

Series Based Bible Study



Vineyard Columbus

January 2019

The Challenge of Change

A Vineyard Columbus Small Group Study Series

Series Description

You have probably heard it said that the only thing that is constant in life is change. But what do you do when one season ends and another one begins? Life changes can be stressful and challenging because we do not know what comes next. So, how do you navigate life's biggest transitions? And how do we as a church navigate changes in our church life together. Join us for this four week series as we look at navigating change in your life and in our lives collectively as a church.

At Vineyard Columbus, we encourage your group to use this study as one component of your time together. We truly believe that disciples of Jesus will mature best when they engage in corporate worship, prayer ministry, practicing the prophetic, studying the Bible, serving our neighbors, community, church, and fellowshiping together. This study only covers one of those aspects, the Bible.



Suggestions and ideas will be posited to aid the leader regarding the other areas. We pray this will be helpful to your group as you explore “The Challenge of Change”.

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How to use this Study Series

Leaders are encouraged to briefly look over all studies before you teach or hand them out to alternative teachers within the group. ***There is a summary of Ministry Ideas from the entire series in the back. The ministry ideas are meant to build upon each other whenever possible and some ideas will take longer planning than others. Reading the full arch of Ministry Ideas before you start the series as a small group may provide a much richer and fuller experience.***

Having all studies provided at the start of a sermon series will give leaders the opportunity to give studies to potential teachers or co-leaders weeks ahead of time. Our prayer is that many more disciples of Jesus will feel comfortable sharing and leading others in discussion during small group. If you have any questions, please email us at: smallgroups@vineyardcolumbus.org

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Week 1



The Call to Change

Hebrews II:1-40 (focus on 8-10)

Tips: These questions are meant to get the group thinking and spark discussion, so don't rush through them or attempt to get a solid answer for each one. Don't be afraid to wait for a while to see who speaks, and remember, there are no wrong opinions.

Before the Lesson:

The author of the letter to the Hebrews in and around Jerusalem is unknown. There are several options that would make sense based on the timing and recipients. Many think Paul or Barnabas to be viable options. Others propose Apollos, Pricilla, or Aquilla. Paul is the least likely candidate for two reasons. First, the author of Hebrews reveals that they heard the gospel second hand (Hebrews 2:3) and Paul insists he heard the gospel directly from Jesus (Galatians 1:11-12). Second, Paul's usage of Greek is well documented (see most of the New Testament) and does not match the style used in Hebrews. Whether it be any of these or none of these possible authors, the letter to the Hebrews is unparalleled in its content and style. The author was

Bible Verses: Hebrews 11:1-40
Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. 7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith. 8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob

masterful in the use of the Greek language and demonstrates a rich understanding of the Hebrew Bible. Why is this pertinent? We know that a large number of priests in Jerusalem had converted to Christianity around this time (Acts 6:7). Many of these highly educated, often wealthy and established, converts were beginning to lose their possessions, rights, and status because of increased persecution. In other words, these elites were being stripped of worldly goods/comforts and facing brutality and eventually death. What would comfort these Jewish converts? Heroes of Judaism who exercised faith in trying circumstances!

Starting the Lesson:

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is not simply a list of heroes in Judaism. It is written to comfort a sect of converts to Christianity who needed encouragement from something familiar. The wealthy believers were being stripped of possessions, position, and were being physically assaulted for following Jesus. The poor and disenfranchised who followed Jesus were used to having nothing. Jesus' message to them was that wealth and favor would ultimately come! The wealthy were faced with a different challenge: The comforts of life being stripped away, being asked to risk what you hold dear, and believing that the loss you temporarily experience won't compare to your ultimate reward, is what God has always required of his people. The list begins with Abel (11:4) and concludes with the letter's recipients (11:40). In this way, the author links the audience to God's work and expectations all the way back to the first family of scripture. Eugene Peterson translates the final verse of the chapter this way, "God had a better plan for us: that

who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours." The first readers were not simply being told, "Be like these faithful people." They were told, "The saints of old are connected to you by the very same faith. You are adding to and completing their story."

Starter Questions:

Could someone tell a story of when you really felt like you belonged? Maybe also share a story of when you didn't feel at all like you belonged at all. What made you feel like you belonged or what were the tells that made you feel disconnected?

Have you ever stepped out to do something no one in your family ever did? Maybe you were the first to go to a four year college or the first to start a business. Maybe you are the first Christian in your family or you may be the first in your family to go into the armed forces or the first to not go, etc. Why did you choose to step away from the pattern? What was hard about it?

Opening Prayer:

Ask God to bless each person who has come to group. Pray blessing over any who might be absent. Ask that God would be gracious to guide and call each person toward adding to God's kingdom.

Scripture Reading:

The passage we'll be covering is the entire chapter of Hebrews 11, but we'll circle back on Abraham. Could a few people read our passage?

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones. 23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

(Depending on the willingness of the members of the group to read aloud, you may want to call on two or three readers. Remember to thank them for reading!)

