

Pre-Trip “GRIT” Devotions

During the summer of 2018, you'll leave home to serve at a camp with Group Mission Trips. Between now and then you have a lot to do to prepare for your trip. But the most important step you can take is to anchor your heart in Jesus, and begin to recognize his heart FOR you. Jesus sees something in you, and he wants to energize your life and your commitment to serve. You have something unique and important to give to your family, friends, youth group, and school—the world needs what you have!

You have big opportunities in front of you, but you'll need a source of deep strength to “seize the day.” That's why we've chosen one particular word to describe this year's theme: GRIT. You will need GRIT to carry out what God has planned for you. If you don't have it, it'll be easy to give in and give up just when you're on the verge of a breakthrough. So, what in the world is “GRIT”? Glad you asked!

Grit is the engine that drives perseverance in life—it's the core strength that helps us face and overcome challenges and obstacles. And it's the essential characteristic that sustains our lifelong journey with Jesus. Without grit, our faith wavers, distractions derail us, and our focus blurs. Every person of great impact in the world—people who have lived for Jesus in world-changing ways—needed grit to do it. It's personal—GRIT allows us to participate in Jesus' epic mission.

The path into a life characterized by GRIT begins with your willingness to give yourself in service to others. Your decision to serve requires humility and courage—and because you've made this choice, you'll have many opportunities to grow through your experiences and new friendships. In fact, you'll be surrounded by others who have also said yes to service, and are learning the ways of spiritual grit alongside you. Because of your practical help, people in desperate need will experience new hope as they face the challenges before them. During one epic week (or weekend), you'll learn, grow, and serve. People in need will receive the gift of your service and grow in their hope. Everyone wins!

All of us here at Group Mission Trips have been working hard to offer you a stellar experience as you spend a week (or weekend) serving others in partnership with Jesus. A great summer experience is waiting for you, so dive into this devotional with an expectant heart—ready to discover that Jesus is loose in the world, bringing hope and life to those who need it most. These devotions will help prepare your soul for growing the GRITTY heart Jesus has in mind for you.

Thank you so much for choosing to step out of your comfortable place—to see where Jesus wants to take you. You'll never regret this step!

Because of Jesus,

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Welcome

Welcome to your first step into Spiritual GRIT for your 2018 Group Mission Trip!

Before you start, keep these tips in mind...

- ▶ These devotional dialogues are not just another task on your mission-trip to-do list. You won't get "extra credit" or a "suitable-for-framing" certificate of merit for knocking them out. Our intention is for you to create some space in your life so that you can listen to and interact with the One who is already very present and active on the road with you —Jesus. He's not impatiently tapping his foot because you're not doing enough or don't have the time you wish you had to go deeper. He just wants you to know him, and he's inviting you to relax and be with him.
- ▶ Remember this: With Jesus, *everything* won't be precisely as you imagined or expected it might be, as it has been described to you, or what you think you deserve. You'll need learn to trust his heart for you. It's a wild ride—but worth every moment!
- ▶ Grab your Bible (the Bible passages are also included in the devotion in case you don't have a Bible handy) and a pen and paper to journal your thoughts. Please use these devotions any way that works for you—by yourself or with a friend or two. The important thing is that you take the time to consider the amazing life Jesus wants to craft in you when you're with him.

Two Distinct Expressions of GRIT

Our theme for the 2018 camp season is "**GRIT**". You may be wondering what grit really means, especially in relationship to your summer mission experience. Let's start the conversation by looking at two distinctly different types of grit.

Personal Grit

Grit describes the personal strength and character you develop over the course of your lifetime. It's your capacity to hang tough when tempted to quit, to solve difficult problems that at first appear to be too challenging for you to overcome, to develop a vision for who you are and to pursue that vision each day. Personal grit is yours alone—and is built upon the resources you've gained through your experiences. Everyone has their own unique version of personal grit.

Spiritual Grit

Spiritual grit is much bigger than personal grit. While personal grit is limited to your capabilities, spiritual grit is not limited by the scope of your strengths and weaknesses! That's because spiritual grit is all about the limitless resources of Jesus, and it's anchored in a growing dependence on him. As spiritual grit grows, you gain a growing and deeper confidence as you walk with Jesus. A grit-filled faith relentlessly follows Jesus into the unexpected relationships and experiences that make up our lives.

Spiritual Grit perseveres even when confusion creates a fog of uncertainty, it holds up in giddy moments of success as well as in the depths of disappointment and doubt. The following devotions will introduce you to people who demonstrated spiritual grit in their unique journey of faith in God. They will help you begin to get a better picture of what spiritual grit looks like in people who are a lot like you and me.



