

All Ages (Jacob, Moses' Parents, Moses)
Hebrews 11 / Live by Faith
Hebrews 11:21-26
6-30-19

(Lake Forest – Davidson is a community.) Whether your approach to Jesus Christ is cautious, curious, or committed, there is room for you here. This is a safe place for you to learn, grow, and change. So long as you don't have it all together you'll fit right in.

And the round reminds us that our spiritual growth is not just for our benefit. Yes, we're all here to receive something, and we also all have something to give. As we soak in the grace and truth of God's love, we are able to spread that love to one more person.

I'll just start with a confession this morning. Being a parent was never really on my radar screen growing up. I wasn't opposed to being a parent, but I wasn't dead set on it either. So now I'm the father of two little girls and am just trying to figure out what I'm doing. Because of this, I do a lot of google searches. Makes you pretty confident in my parenting.

I am now going to summarize what I have read on the internet about parenting: the phase I'm in right now is the hardest phase of parenting. If only I could go back to the previous phase and realize how good I had it, or if only I could get to a future phase that will be so much easier... But this phase, right now, is the hardest phase.

Sound familiar? There is something in human nature that makes us say – about any number of things – that there is something about my current situation that makes it uniquely difficult to be a good parent or a good spouse or a good friend or a good employee or employer. If only I could get to some magical point in the future when it will be easy.

But what I want to do today is to apply this thinking to living by faith. If you are anything like me, then you can convince yourself that living by faith is uniquely difficult in your present circumstances. Because of a specific situation or a specific need. If only I could rewind or if only I could fast forward, then I would find that it is easy to live by faith. But right now, I don't think I can live by faith ... it's just too hard.

We're in a series of sermons on living by faith, based on Hebrews 11. We learn in **Hebrews 11:6a - And without faith it is impossible to please God.** And then the chapter goes on to name person after person from the Old Testament (the part of the Bible that predates the earthly ministry of Jesus) who lived by faith.

They were really different people, and living by faith looked very different in each of their lives. There is no cookie cutter model for what it looks like to live by faith. They did different WHATs but they all grew out of the same WHY. That's the distinction we want to make on living by faith. Start with the WHY, don't get immediately preoccupied with the WHATs.

Hebrews 11 teaches us that **living by faith means trusting the unseen God, especially his good character and redemptive plan.** That's the WHY. That's the thing out of which our actions grow. You come to trust God, even though you haven't seen him. You trust that he is good and wants what is best for you. You trust that he has a plan, a redemptive plan, and that he is working out that plan even in the midst of hardship.

And then you start to act based on this trust. That's living by faith. You let your growing trust of God – no matter how big or little or microscopic your trust of God is – you let your growing trust of God play out in your life...in your family, finances, priorities, as you face the future.

And at this point, there is a long line of people – billions of people in fact – a long line of people who have lived by faith. It's even longer than the line on Free Cone Day. (That line always makes me say "You know what, I think I'll just come back on Expensive Cone Day.")

And in this long line of people who have lived by faith, it helps us to find someone – or multiple people – who are further ahead than us. An example, a guide, a mentor. People who have more experience and a better track record in living by faith, in following Jesus. We learn from them.

And the flip side is that there are people behind us in line. We have the opportunity to be an example, a guide, a mentor to these folks as they learn what it means to live by faith. Lake Forest Davidson is – and always wants to be – a church where we take time to turn back and help at least one more person who is new to faith or young in faith or is struggling. Turn back and help them learn or relearn what it means to live by faith and to follow Jesus.

The point I want to make today from Hebrews 11 is that **Defining "live by faith" moments can happen at any age. They occur for different people at different life stages.** There is no one best time – or one easiest time – in life to live by faith. Living by faith can happen at any age, at any stage of life. And the defining "live by faith" moments that come to characterize our lives, these can happen at any time.

So as we think about our guides, examples and mentors ahead of us in living by faith ... and as we think about the people for whom we are a guide, example, or mentor ... these can be folks of any age. Any stage in life. That's part of what I love about our church family, the way that we build relationship that bridge generational divides.