Discussion Questions:

Effectively we just traveled through the entire Old Testament! This chapter not only offers witness to who has been faithful to God, but it also helps shape our definition of faith.

- What is the explicit definition of faith given in this chapter?
 - Verse 1: Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
- What is your definition of "hope"?
 - There is room and nuance to almost any word. Here, the word in Greek is ἐλπίζω (elpidzo). This word typically means to "expect with a pleasurable outcome in the future." The word for "assurance" is nearly a legal term meaning "convict" or "proof" that leads to a correction (reproof).

So, the author is saying something like this: Faith is - being concretely sure of a positive outcome and convinced about things that we may never witness personally. As we'll see, faith is something that demands action or a posture to prove it's worth. The saints listed did not see what many who read this letter DID see. That is the coming salvation in the person of Jesus. Despite having seen Jesus raised from the dead (as many in Jerusalem had or personally knew people who had)

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. 32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

there is still hope yet to be realized. This is the backdrop and overarching message. Now we'll spend the next few weeks unpacking what it looks like to be counted among such saints. In other words, the examples listed give varying scenarios and situations by which faith is practiced. Here is how the winners, win. Even when winning looks like losing - it isn't. Who can re-read verses 8-10? (Be sure and thank them for reading.)

- Does anyone remember the story of how Abraham was called by God?
 - Allow people to answer, but have Genesis 11:27-32, 12:1-5 as a reference if you'd like clarity.
- What is it about Abraham's call that is inspiring? What is it about Abraham's call that is surprising?
 - allow for various answers
- What are some things one may expect when they receive a call from God to "go" or "do" something?
 - allow principles from Abraham's story to guide. It may be unusual. It may be scary. It may be unknown. It may require hard work. You may have to take care of people along the way. You may not exactly know where you are going. You may not have the full picture that God has, etc.

The key word in verse 8 is "obeyed." The word in Greek is not fancy. It is a compound word that means "to hear under" or "to attentively listen" and generally means to conform accordingly. The idea behind this is that

obedience is something that requires a listening ear. One cannot hear the call of God if one never listens for it.

- Have you ever sat and listened for a call from God?
 - allow for various answers. This is a good opportunity for you to share first if possible.
- Are there regular postures you know to practice in order to “tune” your ears to hear God’s voice if he should call?
 - Accept and encourage answers from everyone if possible!

If obedience is the key to verse 8, then we may want to examine the conditions by which Abraham obeyed. He had not been told that he or his offspring would inherit the land until they actually arrived. Even when he reached the promised land where he would father the promised people, Abraham did not settle down and establish his throne as king. Instead, he was a wondering tent traveler or what we’d call a journeyman. While this was certainly practically wise due to their small numbers in a volatile land, it also indicates he was continually looking to God to make provision.

- When we step out in faith, perhaps even following a call from God, what does it look like to continually look to God for provision? How can we ensure we stay dependent on God, practically speaking?
 - One way is to be generous with time and finances toward others. This does not mean we ignore what is wise (see Abraham’s practical reasons for not settling down in

Canaan). It simply means we do not hoard or stockpile our time and money. Jesus teaches this regarding money in Luke 12:16-21. If one spends all their time acquiring money or spending time on their own interests, then the result is the same. They will have missed the opportunity to be dependent on God. Loving ones family well, serving the body of Christ, being generous toward the kingdom of God are ways we “stay in our tents and look for a more permanent home built by God.”

- Faith is a noun in this chapter, but is expressed through lots of verbs. Going. Obeying. Making. Looking forward. What are some verbs that you can recite explaining how you responded to God recently?
 - allow for various answers.
- Faith is also a gift! God can give it, increase it, and bless it. There is certainly the gift of belief regarding salvation. But the usage we’re getting at here has more to do with acting because of this fact. Have you ever prayed for or asked for the gift of faith? What was the result in you or the other person?
 - allow for various answers.

The most obvious thing is one that we have not mentioned yet. When God calls, there is inevitably going to be change! Change, transformation, revolution, adventure, perseverance are all to be expected. Change isn’t bad. Change is unnerving and sometimes scary. Change is unfamiliar. Despite these things, God calls us

and the result is always change. Change of mind, body, soul, situation, etc. One way we can check to see if we are being faithful, exercising faith, and having the same faith that completes the saints, is to notice if we've changed much in our lives or circumstances. In this way, we can all celebrate God's call to change.

Ministry Time Application:

Based on the people and overall feel of your group, select which option you feel fits best.

Option 1:

Go around the group and ask if people would like to share about upcoming change. Do they think it is God call them toward this? If so, have the group pray favor over that person. If not, have the group pray favor over that person! Move on to the next person.

Option 2:

Practice hearing the call of God by spending 5 full minutes in silences as a group (set a timer for help). Start with a simple prayer like: Holy Spirit, we want to be like Abraham and hear your call. Even if it brings about great change in our lives and circumstances. Speak, your people are listening.

