

Life Group Notes 12/8/2024  
Pastor Mark Warren 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent Sunday--Hope

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[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at [tbeachhead@comcast.net](mailto:tbeachhead@comcast.net). Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

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Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent, 12/8. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On biblical hope, please take the time to read this note.](#)
2. [On Hebrews 1:3 and the root of all hope: a universe called into being by faith.](#)

**\*\*\*Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. \*\*\*

**Pastor Mark** opened his message contrasting the feelings different individuals feel toward the Holidays. It could be, "...the MOST wonderful time of the year," for some, he sang, "but it can also not feel that way. There is something about the holidays that can magnify the pain of our world." He said, "The goal of today's message is to offer you something that will allow you to enter into the Christmas message with a little more hope."

1. Did he?
2. How do you face the season?
3. What are the prospects for this season, this year?
4. What are you hoping for?

He continued, "Our world is very fractured. Our relationships are fractured. I know some of you are experiencing loss and separation, so the holidays can be a difficult time, and the season only magnifies the difficulties."

1. Comment.
2. Do you know any who are experiencing these difficulties?
3. Can you all take a moment to pray for each one, and for all that these holidays begin a season of hope and peace with joy.

Look up Proverbs 13: [12](#)*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.*

1. What do you see?
2. See the footnote on “hope” below. Is it true? How does your heart react when an earnest expectation is not met, but is deferred...or even disappointed?
3. Look closely at the second part of the verse: How do you feel when an Amazon package finally arrives at your door? How has Amazon served the world to communicate a biblical meaning of faith and hope?
4. (What do you KNOW about an Amazon package? How strong is your faith in Amazon? Explain in terms of Hebrews 11: [1](#)*Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see.* [2](#)*This is why the ancients were commended.*)
5. Explain where faith and hope meet.
6. How does the English expression, “I hope so,” differ from your expectation that the Amazon package will arrive?
7. What makes that place of a hope deferred a difficult, as Pastor Mark says?
8. Have you ever had an Amazon package that you “needed” not arrive? Describe the feelings.
9. How similar is that feeling to that of a hope deferred?
10. What happens when you enter into a contract, and the other end of the contract does not meet your expectations.
11. Pastor speaks of the anxious thoughts, the despair, the depression that comes when we don’t have hope. Do you have a testimony?
12. What pulls you out of such feelings?

Mark continues, “The ache of a deferred hope is truly painful. Some of you are saying, ‘I just want the holidays behind us.’ But now we’re going to turn to Jesus. He came to the earth as a baby and brought good news.”

Jesus came as the fulfillment of a promise, the fulfillment of hope for the generations that preceded Him.

1. What did He bring with Him?
2. What is the hope of our generations.

Examine closely John the Baptist’s father’s, Zecharia’s, prophecy that was spoken on the day of John’s birth in this light: [69](#)*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,* [70](#)*as He spoke through His holy prophets, those of ages past,* [71](#)*salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,* [72](#)*to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant,* [73](#)*the oath He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us* [74](#)*deliverance from hostile hands, that we may serve Him without fear,* [75](#)*in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives.*

1. What do you see?
2. What was the hope that had been promised beforehand? When was that promise first spoken?
3. What was the oath spoken to Abraham?
4. For how many generations was this hope deferred?
5. What is the New Promise made toward us?

6. Look at verse 75: what does it look like to serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives?
7. When does that promise take place? Before or after we die?
8. How are you doing? What do you have to look forward to?
9. How does focusing on Jesus and His coming become a new hope?

Pastor says, “Biblical hope is not wishful thinking, but a confident expectation grounded in God’s character and His promises.”

1. (See [footnote 1, below](#), if you haven’t already. You can look at [footnote 2](#) while you’re at it!) What is in the nature of God’s promise that inspires solid hope? What physical evidence do we have that God’s Promise does not disappoint?
2. Look at Hebrews
3. Do believers walk by what is seen? Or by what is not seen? Explain.
4. Have you ever walked by sight? Have you ever walked by faith? Do you have a testimony?

