it appears to go against our own desires? Leaders in particular can learn from Samuel's example of the power he derived from his close relationship with God, generated by a healthy prayer life. Samuel was a great man of prayer, and his people respected him for it (1 Samuel 12:19, 23). Even though Samuel was aware of the evil in Saul's life, he never stopped praying and mourning for him. God's plans for each individual will come to pass, but it should never stop us from continuing to pray and care for those who are weaker in their faith (Romans 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).

The main theme throughout Samuel's life is that God alone should receive the glory and honor. After making his sons judges, it must have been a very sad thing for Samuel to learn that they were unfit to lead. When he consulted God about the people's request for a king, nothing was said in defense of his sons. Samuel was obedient to God's instructions to give the people what they wanted. A key verse in the life of Samuel relates his words to King Saul: "But Samuel replied: 'Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams'" (1 Samuel 15:22). Obedience to God's Word must always be our top priority.

The above list of faith heroes is a cloud of witnesses whose faithfulness is a constant encouragement to us. We do not struggle alone. We are not the first to struggle with the problems we face. Others have run the race before us and won and their witness stirs us to run and win also. What an inspiring heritage we have. Our life involves hard work and it requires us to give up whatever endangers our relationship with God, to run patiently and to run against sin with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Leader and Perfecter of Faith: To live effectively, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. We will stumble if we turn away from him to look at ourselves or at the circumstances surrounding us. We should be running for Christ, not ourselves and we must always keep him in sight. When we face hardship and discouragement, it is easy to lose sight of the big picture. But

we are not alone. There is help. Many have already made it through life, enduring far more difficult circumstances than we experienced. Suffering is the training ground for Christian maturity. It develops our patience and makes our final victory sweet. Christ never gave up and He is the Victor. Christ is the originator of our faith in that He begins it as well as the captain and prince of our faith. He is the Way to God. Our faith is grounded in truth, being based on a historical Person whose acts were verified by eyewitnesses and recorded by four different biographers. Jesus is “the Life” (John 14:6); He is the source of life, and without Him one cannot truly live (John 1:4; 3:36; 5:24; 10:10). Jesus provides what we need: the Bread that satisfies forever (John 6:35), the Water that gives eternal life (John 4:14; 7:37-38), and the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). These are more than empty claims; Jesus proved His ability to give life by raising from the dead Lazarus (John 11), Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5), and the boy from Nain (Luke 7).

What is Faith? Faith isn't just a notion that some people hold onto in tough times; Faith is an important element to all human life on earth. Faith is what helps to get us through, illuminating the pathway in times of darkness, helping to give us strength in times of weakness. Without faith, we are nothing. Faith is essential to us. Without demonstrating faith and trust in God, we have no place with Him. We believe in God’s existence by faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God, because faith is the avenue by which we come to God and trust Him for our salvation. Faith is the atmosphere in which our life is lived. We are called “believers” because we are continually putting our faith, trust, and confidence in God. By faith our Christian life begins, and by faith it perseveres until the end.

The dangers of Moral relativism and Post modernism: Both Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI challenged the world in general and the church in particular to pay attention to a human tendency to fall into a moral relativism which teaches any moral choice is good according to one’s liberty and understanding, underestimating the definite moral norms. It is harder to say that this is right or wrong when many people of good will disagree on that issue, particularly in the area of moral decision-making. Postmodernism is a philosophy that does not believe in absolute truth, especially in matters of religion and spirituality. Postmodernism’s viewpoint is exemplified in the statement “that may be true for you, but not for me.” While such a response may be completely appropriate when discussing favorite foods or preferences toward art, such a mindset is dangerous when it is applied to faith.

Why is Faith so Important? Sometimes, when things don’t go according to plan, we lose faith, not only in ourselves, but also in any potential outcome in our lives. When we experience life’s monumental failures, it’s easy to lose hope and even faith. But what’s the difference? Faith goes beyond hope. While much of hope lives in the mind, faith is steeped in the heart and the spirit. While life can be hard at the best of times, faith is the knowledge, deep down inside, that things will get better. It’s taking the next step when we can’t see the entire staircase. Faith, then, is just as important as the air we breathe. While the oxygen in the air nourishes the body, faith nourishes the heart and the soul. It is the fundamental foundation of our existence. Simply put, the importance of faith cannot be underestimated.

Reasons to have faith: Faith isn’t just a notion that we hold onto in tough times; faith is an important element to all human life on earth. Life is precious, but it can also be remarkably difficult at times. Faith is what helps to get us through, illuminating the pathway in times of darkness, helping to give us strength in times of weakness. Without faith, we are nothing.

Faith in God gives us strength. When we say strength, we don’t mean a physical strength but an inner resolve to withstand turmoil. Faith in God gives us courage. Courage and strength aren’t the same things, even though they are often seen together. Courage is the ability to do what scares us, to act on our beliefs despite threats of danger, to show strength in face of grief or pain. Courage, like strength, comes directly from our faith in God.

Faith in God provides stability. We all want to persevere through the day without melting down or throwing a tantrum (despite how we feel at times). Faith in God is what allows us to experience stability in the middle of instability. When life feels out of control, we take comfort in knowing that God is in control. Faith makes us stronger even if we lose everything. Job loses everything that he had worked so hard to create over the years. His livestock, all his money, his family, his friends, and his health. However, even when his wife told him he should curse God, Job didn't. He remained faithful. Afterwards, God restored all of Job's worldly possessions, family, and health. To add to that, God multiplied what Job once had many times over. The moral of the story? Times might be bad and we can be easily tempted to give up but we should never lose faith.

Faith helps us to discover our purpose in life: Going through life and all of its ups and downs can take a toll on us. At times, it's enough to question our very existence. But through all of the trials and tribulations we might face, it's faith that gives us that helping hand. It works to guide us in the right direction, moving us towards and allowing us to discover our purpose in life. This doesn't happen overnight. Usually, when we're faced with a difficult situation, it gets harder before it gets better.

Faith trumps stress, anxiety, and fear: It's easy to allow stress, anxiety, and fear to run our lives. We go from moment to moment worried about one thing or another. Sometimes, those worries manifest themselves into highly-stressful situations, causing not only mental anguish, but physical problems as well. There's a clear and documented connection between stress and the increased likelihood of disease and illness. We must learn to harbor faith and use it to eliminate stress, anxiety, and fear. We should think back to situations in the past when we made it through something we thought was insurmountable. We believe and expect that good things will happen, and they will. This isn't about ignoring our problems; this is about knowing that our situation will improve deep down inside our heart and our soul.