After the five minutes, ask if anyone got anything or heard/got an impression of a call from God. Ask God to bless this as a group over whoever shares. If no one has anything, simply pair up and pray that God would be clear in the future of the call he is making. We trust that he will!

Week 2



The Cost of Change

Hebrews 11:1-40 (focus on 24-27)

Tips: These questions are meant to get the group thinking and spark discussion, so don't rush through them or attempt to get a solid answer for each one. Don't be afraid to wait for a while to see who speaks, and remember, there are no wrong opinions.

Before the Lesson:

Chapter 11 of Hebrews is a famous passage on the topic of faith, often referred to as the “Hall of Faith” for its list of people from the Old Testament who demonstrated what it meant to be a person of strong faith. In today's lesson, we'll be discussing the life of Moses, one of the most famous men in scripture, and included on this prestigious list. This particular portion of Hebrews presumes that the readers are familiar with the story of Moses: his birth and adoption, abandoning his Egyptian position to serve Israel, the plagues brought to Egypt, the escape across the Red Sea. You may want to skim through the book of Exodus to re-

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familiarize yourself with Moses' life story before the lesson.

Starting the Lesson:

Change can be scary — especially when we know that the changes are going to cost us something. The life of Moses shows us that when faced with challenges that have the potential to turn our lives completely upside-down, having bold faith can help us to persevere through the change, even when it is hard, painful, or uncomfortable.

Starter Questions:

Have you ever bought anything from the classifieds (or Craigslist or eBay) "sight unseen"? If so, what were your expectations, and were they met? If not, what held you back?

How well do you deal with instant versus delayed gratification? Do you struggle with wanting to see results instantly or are you more of the patient type who can handle waiting?

Opening Prayer:

In today's prayer, thank God for being present with us during the changes in our lives, even when it's hard to see him. Ask him to help us live with a bold faith in the face of challenges.

Scripture Reading:

(Have someone read Hebrews 1:1-40) Could someone read our passage?

(Depending on the willingness of the members of the group to read aloud, you may want to call on several

who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

readers. Remember to thank them for reading!) That was great, now could we focus in on a particular set of verses? Can someone re-read verses 24-27?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the life of Moses? As a group, let's talk through all the events you remember about his life story.
 - This will include a wide range of answers, but be sure that Moses' choice to leave Egyptian royalty to be with the Israelites is mentioned.
- Good stuff. In the verses we focused on (verses 24-27) there are 5 verbs (action words) that describe what Moses did by faith. What are they?
 - Refused, chose, regarded, left, persevered.
- In v. 24 we see the first one: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of the Pharaoh's daughter." What would Moses have gained by being known as the son of the Pharaoh's daughter?
 - Fame, wealth, prestige, etc.
- What would this choice cost him?
 - The comforts and benefits of being an Egyptian royal.
- Why do you think this decision took faith?
 - Because it would require looking past the immediate benefits of his position and instead to the big-picture benefits of having faith in and obeying God.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones. 23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

- The second action, in v. 25, says that Moses **CHOSE** to be mistreated. Have you ever experienced a time when you chose to suffer for the right thing instead of taking the easy way out? How did this challenge you? Do you believe it was worth it?
 - Allow for people to answer. (This is a great opportunity for the leader to show vulnerability and answer first. Then wait for others to answer. Even if you have to wait a full 30 seconds!)
- What is the third thing Moses did by faith, in v. 26?
 - He **REGARDED** disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt.

Based on historical timelines, the towering pyramids of Egypt had already been built by the time the Israelites had become enslaved and Moses was sent to rescue them. And while scholars don't know for sure which Egyptian king was in power during the exodus — none are identified by name in the scriptures — one of the contenders was Akhenaten, who would have been succeeded by Tutankhamen, the famous King Tut himself.

The discovery of King Tut's untouched tomb in 1922 by archaeologist Howard Carter showed us the opulence of this era in Egypt. You've likely seen photos of the golden artifacts from the tomb discovery or observed ancient Egyptian relics in an art or history museum. With all of those items in mind, close your eyes for a moment and imagine the Egypt Moses must have known: a palace full of lavish golden decorations, a powerful and prosperous

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. 32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

kingdom, beautiful monuments like the soaring pyramids.

- But according to the author of Hebrews, Moses regarded something else as greater than all of the priceless treasures he had grown up with in Egypt. What was it?
 - Disgrace for the sake of Christ. Remember, Christ means “Messiah/Deliverer” to the Jewish ear. It isn’t Jesus’ last name! God was Moses’ Deliverer temporarily in Exodus and eternally in the gospels.
- Why does this verse say he believed this?
 - Because he was looking ahead to his reward.
- What is the fourth thing Moses did by faith, according to v. 27?
 - He left Egypt for the desert.
- For Moses, it was worth the cost of losing everything his connections to Egypt had to offer in order to gain the promise of God’s kingdom. How do you think you would react if asked to give up all your comfort and wealth — your home, your job, your social standing, etc. — to forward the kingdom of God?
 - Allow for various answers.
- This was a bold decision on Moses’ part, to leave behind the comfortable position as the son of a pharaoh’s daughter and instead become a leader of a rag-tag group of slaves. But what did Moses do, according to the second half of v. 27?