Look at Hebrews 1: *2But in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. 3The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature, upholding all things by the word of His power. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. 4So He became as far superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is excellent beyond theirs.* Compare this to what Paul tells the Colossians in chapter 1: *15The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16For in Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

*17He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

1. What do you see?
2. Think of John 1, how did God create the heavens and the earth? What was created without the agency of His Word?
3. How does Jesus hold all things together?
4. What does He not hold together? What is the reason for our hope?

Look at closely at the verse Pastor Mark turned to: Romans 15: *12And once more, Isaiah says: “The Root of Jesse will appear, One who will arise to rule over the Gentiles; in Him the Gentiles will put their hope.” 13Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. 14I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, brimming with knowledge, and able to instruct one another.*

1. What do you see?
2. What did Isaiah promise?
3. Was that hope deferred? For how long?
4. How does the longsuffering of the ancients encourage us to not lose hope?
5. What is Paul’s prayer? Pray it for all again.
6. Was this a “religious” prayer? Or did Paul fully expect an answer?
7. What does it look like to “abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit?” What expectations arise?
8. Look at Paul’s description in verse 14? Whom is he describing?
9. How are your goodness and knowledge doing? Are you brimming yet?
10. What are your earnest expectations? (Biblical translation: What is your hope?)

Describe the purpose Holy Spirit's presence. Look up John 16: **7**But I tell you the truth, it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. **8**And when He comes, He will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: **9**in regard to sin, because they do not believe in Me; **10**in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see Me; **11**and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world has been condemned.

1. What do you see? What is the good news in verse 11?
2. Who came when the Coming One was carried up? How are we advantaged?
3. Look again at what Paul said in Romans 15 above. How are we benefited?

Mark called us to look at Mark 5 to buttress this notion. Let's look: Mark 5: **24**So Jesus went with him, and a large crowd followed and pressed around Him. **25**And a woman was there who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. **26**She had borne much agony under the care of many physicians and had spent all she had, but to no avail. Instead, her condition had only grown worse. **27**When the woman heard about Jesus, she came up through the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak.**28**For she kept saying, "If only I touch His garments, I will be healed." **29**Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she sensed in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

1. Look at verse 28. What was her hope?
2. What was her situation? How long had she suffered? What was the personal cost?
3. What motivated her hope that it became her expectation?
4. What did she do in response to her hope?
5. What was the result?

Examine what Jesus told her: "**32**But He kept looking around to see who had done this. **33**Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him trembling in fear, and she told Him the whole truth. **34**"**Daughter,**" said Jesus, "**your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free of your affliction.**"

1. What healed the woman?
2. If she had stayed home, what would have been the result?
3. Does Jesus say He healed her? What does Jesus say healed her? Is this truth?
4. Look at Galatians 5: **5**But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the hope of righteousness. **6**For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. All that matters is faith, working through love. What is the hope Paul speaks of?
5. What is the source of all hope? Where are God's promises found?
6. What are the characteristics of hope revealed in the above verses?
7. Go back to Zacharia's prophecy in Luke 1 above. What was the hope that came with Christ's birth?
8. Why does Pastor Mark insist that it is not time to give up on hope?
9. What does Jesus call the woman who was healed? Why? How was Jesus related?
10. Look at what Jesus tells the crowd in Matthew 12: **49**Pointing to His disciples, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers. **50**For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." What was the Father's will concerning this woman?
11. How do you know that?
12. How was Jesus related to this woman?
13. What is the fruit of one woman's testimony, pursuing Jesus through her pain? (Think of what is happening today in your own discussions due to her pursuit. Whom are we talking about today.)
14. Does it help to know that God sees you, and calls even *you* sons and daughters?
15. Pause and pray Paul's prayer from Romans 15:13 above over each other.
16. Why is it so important that we not give up?