Pre-Trip Devotion #1: “The Spiritual GRIT Hall of Fame”

The Hall of Fame. It's a museum of sorts that honors people who excel at... well, at a lot of different things. Some of them are familiar—there are Halls of Fame for most sports, styles of music, and even for insurance salespeople. Go to Wikipedia.com and pull up their “List of Halls and Walks of Fame” and you'll be blown away by the huge list. Some of the more obscure include “Space Camp Hall of Fame,” “Astronaut Hall of Fame,” “Polka Hall of Fame,” and “Dance Music Hall of Fame.” Then there's the “International Bowling Hall of Fame,” “Canadian Business Hall of Fame,” “International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame,” and “North America Railroad Hall of Fame,” to name just a few of the hundreds listed. It's obvious that we're hard-wired to honor people who demonstrate a high level of skill and commitment. The individuals honored have exemplified the personal grit necessary to achieve a lofty status.

If you created a hall of fame for the people who have been most influential in your life, who would you enshrine?

Hebrews 11—Spiritual Grit in Action

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, there is a Hall of Fame for Spiritual Grit. Okay, the word “grit” isn't mentioned, but the people highlighted in Hebrews chapter 11 certainly demonstrate grit through their faith. Grab your Bible and read the verses that make up Hebrews chapter 11 (the passage is also included at the end of this devotion). As you read, look for evidence of grit as it's demonstrated in the lives of the interesting people mentioned there.

In verse one, two words are used to define faith.

- ▶ How do these words help to create a foundation for spiritual grit?
- ▶ Where is a gritty faith focused—past, present, or future? Explain.
- ▶ Based on verse one, write out your own expanded definition of “gritty faith.”

Read Hebrews 11 one more time with your expanded definition of “gritty faith” in mind.

- ▶ *Write the names of three people in this passage who jump out to you as people who demonstrate spiritual grit.*
- ▶ *How did each person demonstrate a gritty faith?*
- ▶ *What are some characteristics of spiritual grit you gain from the people you've mentioned?*
- ▶ *Why are those characteristics important to you?*

Pray, asking Jesus to grow spiritual grit within you.



Pre-Trip Devotion #2: GRIT in the Fire

The stark image of a solitary man calmly standing in front of military tanks is as riveting today as it was a quarter of a century ago when a Chinese photographer captured the moment. It was a significant turning point in a protest by dissidents in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The man, (with a white plastic shopping bag in each hand), positioned himself directly in the path of a long line of tanks on June 5th, 1989, just a day after the military had violently struck down protests in the square. It took a giant dose of personal grit for that protestor to carry out a non-violent protest without concern for his safety. His was a gripping demonstration of resolve, commitment to his cause, and... personal grit in standing against the government he opposed. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/tank-man-what-happened-man-3644636>

Spiritual grit is uniquely demonstrated by the diverse friends of God. Some quietly work in the background, drawing little or no attention to the strength that God nurtured in them. Others demonstrate their grit in very public settings—in ways that astonish the people around them. Like the lone protestor in Tiananmen square, the three guys demonstrating grit in the Old Testament book of Daniel (chapter 3) are doing so with no thought to their personal welfare; nor are they concerned about how their actions will anger one of the most powerful rulers of all time. The ruler's name is Nebuchadnezzar, and he ruled the great Babylonian empire, one of the most significant in history.

Backstory: Nebuchadnezzar was the mega-powerful ruler of the great Babylonian empire. He was a bit of a narcissist (okay, he was an all-in narcissist) and decided it would be a great achievement to build a giant gold statue (the Bible says it was 90 feet tall and nine feet wide). Then, to show his power, he made it clear that everyone in the city was required to come to a special dedication ceremony for the statue—and bow down to worship the statue. Heady stuff for him. Three sharp young political operatives named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not on board with the whole idol worship thing—their faith was in the one, true God, not a statue or Nebuchadnezzar himself. Someone told the king about their refusal to worship the statue and he flew into a rage. The three protestors were brought to a confrontational meeting. Here's what happened next:

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, 14 Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? 15 I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments.[f] But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. 18 But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

19 Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. 20 Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.



Pre-Trip Devotion #2: GRIT in the Fire Cont.

21 So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. 22 And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. 23 So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames. 24 But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied. 25 "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!" 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. 27 Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn't even smell of smoke! 28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king's command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!" 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon. **Daniel 3:13-30 (NLT)**

In verses 16-18, under gigantic pressure from the mighty Nebuchadnezzar, the three friends spoke strong words of defiance.

- ▶ Why did these men stand against the King's orders?
- ▶ Why were they so certain in the midst of their stand?

After the men survived the fire, the King had a strong response.

- ▶ Surely the king had seen some crazy things in his time as king. What do you think moved him so profoundly in this situation?
- ▶ Why create a new decree?
- ▶ Why didn't he just figure out another way to kill them?
- ▶ How would you characterize the grit expressed by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Was this an example of personal grit (their own internal resources) or of spiritual grit (a dependence on God's resources). Explain.