- He persevered.
- What helped him to persevere?
 - It says he saw him who was invisible. This is exactly the same challenge we face! Lots of times we think that it was easier for Moses and some old testament saints because of signs and wonders they witnessed. The truth is, we see signs and wonders today! Moses still had to persevere with the same faith we do. See who is unseen.
- Going back to verses 1-2, specifically how does Moses exemplify this definition of faith? Can you think of someone you personally know who has had this kind of faith recently?
 - allow for various answers
- It can be hard to persevere in the face of change, especially when it requires so much personal cost. What are some ways you can practice having more reliance on the “one who is invisible” when you find yourself in the midst of costly change?
 - allow for various answers.

It’s tempting to look at this story and think, “Sure, it was easy for Moses to do the right thing when faced with change this costly — he’s MOSES!” But the greater story being told by the author of Hebrews in this list of greats is that they’re all just people, like us, who did great things because they had faith. Moses may have been a revered leader with an elite childhood, but he was also born a simple Hebrew baby (Exodus 2) and wasn’t great at public speaking (Ex. 4:10). All of the people

listed in this chapter, from Noah to Jacob to Rahab, had messy lives but practiced faith in an invisible God.

“These are “heroes” not because they are perfect, but because they worked with God in his perfect work,” says George Guthrie in his commentary on Hebrews 11.

This means that, we, too — imperfect as we are — are able to be people of great faith. It takes boldness, and being prepared to let the knowledge that God’s kingdom and ways are best cost us something.

Ministry Time Application:

Based on the people and overall feel of your group, select which option you feel fits best.

Option 1:

Having great faith isn’t relegated to the giants of the Old Testament, as listed in Hebrews 11, or even the saints found in the New Testament — all it takes is real people with real faith. Who are some people your group knows, from your friends or families or your church, that you would induct into your own Hall of Faith? Create a list of names and reasons. After making your list, assign each person to a group member and ask them to pray for them over the next week, and to consider writing them a short note to encourage them in their faith.

Option 2:

The 1998 award-winning animated film *The Prince of Egypt* tells the story of Moses, from his birth through the Hebrew people’s escape across the Red Sea. (Cue up the song with lyrics from YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqqEgvgExo8>)

Lyrics (and translation of the Hebrew portion can be found at: genius.com/9308613)

Do you feel this portrayal of Moses shows his faithfulness? Why or why not?

Which lyrics in the song spoke to you the most?

The chorus claims “There can be miracles when you believe. Though hope is frail it's hard to kill” — how do you see this aligning with the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1?

After discussing the clip and song as a group, split off into pairs or small groups and share with one another the parts of your lives where it feels like your prayers are in vain or that no one is listening. Pray for one another with encouragement to approach those situations with faith and hope, and to remember that, as the song says, “there can be miracles when you believe.”

Week 3



The Commitment of Change

Hebrews 11:30 (and various verses from the book of Joshua)

Tips: These questions are meant to get the group thinking and spark discussion, so don't rush through them or attempt to get a solid answer for each one. Don't be afraid to wait for a while to see who speaks, and remember, there are no wrong opinions.

Before the Lesson:

This lesson is prompted by one central verse found in Hebrews 11:30, "By faith the wall of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days." But, it should be clear that this verse presupposes that the hearers will be familiar with the story of God handing Jericho over to Israel from the first six chapters of the book of Joshua. Therefore, we have referenced several brief passages from Joshua throughout the lesson to teach or remind your group about how Israel's faith (and faithfulness) led to Jericho's walls toppling.

Also, you may want to consider that a study of the book of Joshua raises some difficult questions about God and God's role in war or even genocide; especially in light of Jesus' commandments to love, pray for, and seek peace

Bible Verses: Hebrews 11:1-40
Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. 5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. 7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith. 8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob

with our enemies. This tension has existed throughout the history of our faith. In fact, how Christians should interpret God's role in the book of Judges was one of the major points of distinction between two early Christian schools of thought (Alexandria and Antioch). Faithful Christians disagree about God's relationship with war, and modern theologians continue to dialogue about this tension. Which is to say, if someone in your group is uncomfortable with the idea that God would direct Israel to commit genocide against the Canaanites, they aren't alone.

Vineyard doctrine does not require congregants nor staff to adhere to one view or the other. The reason faithful Christians hold different views is because both views have thoughtful approaches to these texts and ideas surrounding them despite coming to different conclusions. We hold these texts very seriously and choose to remain open as a church community to ongoing wrestling, prayer, and charity toward one another.

This lesson is not going to attempt to answer these difficult questions, because they are ultimately outside of the central concern of the text in Hebrews. The focus of this lesson is that faith and faithfulness resulted in the Israelites being given Jericho in an unlikely way. You may want to consider ahead of the lesson how you would like to respond to questions about God and violence if they are asked. Remember, discipleship is a lifelong process, and there will be other times and studies where these questions can be addressed directly.