So let's look at the passage XX read for us earlier, **Hebrews 11:21-26**, to see how we might live by faith now and in the future. I especially want to focus on Jacob in his old age, then Moses' parents, and then Moses in his growing up years. It so fascinating that the writer of Hebrews groups these people together, as if to say, you can live by faith at any and every stage of life.

The passage begins: **Hebrews 11:21 - By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.** Don't you love some of the images in the Bible? Jacob worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. (That's a reference to Genesis 47.) In fact, Jacob's life is recorded in the book of Genesis. And there are more lowlights than highlights.

As a young man he conned his father and cheated his brother out of an inheritance. As a father, Jacob showed favoritism to his youngest son, Joseph, giving him a coat of many colors (or a technicolor dream coat if you prefer). Jacob's other kids were so frustrated with the favoritism that they sold Joseph into slavery. And you think you don't get along with your siblings?!

But then, at the end of his life, for all his failures, Jacob becomes an exemplar of living by faith. When it came to his faith, he saved the best for last. He has been reunited with his son Joseph. And Genesis 48 tells us that Jacob was laying sick in bed, but he sat up when Joseph brought his two sons to him. And there Jacob blessed those two children.

Jacob trusted God's character and trusted God's redemptive plan. God's work was not going to stop when he passed away, and so he fought through his own frailty to bless the next generation. Against great odds, he left a legacy. He spoke words of life and love and following God into the lives of these children.

His faith in God convinced him that his life should not end as a whimper ... his life should end as a blessing to others in God's name. God's work was going to continue, God's redemptive plan was going to continue, and because of that Jacob had something to contribute as a legacy to the next generation. He blessed Joseph's sons.

And then, as everything else in his life faded, his worship of God remained. The noise of the

And then, as everything else in his life faded, his worship of God remained. The noise of the world was starting to be drowned out by the eternal symphony to which he was headed. He worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. Jacob praised God for his goodness, even as frailty began to overtake his life.

Hebrews 11:23 - 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. So, when it comes to living by faith, Jacob saved the best for last. His exemplary living by faith moments came in his final years. For Moses' parents, their exemplary living by faith moment came when they were young parents.

This account is found in Exodus 2. Jacob's and Joseph's descendants, God's people, the children of Israel, the Hebrews at this point in the Bible are enslaved in Egypt. And a particularly cruel Pharaoh comes to power and starts to fear how many Hebrews there are. So he starts looking for ways to eliminate the Hebrew baby boys from the population, going so far as to pass an edict that Hebrew baby boys must be thrown in the Nile River.

So Moses' parents give birth to a son, a son who would in fact deliver God's people out of Egypt through the Red Sea. (You may have recently heard a great sermon on that very topic.) But, because of Pharaoh, what should have been a joyful occasion is now very difficult. Because Pharaoh wants Moses – and all the Hebrew baby boys – dead. What will his parents do?

They decide to live by faith ... Hebrews 11 says specifically that they were not afraid of the king's edict. Now, of course, there are reasons to be afraid of the king's edict. There are plenty of valid reasons for them to be afraid of this cruel Pharaoh. But for Moses' parents, it was faith and not fear that won the day.

If you are anything like me, you have both faith and fear in your life. Moses' parents are an example to us, though, that only one of those two can be in the driver's seat. Our lives can be driven by fear or driven by faith. We can live by fear or live by faith. And throughout life, especially as young parents, it is very possible to live by fear. To let fear drive our decisions and our actions. But Moses' parents, in a difficult and exemplary moment, trusted God.

And they let faith in God's character and God's redemptive plan drive their actions. And when they could no longer hide Moses, they probably did the scariest thing of their whole lives ... they put him in a basket in the Nile River in hopes that someone would find him and save him.

In one of those situations that only God can orchestrate, someone did find him. Someone did rescue him. **Exodus 2:5-6 - Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.**

Pharaoh's daughter had pity on Moses, actually sought out a Hebrew woman to be his wet nurse. As you might imagine, Moses' mother got nominated. So she got paid by Pharaoh's daughter to nurse and raise her own son. That's not a bad side hustle. But when Moses got passed the age of needing such care, he went to live with Pharaoh's daughter as her son.

