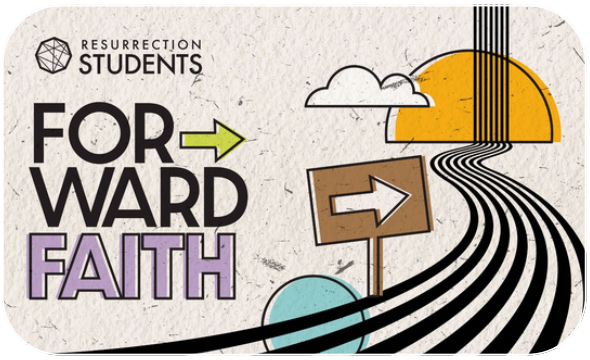

RESURRECTION STUDENTS

FORWARD FAITH

4-WEEK SERIES ON LIVED-OUT FAITH

UNIT OVERVIEW

Faith can be a nebulous thing. It's a word we throw around in church that we assume people understand, yet it can actually be hard to describe. Faith can be pigeon-holed as merely a religious word, similar to 'belief' or 'conviction.' Sometimes we think only people who go to church or adhere to certain religious tenets are 'people of faith.' But in reality *faith is something everyone exercises*. We all put our *faith* in something or someone when we trust, believe, and have confidence in something outside of ourself. This mean faith is not merely something that happens in our head or our heart; it is to be lived out by our life!

For this series (and the theme of this school year) we are challenging students to not just have faith in general, but to live out a faith in Jesus, a faith that moves them **FORWARD.** We want students to experience a faith that is their own, a faith that is alive and thriving, and a faith that moves them from who they are to who God is leading them to become.

TEACHING OUTLINE

1 **WEEK 1: THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH**
Main Point: Faith takes God at His word.
Scriptures: Hebrews 11:1-3

2 **WEEK 2: THE MOVEMENT OF FAITH**
Main Point: Faith moves us forward.
Scriptures: Hebrews 11:8-12 (story of Abraham's journey)

3 **WEEK 3: THE ENDURANCE OF FAITH**
Main Point: Faith perseveres through struggle.
Scriptures: Hebrews 11:32-40

4 **WEEK 4: THE FOCUS OF FAITH**
Main Point: Faith focuses on Jesus.
Scriptures: Hebrews 12:1-2

SUPPLIES

1
- 25-50 random objects
- paper (1 sheet per student)
- black markers (1 per student)

2
- one piece of 8.5 x 11 paper for each student

3
- river rocks (1 per student)
- acrylic paint or paint markers
- paint brushes
- wet wipes for cleanup

4
- playdough/figets

DIRECTOR GUIDE | Week One
The Foundation of Faith

Main Point: Faith takes God at His word.
Scriptures: Hebrews 11:1-3

Are you a trusting person? Do you typically believe what people tell you? Have you been told you are gullible or have 'blind faith?' Or maybe the opposite is true, that you are a cynic, a skeptic, and just because someone told you something doesn't mean you'll believe it at face value. For you, undeniable proof needed before you trust someone or something.

The God of the Bible is a speaking God. It's one of the very first things we learn about God in Scripture. Genesis 1:3 begins, *"And God said…"* and by His word, all of creation was made. God is not mute. He is not unknowable. God is not absent. God speaks, and God reveals Himself, His desires, and His character to us through what He says.

The question is not, "Does God speak?" but rather, "Do we trust what He has to say?" Having faith in God starts with taking Him at His word, trusting what He says, and believing that if God says it, it's true, and it's all for our good and His glory.

In this first message of 'Forward Faith' we will talk about how and why we should trust the words of a God we can't see.

LARGE GROUP GAMES

Active Game: Minefield
One player is blindfolded and must navigate through an open area of scattered objects using only the verbal directions of a guide, who can only lead them by verbal instructions. If the blindfolded player runs into an object, they must return to the start. Have several pairs of students go, and see who can make it through the minefield the fastest!