Starting the Lesson:

who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore. 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

It’s been said that one of the only constants in life is change. The world spins, the waters run, and every path bends at some point. And even though we know to anticipate change, it is often stressful and challenging. In this series, “The Challenge of Change”, we will be looking to Hebrews chapter 11 for wisdom on how we navigate change well, and specifically, what role faith plays in those seasons. We will witness how the faith of Israel, led by Joshua, resulted in God’s gift of the promised land.

Starter Questions:

Have you ever been inspired by someone who did something in an unconventional way?

How was their way different than the average, and why did you find that intriguing?

(Consider examples like seeing someone write their signature a certain way, or wearing an article of clothing differently, or even texting using particular characters).

In this lesson, we are going to read about how an unconventional plan resulted in the toppling of an enemy army’s walls. And how Israel’s faith led them to be obedient, even when God’s instructions seem bizarre. But first, let’s pray.

Opening Prayer:

Thank God for those in your small group, and that he is worthy of our trust and our discipleship. Invite the Holy Spirit to stir in the hearts and minds of the group as they read about Joshua, and ask that God will gift us with wisdom to navigate change and transition.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones. 23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

Scripture Reading:

Have someone in your group read Hebrews 11:1-40. Remember to thank them for reading. Then have one person re-read 11:30.

(If possible, have two separate people read the passages. The verses are provided for you in the left hand margin of this study as well. Remember to thank the readers.)

Discussion Questions:

- What do you remember about the story of Israel seizing Jericho? Can someone provide a brief summary of the story?
 - If your group (or someone in your group) is familiar with the story, this question will offer them a chance to summarize the story. If no one offers to answer, or if you would like to provide the summary, here are some important points to remember:
 - i. Moses had recently died and God designated Joshua as leader in Moses' place.
 - ii. God had promised Israel a land of their own after he freed them from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 23:31)
 - iii. God instructed Joshua to send armed men and priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant around the walls of Jericho for seven days. On the seventh day they were to march around the walls seven times and then yell out. At that point, Jericho would be given to them.
 - iv. Israel did as they were instructed and Jericho's walls fell.
 - v. They were instructed not to keep any of the spoils of war, but everything

31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. 32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

they captured would be given to the God's treasury.
vi. Joshua pronounces a curse over anyone who would attempt to rebuild Jericho. (Jos 6:26)

- How do you imagine you would respond to God if he had directed you to send priests and soldiers to march around an enemy's city for seven days? What questions would you have for God?
 - Receive all answers. Some in the group may express that they would be willing to do whatever God commands because he is in charge. Others might express that they would struggle to believe that they had understood God correctly, or might fear that such orders would make them vulnerable to Jericho's attacks. You might even bring up the point that this obedience likely put Israel in a dangerous position.

Let's turn to the book of Joshua together and investigate how faith played a role in this story. (Have someone read Joshua 1:1-6)

- How did Joshua become the leader Israelites?
 - Joshua, having been a servant to Moses, was instructed by God to take on the mission God had begun with Moses. (v.2)
- What promises does God make to Joshua?
 - "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses." "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you."

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. 5 No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

Joshua 3:7-8, 17

3:7 And the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. 8 Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.'" ...

17 The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground

This passage has something important to tell us about how God works in our world. On the one hand, the change of leadership from Moses to Joshua was a significant one. In fact, the book of Deuteronomy closes with a eulogy to Moses that says, "Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face [...], For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel." (Deut 34:10-12) Moses had enormous sandals to fill! And Joshua, even though he was appointed by God, did not have the relationship with Israel that Moses did. He hadn't delivered them from Egypt, and he hadn't acted as their high priest, nor had Joshua given them their laws.

- Have you ever been in a position to follow in someone else's footsteps; where you had to take over a project or job from someone else? What were some of the expectations that came with that transition? Did you enjoy the transition, or was it difficult?
 - Allow all answers. This is an opportunity for your group to empathize with how difficult it might have been for Joshua to try to take over after the larger-than-life Moses.
- What fears might the Israelites have had when Moses, their first chief, had died and been replaced by Joshua?
 - Take time to consider how Israel must have felt now that their first leader was dead and their future now largely rested in the fate of this new leader.

Whatever concerns Israel had about Joshua taking over the mantle from Moses, the text makes it clear that God's mission would persist, just as it was promised years ago. Even though they had a completely different person as their leader, Israel's true king remained the same through the transition.

- How can this passage help us think about the changes we experience in our lives in relation to God's ongoing mission?
 - That God's mission—namely to reconcile and heal the world, and to bring the Kingdom to earth—remains constant through our transitions. But, the particulars of how that is done may look differently from person to person and generation to generation. This is illustrated in the metaphor of the body Paul uses—that we are different but are all part of one body of whom God is the head. We should be relieved of fear and anxiety as things change because God makes good on his promises.