And this brings us back to Hebrews 11: **Hebrews 11:24-25 - By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.** Hebrews 11 keeps working its way down the range spectrum.

Jacob's defining "live by faith" moment came in his old age. Moses' parents' defining "live by faith" moment came as new parents. But for Moses, he had a defining "live by faith" moment during his formative years, as he was growing up. And for him, living by faith was all about coming to claim his deepest identity, no matter the cost.

Moses is a Hebrew, a descendant of Jacob and Joseph, an Israelite, a child of God. But he's been raised in the home of Egyptian royalty. It's a godless place, but the perks are really awesome. And so Moses is growing up struggling with this identity issue, the thing that most folks struggle with as we grow up ... who am I really?

For Moses, he is a child of God in a godless place. And he could quite easily keep blending in with the godlessness and enjoying the perks of Egyptian royalty. But he was not content to just blend in with the godlessness. He knew his deepest identity: he was a child of God. And so he lived by faith: he held onto his deepest identity as God's child and he knew that made him distinct and he was willing to deal with the fallout.

Better yet, he was willing to trust God – God's character and God's redemptive plan – in the midst of the fallout. He did not hide his distinctive identity, he lived out his distinctive identity. He did not flee from being associated with God and God's people, he embraced being associated with God and God's people. And he trusted God when the fallout happened.

And boy, did the fallout happen for Moses. As sometimes happens with new convictions, he actually went overboard on the "I'm God's child – not an Egyptian" thing and killed an Egyptian, forcing him to flee Egypt and live in the desert for decades. God was still at work, even in the midst of Moses' failures.

And thus Hebrews 11 says this about Moses: **Hebrews 11:26 - 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.** He left behind the comforts of blending in to truly own his identity as God's child. So let me ask you: would you rather be mistreated or have a billion dollars? I'll give you a minute to think about it. You don't need a minute to think about it. That's an easy one. Take the billion dollars.

But, Hebrews is posing a slightly different question. Would you rather be mistreated because you follow Jesus or have a billion dollars? Would you rather face struggles because of your faith in Christ or have all the treasure of ancient Egypt? That's the decision Moses faced ... and when stated that way, the decision may not sound quite so easy.

But, Moses realized that a billion dollars, all the treasure in Egypt is fleeting. It doesn't last. It's like an energy drink that gives you a huge pick-me-up now but eventually you're going to crash. It doesn't last. But following Jesus lasts. Faith in Jesus lasts. And so following Jesus is worth it, even when it's hard.

Following Jesus is more valuable than all the money in the world, even when it gets hard, because it's not a fleeting thing. Jesus is eternal. Jesus lasts forever. And those who follow Jesus will do so forever. On this earth and into the life everlasting.

The greatest reward for following Jesus is not found in this world. Now, there are great rewards and great joy that come from following Jesus on this earth. But the greatest reward is yet to come, when we see Jesus face to face on the other side of death in the life everlasting. And we live by faith when we come to value the eternal over the temporary, even though we can see the temporary and the eternal remains unseen.

And thus, the parenting blogs are right. The best is yet to come. What's hard today won't be hard forever. There is a moment coming where we will be more alive than we have ever been before. Hold out for that moment. Hold out for your reward. In fact, follow your Reward ... until he calls you home and you see him face to face.

Let me ask you to reflect on this as I wrap up: **How can you better live by faith based on the example of Jacob, Moses' parents, or Moses?** Whatever your age, whatever your life stage, wherever you are in your faith or in your exploration of faith what can you and I learn from

wherever you are in your faith or in your exploration of faith, what can you and I learn from these exemplary moments of living by faith?

The WHY is faith: trusting God's character and his redemptive plan. And some of the WHATs that can grow out of that WHY: letting your life bless future generations, worshipping God even in frailty, not letting fear drive your actions, praying for the miraculous when you need a miracle, declaring your identity as God's child through Jesus Christ, being willing to not blend in to godlessness, letting the eternal – not the temporary – set the course of your life.

What would it look like for you to live by faith, to better live by faith in your life?