Screen Game: Line Up
Divide students into small groups or by grade and have them line up by the category on the screen.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- 25-50 random objects from your church closet/youth room
- paper (1 sheet per student)
- black markers (1 per student)

SCRIPTURE

Romans 1:20, John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:1-3

TEACHING IDEAS

- **God is a Speaking God.**
  - Throughout scripture God speaks in all sorts of ways to all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons.
    - Ex: angels, burning bush, writing on the wall, donkey
    - He speaks to create, to give commands and information, to reveal His plan, to provide comfort and care
- **God's Word makes the invisible visible.**
    - Creation (Romans 1:20); we can see invisible attributes of God by the visible aspects of creation
    - Jesus (John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:1-3); Jesus is fully God and fully human, His words and actions carry the weight and authority of God
- **Faith takes God at His word.**
  - Faith is knowing what God says.
  - Faith is asking and wrestling with tough questions.
  - Faith is trusting that what God says is true and good.
- **Ending:**
  - God is not afraid of our doubts or questions.
  - He's not afraid of us digging deeper to get answers.
  - The goal of the Christian life is to not have *blind faith* but to have *strong faith,* full of confidence in who God is, what God says, and why God says the things He does.

STUDENT CHALLENGE

Find 3 promises from Scripture. Remind yourself of them daily, trusting that what God says is true and good.

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OPENING QUESTIONS

Leaders: Choose the one that will work best for your group!

- If you came with a warning label, what would it say?
- What's the strangest thing someone convinced you was true before you found out was a lie?
- Are you a trusting person? Do you tend to believe what people tell you or not?
- What makes someone trustworthy? Is God trustworthy? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY "Blind Pictionary"

Give each student a blank piece of paper and a black marker. Have a mentor describe the picture on the next page while students draw what they hear based on their own interpretation. Keep the descriptions simple and open-ended. After 3 minutes, have students share their drawings and compare them to the original picture.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- What's the difference between knowing what God says and actually trusting what God says?
- Is it okay to have questions or doubts about God? Why or why not? What are you some questions or doubt you (or someone you know) have about God?
- What are some things that God says that you have a hard time believing and trusting? (examples: God loves me, God is with me, I am made for a purpose, etc)

HIGH SCHOOL

Use some of the middle school questions as well.

- What's the difference between blind faith and a strong, confident faith?
- How much trust do you put into what God says? (low trust, mid trust, high trust). What would it take for you to increase that trust?

STUDENT CHALLENGE

Find 3 promises from Scripture. Remind yourself of them daily, trusting that what God says is true and good.

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DIRECTOR GUIDE | Week Two
The Movement of Faith

Main Point: Faith moves us forward.
Scriptures: Hebrews 11:8-12

Saying you have faith when life is comfortable and predictable is one thing. Following God's calling and commands when it costs us something and leads us into the unknown is quite another experience. This is what Abram and Sarai learned firsthand when God told them to pack their things, leave their homeland, and travel to an unknown destination where God promised to bless not only them but many generations after them (read Genesis 12).

Abram took God at His word (which we looked at last week) and trusted that what God told him was true. Despite not knowing exactly where God was leading him or what the journey would look like, Abram faithfully followed, believing there was something better in store.

Real faith means doing something with what you believe, putting your faith into action. It means actually forgiving someone, actually being vulnerable with your struggles, actually standing up for what's right, and actually doing what God says even when it's not popular.

This is the kind of life God wants us all to experience, because it makes us more into the people God wants us to become; people that reflect Jesus to the world!

LARGE GROUP GAMES

Active Game: Ultimate Simon Says
Have a student or mentor who is good on stage be 'Simon.' Normal rules apply, but make sure the game is challenging with rapid-fire clues, funny prompts, and misdirection.

- Simon says walk like a penguin.
- Simon says make your best dinosaur noise.
- Simon says the floor is lava.
- Simon says pretend you're stuck in slow motion.
- Simon says act like you're underwater.

Screen Game: Truth of Chair
This game combines musical chairs with truth or dare. No eliminations!