God was still with Israel. And Israel seemed to accept Joshua as their new chief. By the end of chapter one they are giving an oath of allegiance to Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you." Irony aside (they most certainly did not fully obey Moses! Heb 3:7-12), the Israelites agreed to submit to Joshua's leadership. But it seems God wanted to be sure it was clear that Joshua would be continuing on the same mission.

Read Joshua 3:7-8, 17.

- What is the symbolic significance of the waters of the Jordan being parted under Joshua's leadership?
 - This event echoes Moses parting the Red Sea and leading Israel to safety from the hands of their slavers, the Egyptians. Before they went to march around their enemy, God reminded them of his presence, protection, and abilities. And he affirmed that he would be with them in this time of Joshua's leadership just as he was with Moses.
- How does God use repetition as a way of building up our faith?
 - Think of how baptism is a regular reminder of the washing away of our sins and how we are unified with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Or how communion reminds us that Jesus made a covenant with his disciples, that has existed throughout the centuries. Or think about how the stories of God's faithfulness, healing, and deliverance in the Bible and from those around us have increased our faith that God is good and trustworthy.

One of the most interesting parts of this story occurs in Joshua 5:13-15. Joshua nears Jericho and he sees a man standing with a sword drawn. Joshua asks "Are you for us or our enemies?" and the stranger replies "Neither," "but as a commander of the army of the LORD I have now

come.” It seems that the Lord wanted to make it clear to Joshua that Joshua and the Israelites were supposed to follow God’s lead, and not demand that God do their bidding

- What are some ways we might be tempted to demand God be on our side or in service to us, instead of us being obedient to God’s will?
 - Perhaps we desire and pray for something that will benefit us in the immediate future without being concerned with the long term. Or perhaps we do not consider what our desires might cost someone else. We are more at risk of this when we do not invite the Lord’s will to be done in our lives, and when we do not take the time to listen and meditate on what the Lord wants. If we are not devoting time to asking God “What do you want to be done?” then we are not as likely to hear the answer.
- What are some practices we can employ to help us surrender to God’s will instead of asking him to submit to our will?
 - Many answers will apply. Some examples might be: We can spend time prayerfully inviting God to direct us in our ways of living. We can study the Bible to know the character of Jesus and the expectations God has of his disciples. We can aspire to justice, unity, and

peacemaking, and be willing to make individual sacrifices for the good of others. We can regularly confess and repent of our sins so that we acknowledge regularly how much we rely on God and his righteousness to lead us well.

God's plan of attack against the Canaanites was objectively strange. Marching around a city for seven days playing trumpets has not made it into any military tactical manuals as far as I am aware. This was a unique and counterintuitive direction from the Lord. And yet, the Israelites, commanded by Joshua, obeyed the Lord's direction and Jericho was given over to them. When we hear the adage "The Lord works in mysterious ways," this story should come to mind. So...

- What message are we to take away from this story? What does this story tell us about faith, God's faithfulness, and how what it requires of us?
 - Again, there will be a number of "correct" answers here, but a few worth noting are these: God was in control, and Israel trusted that. God provided and instituted a leader in place of Moses. God used familiar events (the crossing of the sea and circumcision Jos 5:2-8) to remind Israel of his past provisions. God's ways are often mysterious and counterintuitive, and so humility and patience are often requirements of faithful discipleship. The change in leadership, a significant

and likely troubling event for the Israelites, was successful because God was in control and they trusted God enough to trust his appointment and his promises.

Ministry Time Application:

Based on the people and overall feel of your group, select which option you feel fits best.

Option I: One of the most important truths found in the story of Joshua is that God was with his people through their transition. Spend several minutes in silence, inviting the Lord to remind you of a time when you were in transition (or, reflecting on this season if you are currently in transition). Ask God to show you where he was present in that time. In what ways were you protected by God? In what ways has God used that time of transition? Is there anything from that time of change that God can heal today? Let the Lord use your thoughts to encourage, heal, or guide you to allow him to control that change.

Option II:

Change, because it inherently includes uncertainty, can cause us to be anxious. But the Bible regularly offers us the directive “Fear not.” Take several minutes in silence asking the Lord to be present and a comfort for the unknown things ahead. Consider repeating a simple phrase like “God, I trust you,” or “You are good,” or “All will be well.” Allow the Lord to help you believe these words to be true, even in spite of your concerns.

Week 4



An Unexpected Change

Hebrews 11:31 (Joshua 2, 6:22-25)

Tips: These questions are meant to get the group thinking and spark discussion, so don't rush through them or attempt to get a solid answer for each one. Don't be afraid to wait for a while to see who speaks, and remember, there are no wrong opinions.

Before the Lesson:

You have probably heard it said that the only thing that is constant in life is change. But what do you do when one season ends and another one begins? Life changes can be stressful and challenging because we do not know what comes next. So, how do you navigate life's biggest transitions? And how do we as a church navigate changes in our church life together? The author of Hebrews was writing to a church in the midst of persecution, transition, and confusion. One of the key ways they clung to each other, the faith, and to God's plan is by remembering the lessons learned from saints of old. That is why Hebrews chapter 11 exists.

