

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

August 30, 2026

Heroes of the Faith

“Abraham & Sarah: Following God into the Unknown”

Hebrews 11:8-12

Rev. Mike Toluba

On a mission trip to Mississippi, our college students were serving alongside Habitat for Humanity in Jackson helping a family build a home. Whenever we would go on a mission trip, we always do something fun together - this time we did a canoe trip on the Pearl River. As we were getting students paired up in canoes and launching canoes into the river, our outfitter tells us to watch out for the three waterfalls. I had done many canoe trips but never canoed over any waterfalls with a bunch of college students. It was an adventure into the unknown. The first two waterfalls were minor speed bumps, but the third one was not!

The river got very narrow and twisted through a trail of rocks. The guys on our first boat tried to paddle through this narrow and twisted path through rushing water. They were very unsuccessful. The best way down the river was to send the empty canoes through rushing water and over the waterfall. The plan was for each person to jump off a big rock at the top of the waterfall into a deep pool of water below. It was a ton of fun! As the group leader, I was the last boat with all the food and supplies, because I knew my boat was staying dry. College students love shenanigans in canoes! I also had Thomas in my canoe.

Thomas was a young man with special needs, but Thomas really loved going on retreats and mission trips with us. Thomas did not know how to swim, and he never canoed before. So Thomas wore his life jacket, a scrub mask, and snorkel while I did most of the paddling. Thomas and I watched all the other students gleefully jump into the water, and I reminded Thomas how safely and joyfully everyone was jumping off the rock. I told Thomas that I would jump and be ready to catch him when he jumped. As Thomas stood on the rock, it was obvious he was overwhelmed with fear. All of us encouraged and cheered for Thomas to take the leap of faith. Then, I said the absolute wrong thing, “Thomas, the water is plenty deep. It’s safe to jump.”

The deep water did not encourage Thomas, and he started gingerly climbing down the big rock. I quickly discovered an undertow beneath the rock, and there was no way I was letting Thomas get trapped. The Holy Spirit came upon me. I sprang out of the water like a dolphin, reached up, and pulled Thomas away from the rock and into the water. In a split second, I turned Thomas around and swam with him lifeguard style to the shallow waters near the shore. The crisis was averted, and our students welcomed Thomas as a conquering hero.

Going into the unknown can be exciting, overwhelming, or down right frightening. As we continue with the Heroes of Faith from Hebrews 11, we are exploring how Abraham and Sarah followed God into the unknown. Let's turn together to Hebrews 11: 8-12.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

Hebrews 11: 8-12 New Living

Translation

This is the Word of God for the People of God. Thanks be to God!

Abraham's and Sarah's journey with God was incredible. They obeyed God even when they did not know the future. They lived like strangers in this world while looking for heaven. They trusted God to do the impossible when things looked hopeless.

OBEYING WITHOUT A MAP

God told Abraham to go without knowing where he would end up. In Genesis 12, God tells Abraham to leave his homeland, extended family, and his father's family. In the ancient world, leaving one's family could mean losing your identity, your protection, and your inheritance. Leaving your family without knowing where you are going requires absolute trust. Abraham was asked to step into the unknown without a detailed itinerary, completely relying on God. True faith acts on God's word instead of waiting for a complete plan with all the details.

LIVING IN TENTS

Abraham and Sarah lived as foreigners in the land God promised them. They pitched tents instead of building a permanent home. Abraham and Sarah did not treat the earth as their forever-home. Their son, Isaac, and grandson, Jacob, also lived in tents. Abraham's family stands in contrast with his nephew Lot, who moved to Sodom and lived in a house. Although Lot believed in God, Lot traded God's way for the cultural values of Sodom. Abraham's family was involved with their neighbors in Canaan, but they remained distinctly faithful to God rather than adopting the culture of their surrounding neighbors.

LOOKING FOR A HEAVENLY CITY

Abraham and Sarah focused on a spiritual home—a city built and designed by God rather than trying to build their own earthly kingdom. When Abraham and Sarah went out from their homeland to the unknown land of Canaan, they were not just counting on God's promise for that piece of real estate. They were looking beyond it to the promise of heaven. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and Sarah's descendants, and God later completely gave their descendants that land (Joshua 23:13-14). Yet, this land was never the final or full realization of God's promise. It was only an earthly picture of the full promise which is the eternal city that God has prepared for God's people. Abraham and Sarah viewed themselves as strangers and sojourners in the land of Canaan. Their focus was on heaven, so Abraham and Sarah lived in tents. They held the things of earth very loosely.

As followers of Jesus, we should have a longing for heaven. Everything in this world is temporary and does not satisfy the deepest desires of our hearts. God made us for something more. I love how C.S. Lewis describes our longing for heaven.