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- one piece of 8.5 x 11 paper for each student

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 12:1-4, Genesis 15:5-7

TEACHING IDEAS

- **Opening: Which person has faith?**
  - Someone who believes a plane will fly OR someone who gets on the phone to take a flight
  - Someone who believes a chair will hold them OR someone who sits down
  - Someone who believes a parachute will work OR someone who actually jumps out of the plane with one on
  - The point: Faith goes beyond knowing or believing something is true. It requires action and movement.
- **Story: Abram and Sarai had faith.**
  - Faith as *Movement*: Genesis 12:1-4
    - Abram and Sarai followed God's lead, moving to an unknown place that God was leading them
  - Faith as *Belief*: Genesis 15:5-7
    - God tells Abram that he will bless him and give him many generations, and Abram trusts his word
  - Faith requires *both*. Trusting what God says AND a willingness to follow/move where God leads.
- **Ending: What's my next step with God?**
  - Belief may be where faith begins, but how it grows is when you take next steps to follow God's lead.
  - What is my faith in God asking me to do?
  - Where is God inviting you to take a next step?
    - Baptism, studying scripture, serving, inviting a friend

STUDENT CHALLENGE

Identify one simple next step you can take this week (get specific) and do it!

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OPENING QUESTIONS

Leaders: Choose the one that will work best for your group!

- What's your most-used emoji? (bonus points if they can recreate it with their face!)
- What's the craziest or most thrilling thing you've done or would be willing to do? (ex: skydiving, roller coaster, bungee jumping) Why would you have faith in surviving that activity?

ACTIVITY "Paper Airplane Challenge"

Give every student a piece of paper and two minutes to make a paper airplane. They can either figure it out on their own or follow this step-by-step video. Afterwards, have everyone fly their plane to see whose goes the farthest. *(following the video requires trusting the instructions without knowing exactly how the plane will turn out. In the same way, faith means trusting God enough to follow His direction and take the next step, even when we can't see the whole picture.)*

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- What's the difference between believing something and actually doing something (like the examples of getting on a plane, skydiving, etc). How does that relate to faith in God?
- Abram and Sarai didn't know God's entire plan, but they followed anyways, trusting that He would lead them to a good place. Do you like to know all the details of a plan, or are you comfortable trusting and learning the details along the way.

HIGH SCHOOL

Use some of the middle school questions as well.

- What usually keeps people from taking a step of faith (ex: fear, comfort, doubt, control, other people's opinions) What keeps you from a taking a step of faith? (be specific)
- What are next steps of faith that God asks of all of us? Which one is he asking of you??

STUDENT CHALLENGE

Identify one simple next step you can take this week (get specific) and do it!

DIRECTOR GUIDE | Week Three
The Endurance of Faith

Main Point: Faith perseveres through struggle.
Scriptures: Hebrews 11:32-40 (faith

Living out faith in Jesus comes with a warning label: *you may face some big challenges.* This is not a new experience for people of faith; Hebrews 11 recounts some of the struggles faithful men and women of scripture faced (torture, being mocked, prison, afflictions, mistreatment, and even death.) Despite all these difficulties, these individuals were commended for the faith in God they displayed. Scripture even says they "were approved through their faith." God was pleased with the faith they had even when life was difficult.

Faith in Jesus may not lead us to experience some of these same challenges today, but other modern difficulties may come our way:

- living with integrity could lose you friendships or popularity
- choosing forgiveness may mean you give up the satisfaction of getting revenge
- loving people different than you may mean you are misunderstood
- living for God may mean others judge you, think you're weird, or make fun of you

Jesus promised that those who follow Him will experience difficulty (John 16:33). But take heart: *when faith leads to struggle, Jesus remains for us and promises to be with us*!

LARGE GROUP GAMES

Active Game: Finger Jousting
Two players lock hands, extend their pointer finger, and battle to land a touch on their opponent. You can play this game without a screen. The screen games gives some fun variations so you can play multiple rounds, students facing off against different opponents!

Screen Game: Rock Paper Scissors
It's the classic game, except everyone is playing against the screen. If you win, stay standing. If you lose, sit down. Last player standing wins!

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- river rocks (1 per student)
- acrylic paint or paint markers
- paint brushes
- wet wipes for cleanup

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 5:8, James 1:2-4, 2 Corinthians 4:17