Pastor gives another, similar scriptural example. Look at the account of friends and a paralyzed individual: Mark 2:<sup>1</sup>A few days later Jesus went back to Capernaum. And when the people heard that He was home, <sup>2</sup>they gathered in such large numbers that there was no more room, not even outside the door, as Jesus spoke the word to them. <sup>3</sup>Then a paralytic was brought to Him, carried by four men. <sup>4</sup>Since they were unable to get to Jesus through the crowd, they uncovered the roof above Him, made an opening, and lowered the paralytic on his mat. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, *"Son, your sins are forgiven."* <sup>6</sup>But some of the scribes were sitting there and thinking in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>"Why does this man speak like this? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup>At once Jesus knew in His spirit that they were thinking this way within themselves. *"Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"* He asked. <sup>9</sup>*"Which is easier: to say to a paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk?'"* <sup>10</sup>But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, <sup>11</sup>*"I tell you, get up, pick up your mat, and go home."* <sup>12</sup>And immediately the man got up, picked up his mat, and walked out in front of them all. As a result, they were all astounded and glorified God, saying, *"We have never seen anything like this!"*

1. What do you see?
2. Why don't we know whose idea it was to bring the man in the first place?
3. What exactly did Jesus see in the friends of the man? How did He see their faith?
4. Did He see their faith by the hole in the roof? Or by their determined willingness to pursue Him, undaunted by mere obstacles like a crowd and a roof?
5. Why did no one counsel the paralytic to be content in his condition and stay home?
6. Why did no friend give up? How great were the risks they all took? List them.
7. (How easy is it to lift a 180 pound man to the roof of a ranch house?)
8. Which is easier for you to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or, "Rise, get out of your wheelchair and walk?"
9. When is it a good time to give up?
10. How does a hope deferred make people want to give up?
11. Compare the friends breaking through the roof with the friend using the GCCNH app on the phone to bring friends. Is that a good comparison? Explain.
12. Who has it easier, you and the app or the friends breaking through the roof? Explain.
13. Mark says, "Jesus honors persistent faith." What is persistent faith?
14. How is persistent faith manifested? Do you have a testimony?

Look up 2 Samuel 12:<sup>21</sup>*"What is this you have done?" his servants asked. "While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but when he died, you got up and ate."* <sup>22</sup>David answered, *"While the child was alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let him live.'* <sup>23</sup>*But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."* <sup>24</sup>Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. So she gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon.

1. Have you ever seen this passage before? Review the story. Why was the son sick?
2. To what extreme did David go in persistent prayer?
3. What had God told David before he began praying and fasting?
4. What was David's goal? Is it possible to change God's mind?
5. How long did David persist? When did David give up?
6. What did he do next? How is "going on with your life" also an act of faith?
7. What was the fruit? And what came from Solomon?

8. Why is it so easy to give up too soon? Is it too easy?

Mark says, "I want to encourage you that if you're trying to find satisfaction in love in all the wrong places, whether it's through goods or through people or through relationships, I want to remind us that hope is found in a relationship with Jesus. True living water is found in a relationship with Jesus."

1. Do you have a testimony? Take a moment to share/review.
2. What steps do you need to take to reach the hem of Jesus' garment?
3. Do you have friends that can take you through the roof? Or do you have a friend you can help down through the roof? What risks are at stake?

Look at this passage from Matthew 9:[11](#)*When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"* [12](#)*On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. [13](#)But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

1. Who should have more hope? Sinners or Pharisees?
2. Which are you? Do you need a doctor?
3. What does the doctor bring?
4. Look at verse 13: What is required of us, if we seek mercy?
5. Between the Pharisees and the sinners, which were pursuing Jesus?
6. Which has a secure place at Jesus' holiday table?

**Pastor Mark's practical ways to embrace hope at the holiday table:**

- ◆ **Anchor your heart in God's promises.** Remember God watches over His Word to perform it. Has He spoken and will it not come to pass? He holds the cosmos together by the Word of His Power. Look at Jeremiah 29: "[10](#)*When Babylon's seventy years are complete, I will attend to you and confirm My promise to restore you to this place. [11](#)For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope. [12](#)Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. [13](#)You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. [14](#)I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore you from captivity and gather you from all the nations and places to which I have banished you, declares the LORD. I will restore you to the place from which I sent you into exile."*

