

Faith, Doubt, and Somewhere in Between

On Sunday, our Pastoral Intern, Samantha Hasty-Zander, shared a sermon about faith and doubt.

1. Warm up question. Samantha mentioned that she moved to Indiana when God called her to LifeJourney's internship program. She never expected to end up here. After all, Indiana isn't exactly a "destination location." What's something weird or quirky about Indiana that you love or hate?
2. Read Hebrews 11:1-3.
 - a. Verse 1 offers a definition of "faith." Based on what's said there, or your own ideas, how would you define "faith"?
 - b. Verse 2 says that "by faith our ancestors received approval" from God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Why? Why is faith so central to living in harmony with God?
 - c. Verse 3 asserts that God made the world we see from things that we cannot see. What does that tell us about faith?
 - d. Most of us have learned that faith is the opposite of doubt – and that doubt is bad. Growing up, what were you taught to believe about doubt?
3. In the Bible, Abraham and Sarah are regarded as models of what it looks like to live by faith. They're often called the "Father" and "Mother" of faith. Read Hebrews 11:8-10.
 - a. Verse 8 says "Abraham set out, not knowing where he was going." The implication is that God called Abraham to leave the comfort of his home without telling him where he was going to eventually settle. Why? Why would God do that?
 - b. Read Genesis 12:1-4. What kinds of doubts and questions must have flooded Abraham's mind when he heard God calling him to leave his home?
 - c. Why do you suppose Abraham ultimately took the risk and made the move?
 - d. Samantha told how she felt a call and passion for pastoral ministry, but had always grown up in churches that taught women can't be pastors. For her, embracing the call to become a pastor, coupled with her move to Indiana, was fraught with doubt and required a lot of faith. When in your life have you faced a similar dilemma, feeling torn between faith and doubt? What happened?
4. A bold geographic move was not the only challenge Abraham and Sarah faced. Becoming a "great nation" also required that they produce offspring. Yet they were 100 years old and still had none. Read Hebrews 12:11-12.

- a. Put verse 12 in your own words. What do you hear it saying?
 - b. Read Genesis 18:1-15. This is the passage that tells us about Sarah laughing at the prospect of having a child in her old age. What kinds of doubts and questions must have flooded Sarah's mind when she heard God calling her to bear a child in her old age?
 - c. Why do you suppose Sarah and Abraham ultimately took the risk of trying to conceive and raise a child at their advanced age?
 - d. How do you think they felt when the child was born?
 - e. What lessons should we learn from the story of Abraham and Sarah?
5. Samantha also reminded us of the biblical story of Gideon (Judges 6). God called Gideon, a farmer, to become a mighty warrior who would lead Israel's resistance to an enemy nation that had occupied their land. Gideon had trouble believing God was calling him to this role. So he asked for two signs. Read Judges 6:36-40.
- a. Did God get angry with Gideon for asking for a sign? If not, why not?
 - b. Have you ever asked and received an important sign from God? What happened?
 - c. When is it appropriate to ask for a sign?
6. Samantha also reminded us of the biblical story of the Apostle Thomas, who doubted Jesus' resurrection. Read John 20:24-29.
- a. What should we learn from this story about how God responds to our doubts?
7. In her sermon, Samantha said, "You don't want to wake up some day and realize you missed something HUGE that could have happened between you and God." So she asked each of us to consider: "What crazy big hairy audacious thing might God be calling you to?"
- a. How would you answer her question? What big step of faith do you sense God may be calling you to take?
 - b. What are your doubts or questions about that calling?
 - c. Do you think you're going to summon the faith to respond to that call?