



Sermon-Based Group Discussion Guide

Faithfulness of God Hebrews 12:1-2

Celebrating Calvary's 40 Years of Ministry

by Senior Pastor Shawn Thornton and Founding Pastor Larry DeWitt

Discussion Guide by Lisa Smith

April 16 & 17, 2016

Remembering God's faithfulness is more than just a history lesson. It is a commitment to recall, celebrate, examine, and announce the goodness and power of God in our lives. Remembering the ways God has delivered us, recalling his acts of provision, appreciating his forgiveness and mercy, and rejoicing in his kindness and love changes us. We become people of faith and hope, looking forward toward a future that is bright because we know God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Opening Question: What first brought you to Calvary Community Church? What do you appreciate about Calvary now?

Take turns reading Hebrews 11:1- 12:2 aloud.

I. God Has Been Faithful to Us in the Past.

Deuteronomy 7:17-19 (NIV) "You may say to yourselves, 'These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?' But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear."

Jonah 2:7 (NIV) "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple."

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV) "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

- 1. What qualities do the "cloud of witnesses" mentioned in Hebrews 11, the "Hall of Faith", have in common?**
- 2. How have other Christians, either those you have known personally or those you have read about, encouraged you in your spiritual journey?**
- 3. Hebrews 12:2 calls Jesus the "pioneer and perfecter of our faith."**
 - a. In what ways did Jesus honor the history of God and the Jewish people, as set forth in the Old Testament, in his earthly life and ministry? (e.g., Matt. 3:13-17; Matt. 22:41-46)**

- b. In what ways was Jesus a “pioneer” of a *new* expression of God, his heart, and plan for everyone? (e.g., Matt. 5:17-20; Matt. 5:21-48)
4. In 2 Thessalonians 1:10b, Apostle Paul praises the Thessalonian believers by saying, “you believed our testimony to you.” Brainstorm ways you can share the “testimony” of what God is doing in your life in engaging ways with those you know.

II. God Will Be Faithful to Us in the Future

Isaiah 43:18-19a (NIV) “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”

John Piper, Christian pastor, writer, and teacher, March 1, 2016 (Twitter) “Occasionally, weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have.”

Hebrews 11:1 (NLT) “Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.”

2 Timothy 1:12 (NLT) “...I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.”

1. Can we sometimes focus too much on the past? What might cause a church, or a person, to get stuck in the past and unable to move forward?
2. As we heard this weekend, the founding members of Calvary Community Church took bold risks of faith 40 years ago and God rewarded their sacrifices by blessing this church. Share a story of when you took a risk of faith and God proved Himself to be faithful.

How does God’s faithfulness in the past help you trust in His faithfulness in the future?

3. God desires his followers to see and enter into the “new things” He is doing. What new things have you noticed Him doing in your life lately? If nothing comes to mind, consider taking some time this week or as a small group now to ask God to show you His work in your life.
4. Re-read Hebrews 12:1-2 above. The end of that passage affirms that Jesus endured the cross and its humiliation “for the joy set before him.”
 - a. Does it surprise you that Jesus received encouragement to persevere by looking to the future?
 - b. Can you describe a time you persevered in something God had called you to because of the joyful outcome you knew God was bringing?
5. Read Zephaniah 3:20 together and spend some time in prayer, thanking God for His blessings to us in the past and His promises for us in the future.