

Keep on → Keepin' on →



Hebrews 12:1-6
Part 1

Getting Started:

Imagine you are running a really long race. What might keep you going when the race gets tough?

- The Cheering
- Good fitness
- The fun of the race
- Aiming to beat my personal best
- Imagining the gold medal
- Dreams of the Olympics
- Water
- My friends
- My coach

Get Thinking:

Who are your heroes? Who do you look up to? Who do you wish you could be like?

If life suddenly became difficult, or you felt like giving up trying so hard to do the right thing, which person from your list above would you like to write you an encouraging letter? Why?

Have you ever faced any of these situations?

- Being teased because you go to church?
- Not being sure what you believe?
- Trying to hide the fact that your family are Christians?
- Thinking it would be easier if no-one knew what you believed?
- Being made fun of because you believed in Jesus?
- Wondering if following Jesus is really worth it?
- Hearing of Christians being killed because of their faith?
- Wishing you could just be like everyone else?

If any of these have happened to you, then Hebrews 12:1-6 is a message of encouragement to you!

What's it all about?

See if you can find the book of Hebrews in a Bible. (We will be using the NIV 2011).

Although many letters in the Bible clearly state who wrote them and who they were addressed to, the book of Hebrews doesn't do this!

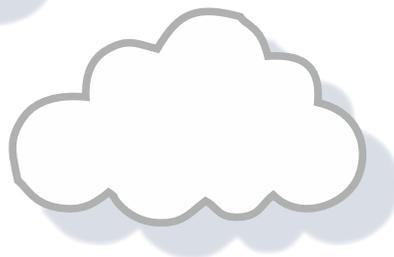
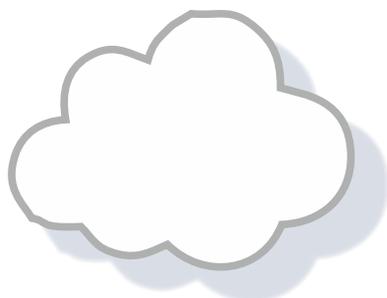
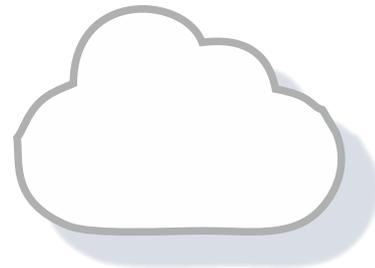
We, along with Bible scholars and historians, can only guess as to the author and first audience of this letter.

What we do know is that the recipients of this letter were a group of early Christians who most likely had Jewish (or Hebrew!) heritage. These people had probably been Christians for most of their lives. They probably had many Jewish friends who were good people, but did not believe Jesus was their Saviour. Perhaps some of these Hebrew Christians were looked down on or treated badly for their faith in Jesus. Perhaps they knew of family members who had been persecuted or even killed for their faith.

We don't know all the details, but a close study of the book of Hebrews shows that it is a very special letter of encouragement about keeping on following Jesus, no matter what happens and no matter what anyone else says.

Dig it up:

Open your Bible at Hebrews 11. On a large sheet of paper write down as many names as you can of people who lived by faith and draw a cloud around each one! Underline the ones you have heard of and circle the names of the ones you haven't heard of!



Alternatively, you could get some playmobil people or some Lego Blocks and line them up as you find each one!

Get Thinking: Questions for us all

Why does the Bible 'commend' them as Heroes? (Hint: Check Hebrews 11:39)

What does it mean to have faith? (Hint: Check Hebrews 11:1)

Did these people live before or after Jesus was born? Do you think these people knew about Jesus? If you've made a line of lego or playmobil figures, you could add Jesus to where He comes in the time line!

Though these people lived a long time before Jesus, they knew that God had promised to send a rescuer King and that there would be life with Him in heaven. They didn't know He would be called Jesus or what He would be like - but they knew that He would come and they trusted that!

Read Hebrews 12:1

Draw a picture of you in the middle of all of the clouds or pick a lego brick/playmobil person to represent you and put all of the others around you.

All these heroes of faith can encourage us to keep running for Jesus!

Get Thinking: Questions for different ages

For 3-5 year olds:

Imagine you are running in a long race. What do you need to do to get to the finish line?

For 5-7 year olds:

Who is the great cloud of witnesses in this verse? (Hint: Think about what we were just talking about!)

These people trusted God and his promises even though they had not yet seen the whole picture and didn't know about Jesus. How are we in a better position than they were?

For 7-11 year olds:

Here are some of the things we know from the Bible:

- o That God's promises all come true in time
- o That Jesus came to show us the full nature of God
- o That Jesus gave up his life as a substitute for us
- o That through Jesus' death on the cross, God dealt with sin once and for all
- o That Satan has been defeated
- o That the Holy Spirit is given to all who trust Jesus as our comforter, helper and strength to live God's way.

The heroes of faith put their life on the line. They trusted God would do what He said he would, even when they couldn't see the whole picture of how things would turn out. How does this make you feel about trusting in God today?

For 12+ year olds:

When do you find it hard to keep going as a Christian?

What was it that the heroes of Hebrews 11 knew that enabled them to keep going?

How does their example help you to run with perseverance the race marked out for you?

For the grown ups:

Tell your family what you think it means to 'run with perseverance the race marked out for us.'

Time to Chat:

The cloud of witnesses doesn't just include the people that lived along time ago who trusted in God's promises. It includes everyone who has trusted in them since!

Can you think of some Christians you know who are 'Heroes of Faith' that encourage you to keep going?

What is it about them that encourages you?

Prayer Suggestions:

Give thanks for this time to learn from God's Word together.

Give thanks for Jesus, the promised rescuer King.

Ask God to give wisdom as we look at Hebrews 12:1-6 over the next few weeks.

Ask Him to help us learn more about how much we can trust Him.

Song Suggestion:

Why not listen, sing or dance to "Go, go, go in the Gospel Power" by Colin Buchanan.

It is available to listen to on Spotify or YouTube here: youtu.be/jXJFMBextz0

(Or search on YouTube for 'St John Newland 2' and it will take you to it!)

Memory Verse:

Write Hebrews 12:1 out onto a sheet of paper or card, or have it up on your phone.

Everyone, except the person who is 'it' sits in a circle with a towel or sheet over their head. The person who is 'it' walks round the circle tapping each person on the head as they read Hebrews 12:1 from wherever you have it written. When 'it' reaches the end of the verse, the final person they tap must stand up, throw off their towel or sheet, and begin the chase. If 'it' can race around the circle and reach the empty seat, they are safe and do not need to wear the sheet. Continue the game until everyone has thrown off their sheets, everyone has learned the verse or time runs out!!

Challenge Time:

Draw a picture, make a model out of lego or junk material, take a photo of your family or find any other creative way you can to show someone running the race!!