Starting the Lesson:

Bible Verses: Hebrews 11:31
By faith the prostitute Rahab,
because she welcomed the
spies, was not killed with those
who were disobedient.

Joshua 2:1-24

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. 2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land." 4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. 5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) 7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut. 8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them,

Week 4

To set the scene, before the Israelites were wandering in the desert for 40 years, Moses sent 12 spies into the Promised Land to investigate, and ten of them came back with an unfavorable report, while two, Joshua and Caleb came back and said they could conquer the land. Because the Israelites believed the other 10 spies, they were forced to roam the desert for an entire generation. Joshua took over leadership of the Israelites when Moses died, and, learning from Moses' mistake, sent only two spies into Jericho, the first city that they would encounter after crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. These two spies infiltrated the city and encountered Rahab. Her story picks up in Joshua 2:1.

Starter Questions:

Have you ever read a story where someone with questionable morals changes their ways and becomes the hero of the story? Did you find the change believable or did you still have trouble trusting that the change was real?

Do you ever doubt that it is possible for people to change for the better, or do you always hope for change?

Opening Prayer:

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to each person in the room about what it means to show faithfulness to God in adversity.

Scripture Reading:

Ask for volunteers to read Joshua 2 and 6:22-25. Joshua 2 is 24 verses, so if there are enough volunteers, split the chapter in half. Remember to thank the readers!

"I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. 12 "Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death." 14 "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land." 15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way." 17 Now the men had said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on

Discussion Questions:

We've all heard stories about a person with a dubious reputation, but a "heart of gold." In the 1950's musical *Guys & Dolls*, Sky Masterson is a gambler who falls in love with a missionary and keeps trying to do the right thing, but his plans keep going awry. In the end, his faithful love is rewarded and he marries the girl, becoming a missionary himself in the process.

Today we're looking at the Old Testament story of Rahab, a woman whose faith is praised by the author of the book of Hebrews. Rahab was not an Israelite, but her faith in God is honored on the same level as that of Moses and Abraham.

- Who is Rahab and what is her job?
 - She is a resident of Jericho, and works as a prostitute.
- Think about this passage as if you've never heard the story before today. What is your first reaction to learning that the spies go into the home of a prostitute and not someone of a more respectable status? How do you think Joshua might have reacted when they told him their story?
 - Allow for some discussion.
- What does the king of Jericho ask Rahab to do and what does she do?
 - He wants her to bring out the spies. She hides the spies and lies to the king, who sends men out of the city to search for the spies that Rahab says have escaped.

us 18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your brothers and all your family into your house. 19 If any of them go outside your house into the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on them. 20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made us swear." 21

"Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say." So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window. 22 When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. 23 Then the two men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us."

Joshua 6:22-25

22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath

Rahab explains to the spies why she hid them and why the people of Jericho are afraid. The Israelites haven't just been wandering the desert, they have fought wars against some great kings and won. Over the course of the past 40 years, they have made a name for themselves, and this scares everyone in the land west of the Jordan, where the Israelites are about to arrive. Most of the people are ready to fight for their homes, but Rahab realizes that this is a losing battle, and she knows that the only way for her to be safe is to help the Israelites.

- Have the group summarize verses 12-24: How did the spies escape, what did they tell Rahab to do, and what did Rahab instruct them to do to stay safe?
- Have you ever had to put your trust in someone, particularly a stranger, when you weren't sure how things would turn out? You may do this more often than you realize. You hand waiters your bank card, you drive on the roads with other drivers when you don't know if they are sober, etc. What is it that makes you trust in your overall safety in these situations?
 - Answers could range from: "I trust that God is with me/will take care of me" to "people are generally good and do the right thing" (There are no wrong answers!)
- Have you ever put your trust in someone and had it backfire on you? Did that make it hard to trust again?
 - Allow a few minutes for people to share.

to her." 23 So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel 24 Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house. 25 But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

- Why do you think the Israelite spies were so trusting of Rahab that she would do the right thing and keep them safe? Why do you think Rahab trusted that they would let her and her family live?
 - Rahab told them about the fear of the people in the land, and she hid them and protected them. They probably trusted that she wouldn't give them up after she had worked so hard to hide them in her home at her own risk. She gave them the benefit of the doubt because of everything she had done for them. They made an oath to one another, and that is not something that they took lightly in those days.
- Re-read Joshua 2:24. Have a volunteer read Numbers 13:26-33. What was the report that the spies gave to Joshua? Compare this with the report of the spies that Moses sent.
 - Joshua's spies gave a completely favorable report, while Moses' spies were the ones who were afraid of the people who lived in the land.

Moses' spies caused the Israelites to be afraid to take the Promised Land and forced them to wander in the desert for an entire generation. They never made it to the home they were promised.

- Have you ever tried to resist what God is doing in your life? Maybe you've heard a calling from God but you didn't think you were capable of doing what he was asking, or maybe you thought that you were

hearing wrong. How did it turn out, did you accept what God was asking you to do or are you still resisting?