1. Look at the promise. What do you see?
2. How does the promise conflict with their current condition in exile?
3. How long do they have to wait?
4. What can they look forward to?
5. What does a hope and a future look like?
6. Who was included in that hope?
7. Look at verse 13. What is required for God to be found?
8. Review the promise in [Romans 15 above](#).
9. Review 2 Peter 1:[3](#)*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4](#)Through these He has given us His precious and magnificent promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, now that you have escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.* What do each of His promises give us? What does it mean to "partake of the divine nature?" What happens when you believe? How many promises are there? How long will it take you to discover each?
10. What does it take to pursue Jesus? List the steps you are seeing.
11. How does hope conquer despair? What is hope based on?

12. What changes when you cling to His promises rather than your memories? What rises to the surface? Do you have a testimony?
- ◆ **Pray with expectation.** How did David pray? How did the woman with the issue of blood pray? How did the four friends of the paralytic pray? Review Philippians 4: [6](#)*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [7](#)And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
  1. What do you see?
  2. Where does that anxiety come from?
  3. Why would your prayer be “with thanksgiving” before you get your answer?
  4. What is your prayer inspired by? What has God said? What has He promised?
  5. Look at verse 7. What is the promise borne of such a prayer?
  6. How do we know that this Christmas will be better than we expected?
  7. Look at Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:[16](#) *ask that out of the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, [17](#)so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18](#)will have power, together with all the saints, to comprehend the length and width and height and depth [19](#)of the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. [20](#)Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, [21](#)to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*
    - a. What do you see? For whom is Paul praying?
    - b. Is Paul praying expecting an answer? What is his hope for you and me?
    - c. What does an answer to this prayer look like in your life?
    - d. What are God’s limits, according to this prayer?
    - e. Where is God’s power at work?
    - f. Do you hope to see this prayer answered in your own life? How often have you prayed this prayer?
    - g. Take a moment to pray this prayer for your group...and for your family.
  8. Do you still know how to skip?
- ◆ **Reflect on God’s faithfulness.** Pastor emphasizes again, “It is the very nature of Jesus to bring restoration and healing into relationships and into your life.” Go back over these notes, and highlight where each person mentioned was reacting to what they knew of God’s faithfulness.
- ◆ **Be a source of hope for others.** This is called “living it out.”
  1. Think about what people see when you walk into a room. What is the corresponding environment shift?
  2. He spoke of the hope offered to a nursing home by the young adults of GCC who went and sang Christmas carols. What would be the impact? Do you have a testimony?
  3. Pastor says, “When you’re a source of hope for others, there is a lot of reciprocity.” Do you have a Bible verse to back this statement up? What happens when you give?
  4. Check out what Paul tells the Romans in 5: Romans 5:[3](#) *Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;*

*4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.*

- a. What is hope borne of? Explain. How does it come from our sufferings?
- b. What happens when we endure hardships? How does experience buttress hope?
- c. How do hope and love work together here?
- d. Once you've endured, what do you have to give to others who have not yet endured?

◆ **Celebrate Jesus, the ultimate gift.** Recognize what Jesus endured for your sake.

1. What did the fulfillment of all promises begin with?
2. A birth where? When?
3. Are we talking history? Or just religion?
4. Why does history matter? Is Jesus' birth a matter of opinion or historic, demonstrable fact?
5. How does Jesus become the greatest gift of all? What does He bring with Him?
6. Look at what Paul said to the Philippians in chapter 3: *10I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to Him in His death, 11and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.* What is Paul's ultimate goal here?
7. How well can we know Him? What is there to celebrate as we get to know Him?
8. Look closely: What else do you know when you know Him?
9. If you have fellowship with His sufferings, what do you have also that you can give away to others?
10. What happens to your own endurance?