While you likely have never been in a life-or-death situation like these three, when have you been faced with a need to stand for something you believed in?

- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ What did spiritual grit look like in that situation?



Pre-Trip Devo #3: Rahab - Gritty Grace

There is a hidden horror in the world—the trafficking of children and women for sexual exploitation. The numbers are staggering. The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 21 million victims of human trafficking around the world, an overwhelming number of individuals trapped in a violent and abusive world. The sexual exploitation of women is not a new trend in society—prostitution has been embedded in every culture throughout recorded history. It's been called the world's "oldest profession," and even the Bible has narratives that include prostitutes as main characters (Gomer in the Old Testament, and the woman who wipes Jesus' feet with her tears in the New Testament, for example).

While speaking to a group of women rescued from sex trafficking, Author Philip Yancey asked: "Did you know that Jesus referred to your profession? Let me read you what he said: 'I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.' He was speaking to the religious authorities of his day." (Philip Yancey, *What Good is God?*)

In his speech, Yancey posed two questions about the verse he quoted (Matthew 21:31). Take a moment to answer them for yourself before reading further.

- ▶ What do you think Jesus meant?
- ▶ Why did he single out prostitutes?

Yancey describes what happened next... "After several minutes of silence a young woman from Eastern Europe spoke up in her broken English. 'Everyone, she has someone to look down on. Not us. We are at the low. Our families, they feel shame of us. No mother nowhere looks at her little girl and says, 'Honey, when you grow up I want you be good prostitute.' Most places, we are breaking the law. Believe me, we know how people feel about us. People call us names: whore, slut, hooker, harlot. We feel it too. We are the bottom. And sometimes when you are at the low, you cry for help. So when Jesus comes, we respond. Maybe Jesus meant that.'" (Yancey, page 75)

Given the shady reputation surrounding prostitution, it's surprising to discover that Rahab, a prostitute, is honored in the "Spiritual Grit Hall of Fame." She is mentioned in Hebrews 11:31: *"It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies."*

Sounds like a thrilling novel, doesn't it? Read the full story about Rahab's gritty heart here:

"Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, "Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho." So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night. But someone told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." So the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab: "Bring out the men who have come into your house, for they have come here to spy out the whole land." Rahab had hidden the two men, but she replied, "Yes, the men were here earlier, but I didn't know where they were from. They left the town at dusk, as the gates were about to close. I don't know where they went. If you hurry, you can probably catch up with them." (Actually, she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them beneath bundles of flax she had laid out.)

So the king's men went looking for the spies along the road leading to the shallow crossings of the Jordan River. And as soon as the king's men had left, the gate of Jericho was shut. Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them.



Pre-Trip Devo #3: Rahab - Gritty Grace Cont.

"I know the Lord has given you this land," she told them. "We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. Now swear to me by the Lord that you will be kind to me and my family since I have helped you. Give me some guarantee that when Jericho is conquered, you will let me live, along with my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all their families." (Joshua 2:1-12).

Now that you've read her story of intrigue and rescue, think about this:

- ▶ Why did Rahab take the action she did in protecting the spies from Israel?
- ▶ How do you think Rahab would describe the God of the Israelites?
- ▶ Rahab was spared when the city fell to the Israelites. Why?
- ▶ Why do you think she's in the "Spiritual Grit Hall of Fame" in Hebrews 11?

Here are two verses that give more insight into Rahab's spiritual grit:

"It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies." (Hebrews 11:31).

"Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road." (James 2:25).

Based on what you've read about Rahab so far, write a description of the spiritual grit she demonstrated:

Rahab is the only person in Hebrews 11 who is listed together with what she did for a living. There is no such defining occupation when others are listed. No "Moses the shepherd," "Sarah, barren housewife," or "Samson, the Strongman." "Rahab the Prostitute" is her name in every other verse in which she is included except one.

- ▶ Why do you think such a strong point is made to include "Prostitute" with Rahab's name in the Bible?
- ▶ Why was she being singled out?

Maybe, it's because God's grace is invited more freely by the lowest people—to people who have desperate needs and dark reputations. What if the reason her occupation is highlighted is much less about her work as a "professional sex worker" and more about her desperate need for God? She had no reputation or social status. People walked to the other side of the street to avoid her. Women hated her. Men used and discarded her. Perhaps "Rahab the Prostitute" reminds each of us that God's mercy is poured out on all people, no matter who they are or what they've done.



Pre-Trip Devo #3: Rahab - Gritty Grace Cont.