"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." - C.S. Lewis from *Mere Christianity*

This world has nothing that can satisfy us and this world has almost everything. When Jesus comes again and brings the fullness of God's kingdom, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit will be visible and present among God's people all the time. God will wipe every tear from every eye. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All those things are gone forever. God will make all things new! Please resist the temptation to be discouraged about the chaos of this world. No experience in this world can satisfy us for very long. We were made for another world.

TRUST GOD TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

Abraham and Sarah thought they were too old to have children. When God called Abraham and Sarah to go to this unknown land, they were 75 and 65 years old. How many people give birth to babies when they are in their 60's and 70's? Abraham and Sarah are heroes of the faith, but their faith in God definitely had moments of weakness. They tried taking God's impossible promise of having a child into their own hands. They came up with a plan for Abraham to have a child with one of Sarah's servants named Hagar. This happened ten years after Abraham and Sarah settled in the land of Canaan. After ten years of waiting for the child God promised, Abraham and Sarah might have thought having a child was impossible.

When their son, Issac, was finally born, Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. They waited on God timing for 25 years to have a child and see God's promise fulfilled. What an example of God's timing being different than our timing. Despite their moments of weakness, Sarah trusted God because God always keeps His promises. Abraham and

Sarah's descendants became as countless as the stars in the sky and the sand on the beach.

How do we obey God when we don't know the exact details of the future? Do we rely on our abilities and resources to determine our future? God calls us to trust in God's abilities and resources for God's plans and purposes in our lives. I have been discerning for a good while that God is leading our church family through a growing season. I have witnessed this through Vacation Bible School, Summer Wildfires, our student ministry, our mission teams, and Sunday morning worship. We don't know the exact details of the future, but we must trust God to provide everything we need to continue growing closer and reaching out to others. I love our church family and believe we all have family, friends, and neighbors all around us who would love this church family too. God is calling us into the unknown as we love and serve the people all around us. There are nearly 30,000 people that live within a three-mile radius of our church. There is no way all of those people know Jesus! Let's not be afraid to follow God into the unknown.

How do we live like strangers in this world while looking for heaven? We need to deny ourselves of the things of this world and pursue the things of God with a passion like never before. We need to always be growing as followers of Jesus. Loving our neighbors and sharing our faith with others. Offering kindness and compassion to people in need. Being generous with the money and possessions that God has given us. So much of this world revolves around people acquiring as much as possible for themselves and keeping others at arm's length in the name of protecting themselves. That is a lie from the pit of hell. When we live in the way, truth, and the life of Jesus, our lives should look completely different than the world around us. Our home is heaven - where God provides everything we need and abundantly more! Heaven does not begin when you leave this world, Jesus has already brought the kingdom of God to earth. Heaven is already underway!

How do we trust God to do the impossible when things look hopeless? What if the impossible is the exact thing that God is calling for us to do? What if hope shines the brightest when things look hopeless? Jesus is the light of the world, and God promises us that the darkness can never extinguish the light. If God is for us, nothing can stand against. Don't be afraid of the unknown. The truth is God knows everything! We need to trust God to reveal to us what God already knows.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *Be Confident: Live by Faith, Not by Sight*, Warren W. Wiersbe
- *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer
- *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn
- *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney
- *The Class Meeting*, Kevin Watson
- *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*, Jerry Bridges
- *The Holiness of God*, R. C. Sproul
- *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Henry Blackaby & Richard Blackaby
- *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A.W. Tozer

Icebreaker Questions

1. Are you someone who likes to have every detail planned before starting a journey, or are you comfortable figuring things out as you go? Why?
2. What is something you once thought would be impossible for you to do, but you eventually accomplished or experienced?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Abraham obeyed God even though he did not know exactly where God was leading him. What makes it difficult for us to obey God when we cannot see the entire plan? What helps you trust God enough to take the next step?
2. The sermon describes Abraham and Sarah as living in tents and holding the things of this world loosely because they were looking toward a heavenly home. What might it look like practically for Christians today to live as though this world is not our ultimate home?
3. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years for the promised child, and during that waiting they sometimes tried to take matters into their own hands. Why is waiting on God so difficult? How can we discern the difference between faithfully taking action and trying to force God's timing?
4. The sermon challenges the church to follow God into the unknown by loving neighbors, sharing faith, serving others, showing compassion, and living generously. Which of these areas might God be asking you to step further into right now? What would one practical step of obedience look like this week?
5. The sermon asks, "*What if the impossible is the exact thing that God is calling for us to do?*" and reminds us that God already knows what lies ahead. Is there an area of your life—or an opportunity for ministry—that currently feels impossible or uncertain? How might your response change if you truly believed God was already present in that unknown?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?