- allow for various answers.

In chapter 6, we see the conclusion of Rahab's story, that she and her family were safe, even though their city was destroyed. In the end, Joshua upheld the oath of the spies and protected her because of what she did for them.

- What is an area where you've been obedient to God and it has made an impact on you and maybe even your loved ones?

- Allow for a few responses, depending on time.

God's plans are not limited by our past. Rahab was not only a prostitute, someone whose reputation would have been very low, particularly in the nation of Israel, but she was a foreign enemy of the Israelites. If it were not for her decision to assist the two spies, she would have been destroyed along with the rest of her city. But her decision to put faith in the God of Israel brought her and her loved ones salvation.

Our theme verse for this week of the series is Hebrews 11:31, which reads, "By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient."

- Based on what we've read and discussed today, what are some of the lessons we could take from the story of Rahab?

- Answers may include: The past doesn't define you, your faith in God and obedience to his plan is more important. Change is possible, even with people who seem beyond it. We can learn important lessons from the past if we are willing, and it will help us make better decisions for the future

Ministry Time Application:

Based on the people and overall feel of your group, select which option you feel fits best.

Option I:

Is God asking you to be faithful in something that you have resisted doing? It could be an area of service or giving, or it could be using your talents in some way. Pray for one another in the group that you would each be open to what God is asking you to do.

Option II:

We all have at least one person in our lives who is far from God, who we would love to see come to Jesus and have their life changed. Have everyone think of the name of one person who they want to see come to Jesus. Split into groups of 2-4 and pray for each of them.



Ministry Time

The Challenge of Change

Read through all of the Ministry Time ideas for each week before you begin teaching through the series. This will help you plan and pray for stronger impact!

Blessings!

Week 1:

Option 1:

Go around the group and ask if people would like to share about upcoming change. Do they think it is God call them toward this? If so, have the group pray favor over that person. If not, have the group pray favor over that person! Move on to the next person.

Option 2:

Practice hearing the call of God by spending 5 full minutes in silences as a group (set a timer for help). Start with a simple prayer like: Holy Spirit, we want to be like Abraham and hear your call. Even if it brings about great change in our lives and circumstances. Speak, your people are listening.

After the five minutes, ask if anyone got anything or heard/got an impression of a call from God. Ask God to bless this as a group over whoever shares. If no one has anything, simply pair up and pray that God would be clear in the future of the call he is making. We trust that he will!

Week 2:

Option 1:

Having great faith isn't relegated to the giants of the Old Testament, as listed in Hebrews 11, or even the saints found in the New Testament — all it takes is real people with real faith. Who are some people your group knows, from your friends or families or your church, that you would induct into your own Hall of Faith? Create a list of names and reasons. After making your list, assign each person to a group member and ask them to pray for them over the next week, and to consider writing them a short note to encourage them in their faith.

Option 2:

The 1998 award-winning animated film *The Prince of Egypt* tells the story of Moses, from his birth through the Hebrew people's escape across the Red Sea. (Cue up the song with lyrics from YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqqEgvgExo8>)

Lyrics (and translation of the Hebrew portion can be found at: genius.com/9308613)

Do you feel this portrayal of Moses shows his faithfulness? Why or why not?

Which lyrics in the song spoke to you the most?

The chorus claims "There can be miracles when you believe. Though hope is frail it's hard to kill" — how do you see this aligning with the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1?

After discussing the clip and song as a group, split off into pairs or small groups and share with one another the parts of your lives where it feels like your prayers are in vain or that no one is listening. Pray for one another

with encouragement to approach those situations with faith and hope, and to remember that, as the song says, “there can be miracles when you believe.”

Week 3:

Option I:

One of the most important truths found in the story of Joshua is that God was with his people through their transition. Spend several minutes in silence, inviting the Lord to remind you of a time when you were in transition (or, reflecting on this season if you are currently in transition). Ask God to show you where he was present in that time. In what ways were you protected by God? In what ways has God used that time of transition? Is there anything from that time of change that God can heal today? Let the Lord use your thoughts to encourage, heal, or guide you to allow him to control that change.

Option II:

Change, because it inherently includes uncertainty, can cause us to be anxious. But the Bible regularly offers us the directive “Fear not.” Take several minutes in silence asking the Lord to be present and a comfort for the unknown things ahead. Consider repeating a simple phrase like “God, I trust you,” or “You are good,” or “All will be well.” Allow the Lord to help you believe these words to be true, even in spite of your concerns.

Week 4:

Option I:

Is God asking you to be faithful in something that you have resisted doing? It could be an area of service or giving, or it could be using your talents in some way. Pray for one another in the group that you would each be open to what God is asking you to do.

Option II:

We all have at least one person in our lives who is far from God, who we would love to see come to Jesus and have their life changed. Have everyone think of the name of one person who they want to see come to Jesus. Split into groups of 2-4 and pray for each of them.