One last mention of Rahab from the Bible: Here's why Rahab is one of the most incredible heroes in the Bible: she's found in the most spectacularly honoring list in the Bible, in a passage most people overlook. That list is full of confusing names and other details that set up the best story of all, the birth of Jesus. Here are the first five verses of the book of Matthew:

The Ancestors of Jesus the Messiah

This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham:

Abraham was the father of Isaac.

Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).

Perez was the father of Hezron.

Hezron was the father of Ram.

Ram was the father of Amminadab.

Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.

Nahshon was the father of Salmon.

*Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was **Rahab**).*

Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth). -Matthew 1:1-5

Read the entire list in Matthew 1:1-16. Notice that Rahab is no longer listed as a prostitute—why do you think it was omitted this time only?

There are a lot of uneven performers and shady characters in this list. Not many of them would make a "Who's Who of Respectability" in Israel—or anywhere else. Yet each one of them is a direct ancestor of Jesus. They contributed to his genetic humanity. Through Rahab and her offspring, Jesus received his humanity. Gritty grace does that—it flips shame on its head through dependence on Jesus.

Here's a paraphrase of a quote attributed to C.S. Lewis: "You can't go back and change the beginning, but through spiritual grit, Jesus gives you what you need to start where you are and change the ending."

What a grit-filled life, Rahab!



Pre-Trip Devo #4: Gritty Trust

For this last devotion, let's get our definitions straight—we all think we know what the word trust means, but maybe it's a more complex word than we realize. It's important to slow down and consider this word, because it's central to the development of spiritual grit in our lives.

Here are two ways the dictionary defines the word **trust**:

1. reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, surety, etc., of a person or thing; confidence.
2. confident expectation of something; hope.

Trust is something that is earned. Isn't it? In friendship, you trust the people who deliver what you expect – and tend to avoid people who don't. That system works for the most part – as long as our expectations aren't too high and your friends are doing their best to keep your trust. The trouble begins when someone purposefully (or accidentally) doesn't do what you hope or expect. When people fail to be what you expect and hope, the trust you invested in them evaporates rather quickly. After all, everyone knows the rules about trust, right?

Ernest Hemingway once wrote this advice to a friend: "The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them." Think about that for a moment.

- ▶ *What does Hemingway mean?*
- ▶ *Is this good advice? Why do you answer the way you do?*

Hemingway may or may not have given good advice, but trust is something that is often super difficult to give.

- ▶ *Why is it difficult to trust others, or isn't it?*

Think of a time you chose to trust someone. Why did you trust them? What happened to your trust?

Jesus said this to his followers:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me." (John 14:1)

- ▶ *Why does Jesus make a connection between our anxiety and our trust?*
- ▶ *On what basis do we consider Jesus trustworthy?*

The wise King Solomon says: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

- ▶ *What does it mean to "Trust the Lord with all your heart"?*
- ▶ *In your life, how has it been challenging to do that?*



Pre-Trip Devo #4: Gritty Trust Cont.

Trust is essential for the development of spiritual grit, because we won't depend on the strength Jesus has if we don't trust him. Distrust severs our connection to him, and cuts off our source of grit.

- ▶ *Think about the role your ability to trust God plays in your ability to persevere in life—what's the connection?*
- ▶ *When you have struggled to trust God, what impact has that had on your ability to push through the tough stuff in your life?*

Thank you for setting aside the time and thought to work through these devotions. Now that you've finished, take the time to summarize your thoughts around these questions (write your answers in the space provided):

- ▶ *In one sentence, what have you learned about spiritual grit?*
- ▶ *What do you need to do to grow spiritual grit?*
- ▶ *What does Jesus do to grow your spiritual grit?*

Pray: Tell Jesus what concerns you most about your life—now and into the future. Ask Jesus to continue to shape your life as he partners with you to develop your core strength.

*We can't wait to see you at your mission trip this summer! Your friends,
The Group Mission Trips team*



Hebrews 11 (NLT)

Great Examples of Faith (The “Spiritual Grit Hall of Fame”!)

11 Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

3 By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

4 It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

5 It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.”[a] For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. 6 And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

7 It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

8 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. 9 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. 10 Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

11 It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed[b] that God would keep his promise. 12 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.

13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

17 It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God’s promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, 18 even though God had told him, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.”[c] 19 Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

Hebrews 11 (NLT)

20 It was by faith that Isaac promised blessings for the future to his sons, Jacob and Esau.

21 It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff.

22 It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, said confidently that the people of Israel would leave Egypt. He even commanded them to take his bones with them when they left.

23 It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.

24 It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. 27 It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. 28 It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

29 It was by faith that the people of Israel went right through the Red Sea as though they were on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, they were all drowned.

30 It was by faith that the people of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls came crashing down.

31 It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God. For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

32 How much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and all the prophets. 33 By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight. 35 Women received their loved ones back again from death.

But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. 36 Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. 37 Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, [d] and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. 38 They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

39 All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. 40 For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

