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## Your Heroic Faith

*Hebrews 11:32–12:3*

As a young pastor I was waiting to have prayer with some of the church leaders one Sunday morning before the worship service when an usher came into my office with an announcement. “Two of your seminary professors and their wives are here,” he crowed. “They’ve come to hear you preach!”

A knot formed in my stomach as I looked out and saw not only one of my theology teachers but also the man who taught young seminarians to preach. I flashed through my sermon in my mind, hoping that I at least came close to the model of biblical exposition he had taught us. The presence of these highly respected “witnesses” made my knees shake a little.

But their presence also gave me a jolt of empowerment and confidence. God had called me to a task and these men had helped prepare me. Their presence inspired me to embrace the challenge that was before me.

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** Who is your “hero” in business or sports or entertainment? How would you feel, for example, if your golf hero showed up just as you were about to tee off, or your favorite musical artist came to hear you sing a solo at church?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** In whose presence do you feel most scrutinized or judged? In whose presence do you feel most

encouraged and challenged? Which way do you feel in God’s presence?

The writer of Hebrews concludes his challenge to live a life of confident trust in God by moving away from individuals and embracing the whole company of men and women who down through the centuries had determined to live by faith. These faithful believers—some named, most unnamed—become a great host of witnesses prompting us to follow in their path. This great passage on faith that we’ve been studying ends with a call to all of us today who want our lives to be marked by courageous faith. *Read Hebrews 11:32–12:3.*

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**1.** What outcome to faith ties the first group of people together (vv. 32-35a)?

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**2.** What is your response when you hear or read about a Christian who has experienced some remarkable work of God? Joy? Envy? Awe? Something else? Explain.

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**3.** What is the outcome to faith for those in the second group listed in this passage (vv. 35b-38)?

Why do you think the writer includes them?

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4. Both those who saw God's miraculous deliverance and those who died without seeing it were "commended for their faith" (v. 39). What does this say about claims today that genuine faith will always bring deliverance or prosperity or healing?

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5. The author of Hebrews sees the men and women of faith who lived in the past to be "a great cloud of witnesses" (12:1). What does that mean to you as you pursue a deeper level of confident trust in God in your own life?

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6. The life of faith is compared in Hebrews 12:1-3 to a race. Explain each of these elements as they apply to an actual race and as they apply to the pursuit of faithfulness in your life.

a. "Throw off everything that hinders"

b. "The sin that so easily entangles"

c. "Run with perseverance"

d. "The race marked out for us"

7. Of what value is it to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus in the race of faith (12:2)?

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8. Jesus endured the cross and the opposition of sinful people. What should the example of Jesus' endurance produce in our lives (12:2-3)?

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9. Where would you place yourself right now in the race toward a faith-filled life: on the bench? running steadily? ready to quit? sidetracked by a different goal? Explain.

What steps do these verses suggest you can take to get back in the race (or stay in it, if that is the case for you) for the long haul?

*Focus your heart in renewed allegiance to Jesus alone. Ask God to help you get back or remain in the race—and to persevere to the end.*

#### **Now or Later**

As you think back through the men and women of faith that we have studied, which one do you have the most in common with? Which situation would you find most difficult?