

# FAITH TO SWIM UPSTREAM

DATE: SUNDAY, 14TH OF NOVEMBER 2021 | FAITH SERIES: PART 2

## HEBREWS 11:7

*By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.*

## GENESIS 6:13-22

*So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."*

*Noah did everything just as God commanded him.*

### NOTES FOR LEADERS:

This Sunday, we officially opened our new building extension. It has been an incredible journey of faith and provision, and we are overwhelmed by God's kindness and grace. This is His work – far beyond what any one of us could have achieved in our own strength. We trust that many more people's lives will be reached and changed through the increased size of our Nation Changers and CityHope Disaster relief distribution centres.

## START TALKING

1. What aspect of Sunday's message challenged you? Why?
2. What is something you can celebrate this week?

## START THINKING

1. Read Genesis 6:13-22 and Hebrews 11:7. How does the example of Noah's faith help us today?
2. Noah's family was saved because of his unwavering faith. What opportunities are there for you to pass your faith on to future generations?

## START SHARING

1. Share about a time where your faith was tested by opposition from others. How did you respond?
2. On Sunday, Steve said that Noah suffered the loss of everything he had ever known when the floods destroyed everything. Yet still, he walked faithfully with God. We've been through some pretty turbulent times in the last 18 months and chartered some unknown territory. How have you seen God through the trials of the Covid pandemic and other issues we are currently dealing with as a society?

## START PRAYING

Pray as a group that God's love and power will become so real to you that you'll want to share Him with others. Ask boldly that He'll help you to share your faith with specific people.

## START DOING

Can you think of one area in your life where you are not walking with God by faith (e.g. relationships, work, etc.)? Find a verse of Scripture to encourage you in your faith. What are you going to do to get back on track? Why not start by memorising the verse ;)

# SUMMARY

## OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, in part two of our Faith series, Steve shared a message titled "Faith to swim upstream".

Salmon swim upstream because it is part of their reproductive life cycle. Salmon are born in freshwater rivers, spend most of their lives in the ocean and then return to the place they were born to lay their own eggs. Salmon swimming upstream is both a form of migration and a way to ensure that their young survive long enough to hatch and grow into adults. The journey is challenging but leads to the successful salmon populations that animals and humans depend on for food. This is an excellent metaphor for faith, courage and tenacity because the stream is always pushing against the salmon.

Our culture and circumstances around us are like a great big river trying to push us back and lead us to live mediocre rather than faith-filled lives. It's far easier in most circumstances just to go with the flow of the current rather than to swim upstream and become the person that God has called us to be. Apart from the stream of culture and circumstances pushing us, we also have our own internal inertia when it comes to some aspects of our faith. But God is calling us to be people that swim upstream - to live a life of faith that is different.

The book of Hebrews was written to believers that were under pressure. Some had abandoned meeting together with other believers, and others were on the brink of giving up on their faith. In chapters 1 to 10, the writer shares about the superiority of Christ. Then in chapter 11, he takes a "hall of fame" type journey through the Old Testament - telling us of ordinary people who lived extraordinary lives of faith and that we should imitate their faith.

This week, we learned some lessons in faith from the story of Noah: *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.* Hebrews 11:7.

Noah was one of the most courageous people in the Old Testament, and his story can be found in Genesis, chapters 6-9. To summarise some of his story we look at some text from Genesis 6:5-10:

*The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time...*

*But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord...*

*Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.*

We can see four things about Noah in Genesis, chapters 6-9:

### 1. He must have been ridiculously lonely.

Imagine being the only person on earth (apart from your family) who believes in the One True God and follows Him wholeheartedly! In 2 Peter 2:5 Noah is called a preacher of righteousness.

### 2. He is given a hectically tough assignment.

He is told to build an ark 135m long, 23 m wide and 14m high (3000m<sup>2</sup> - ¾ size of the CityHill building!). Many theologians believe that there had been no rain on earth prior to the floods. *Noah did everything just as God commanded him.* Genesis 6:22

### 3. He suffered the loss of everything he had ever known of the world.

This challenges us with whatever loss we have suffered!

### 4. An amazing rescue takes place.

Apart from the animals, there were only 8 humans on the ark. This was like a 'reset'

of the entire human race. God gives a promise to Noah, saying he'll never destroy the world again by floods. (The rainbow is a sign of God's promise).

The writer of Hebrews, reflecting on the incredible story of Noah, summarises it in this sentence:

*By faith Noah  
when warned about things not yet seen,  
in holy fear built an ark  
to save his family.*  
Hebrews 11:7

There is so much in this story that challenges us and that we can apply to our lives:

**1. By faith ...** It wasn't just Noah who had to live a life swimming upstream; it's something that is relevant to all of us. Despite the ridicule, he faithfully worked on building the ark, day by day, until the floods came. God is looking to us to do the same - every day, doing the next right thing, by faith.

**2. When warned about things not yet seen** - Just like Noah, we have been warned about things unseen: judgement of the world and destruction of the world by fire (2 Peter) and ultimately, Christ's return. For those of us who have lived out lives of faith, the judgment brings reward.

**3. In holy fear built an ark** - The ark is a picture of Christ, and the floodwaters represent God's judgment against sin. There is only one safe place - INSIDE the ark floating on the waters. A picture of the refuge that Christ offers us. This is not based on our actions but on Christ's sacrifice. The story of Noah urges us to find ourselves in Christ's rescue - His generous offer of forgiveness.

**4. To save his family** - Only 8 people in the whole world chose to enter the ark. They were all Noah's family. Because Noah stepped forward, and his family followed. This shows the power of husbands and fathers making decisions of faith.

Result: By faith, he became the heir of righteousness...

Almost 40 years ago, a man was radically saved out of a self-centred, God-rejecting life. From that day forward, he set out to walk his own journey of faith. He started gathering with his family and a few friends on Sunday mornings, and out of those gatherings this church (CityHill) was birthed. That man was Erick Tocknell. This church's impact on the local community and globally is extensive - yet Eric didn't know any of that when he started walking faithfully with God. He is a great example of how one man's faith has an untold impact. We have no idea what impact our faith today will have on tomorrow. But God is calling us to be those that swim upstream, people who don't just go with the current of our culture and our own inertia but live a faith-filled life that honours Him.

How will your story turn out? Will these words ring true of your life one day:

By faith \_\_\_\_\_ [insert your name]  
when warned about things not yet seen  
in holy fear built their life on Jesus  
to save themselves and others.

Are you swimming upstream or just going with the flow?