Pastor ended by returning to Proverbs 13 one more time: *12Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.*

1. What do you see this time? For how long was the hope deferred? What happened to the world itself, as time wore on?
2. How did the Pharisees cope with that hope deferred? Did religion work?
3. Describe the tree of life that Jesus opened up to us all?
4. Look at what Proverbs 4 says: *20My son, pay attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. 21Do not lose sight of them; keep them within your heart. 22For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.* How does the Word Himself become the Tree of Life for?
5. Look at these verses from Psalm 107: *19Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress. 20He sent forth His word and healed them; He rescued them from the Pit. 21Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness and His wonders to the sons of men.* What happens when the Word comes?
6. Look at verse 21. How does Paul echo that verse in his exhortation to the [Philippians above](#)? Without thanksgiving, how easy is it to forget His lovingkindness and His devotion to us?



7. Pastor raises this very important point: When Adam and Eve sinned, they were turned away from the Tree of Life. How was hope deliberately deferred due to Man's sin?
8. He points out, "Man was trying to be like God..." by eating from the wrong tree, so he hid himself. Why didn't that work out?
9. What was the purpose of that hope deferred?
10. If godlikeness is only achieved by imitating God, what is required for godlikeness?
11. Can you imitate someone you do not know?
12. Pastor says, "That tree of life," is this relationship that Jesus wants with us. Explain.
13. What has Jesus restored, along with hope? What do we now have access to?
14. How does Jesus become the fulfillment of all our desire, and the cure for hopelessness?
15. What does it mean to put Jesus at the center of our life?
16. Read the promise Jesus made to the Ephesian overcomers in Revelation 2: *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to eat from the tree of life in the Paradise of God.* What do you see?
17. Explain how the relationship restores the hope. What does the overcomer in the above verse overcome?

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### **The Follow-up Application**

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Note what steps you need to take right away in your pursuit of Jesus.
3. Note what friends you have that need you to get them to the rooftop. What will it take to get them to the rooftop safely and to dare to take the risk?
4. Go through Mark's steps. Write down those moments where God has been faithful in your life.

### **Take the time to pray.**

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#### **Scribe's Notes:**

1. **On biblical hope**—If you're seeking a biblical understanding of hope, the English word "hope" is misleading. "Is he coming?" we ask. If the answer to that question is, "I hope so..." it actually means "maybe, but probably not." To approach a biblical understanding of the principle, you must know that this is not the meaning of Greek noun ἐλπίς (*elpis*), hope, or the corresponding verb, ἐλπίζω (*elpizo*), to hope. The Greek verb is much more akin to the Spanish verb *esperar*, which means "to await with the knowledge of imminent arrival" than it is to the English verb "to hope." If, in Spanish, when you ask, "Is he coming?" and the response is, "Lo espero," this should not be translated, "I hope so." The better translation by far is, "I'm waiting for him." Hence, Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen," might be even better translated, "Faith is the strength and the foundation of our hope, it is the [only] proof we need to enable us to expect those things we do not see." And faith relies not on feeling, but on prior knowledge of a sure promise. Paul makes this clear

throughout his writings. Look at Romans 5:3 *Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.* Hope is the quality of willingness that drives us to endure hardship without flinching.

2. **On Hebrews 11:3 and the root of all hope: a universe called into being by faith**—Hebrews 1:3 says, *“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”* The first words, “by faith,” begin a recounting of the impact of the faith of heroes on those heroes and on their surroundings. Greek syntax allows “by faith,” the emphasis of this chapter, to be placed first in the context of this sentence. We must understand that the initial believer is not “us/we” in verse 3. Our understanding is not a heroic act of faith. God is the first to speak, the first to believe, and the first to expect that what He declares shall also come to pass. Paul explained this to the Romans as well, in chapter 4, where he says, *“17As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the presence of God, in whom he believed, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not yet exist.”* The key to faith is this: We walk by faith and **not** by sight, because what is visible is temporal. What is invisible is eternal. When God Who foresees all explains to us what we should see, we become an imitation of Abraham when we take Him at His word and begin to foresee. Hence, we allow His word to instruct our expectations. And Abraham became an effective imitation of God and father to us all who have learned to believe as he did.

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**For further study:**

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Hebrews 11:1-2
Tuesday: Hebrews 11:3-4
Wednesday: Luke 1:69-75
Thursday: Romans 5:3-5
Friday: Colossians 1:16-20
Saturday: Hebrews 1:2-4
Sunday: Galatians 5:5-6

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.