TEACHING IDEAS

- **Struggle is inevitable.**
  - Struggle is common to the human experience. It is something we all have in common, from the people in scripture, to the early followers of Jesus, to all of us today.
  - Experiencing struggle goes beyond just people of faith; everyone experiences it. Having faith in God doesn't remove struggle from our life, but it give our struggles a purpose.
  - Faith in God makes the struggle worth it.
  - Jesus himself faced many struggles and grew in obedience because of it. (Hebrews 5:8)
- **Struggle builds endurance.**
  - The same way lifting weights make you stronger and training for a marathon makes you faster, struggles in life grow us spiritually stronger.
  - Struggles help us become more dependent on God, more reliant on him to see us through. (James 1:2-4)
- **Struggle points to something better.**
  - The people mentioned in Hebrews 11 faced great struggles, but held onto a promise of something better in their future.
  - Struggle is never the final word. For those who put their faith in God, enduring struggle leads to something better.
  - Our temporary struggles pale in comparison to the glory God has in store for us (2 Corinthians 4:17)

STUDENT CHALLENGE

When you face a struggle this week, pray that God would remind you that *He is with you* in the middle of it!

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OPENING QUESTIONS

Leaders: Choose the one that will work best for your group!

- You have to survive a month without one of the following. Which do you choose?
  - no wi-fi, no snacks between meals, no complaining, phone only used for text/calls, wear wet socks 30 min/day, someone else chooses what you eat, no sleeping in on the weekend
- What's a small inconvenience that makes you irrationally angry?

ACTIVITY "God is my Rock"

Every student receives one river rock/smooth stone. Put an assortment of paint colors in the middle of the group. Have students decorate their rock however they want as a reminder that God is with them through whatever struggles they face. Encourage students to keep their rock in a place where they'll be reminded of this truth often.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- What struggle listed from Hebrews 11 would you have not wanted to face?
- Have you ever had to choose between doing what you knew was right and doing what everyone else was doing? Did it cost you something?
- When something in life is difficult, what helps you remember God is with you?

HIGH SCHOOL

Use some of the middle school questions as well.

- What are pressures you face that make it difficult to live out faith?
- Have you ever had to sacrifice popularity, comfort, or an opportunity because you knew it wasn't what God wanted you to do? What happened?

STUDENT CHALLENGE

When you face a struggle this week, pray that God would remind you that *He is with you* in the middle of it!

DIRECTOR GUIDE | Week Four
The Focus of Faith

Main Point: Faith focuses on Jesus.
Scriptures: Hebrews 12:1-2

Your faith is only as strong as what you believe in.

Let that sink in for a moment. It's better to have a little bit of faith in something powerful than a lot of faith in something weak. For example, I can have all the faith in the world that a paper airplane will safely transport me to New York City, but it will never happen. Why? It's not because my faith is weak, but because the object of my faith can't actually accomplish the thing I'm believing it can.

For followers of Jesus, we are not called to put our faith/hope/trust/belief/conviction in something that is very powerful, something that can deliver on every promise He's made: God himself. This is why scripture tells us that even small faith (like that of a mustard seed) placed in the hands of God is a very powerful thing. Not because of the fiath itself, but because of the object of that faith. (Matthew 17:20)

For this final week of our series, we are going to talk about the person and focus our faith should be placed in: Jesus Christ, who is *the author and perfector of our faith*!

LARGE GROUP GAMES

Active Game: Tick Tock Boom
Group stands in a circle equal distance apart with one 'detonator' in the middle who is blindfolded. As the group passes a ball clockwise, the detonator says, 'Tick, Tock, Tick, Tock' until finally they say 'BOOM.' The student holding the ball or closest to the ball sits down. The cirlce stays in their same positions, making it more difficult to pass the ball. Play until all but one are eliminate who can then become the new 'detonator!'

Screen Game: Attention Challenge
This three-minute countdown video instructs students to focus on the 'red ball' and not paying attention to the words or images/videos that pop up throughout.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- playdough/figets for small group

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 5:8, James 1:2-4, 2 Corinthians 4:17

TEACHING IDEAS

- **We are more distracted that ever.**
  - We struggle to focus! The average attention span is 47 sec.
  - Distracted drivers injured or killed over 300,000 people in the US alone this past year.
  - *What causes it?* Our tech devices, social media scrolling, and our busy schedule keeps us far too hurried and restless.
- **Even amidst the many distractions, we can focus on Jesus.**
  - Focus on Jesus, who is the prize (Philippians 3:12-14)
  - Running faithfully towards Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:24-25)
- **Living your faith in this distracted world is a marathon.**
  - **Cloud of Witnesses**: People of faith have gone before you. Their legacy can encourage you when you feel like you're distracted or losing focus. These champions of faith are like the crowds lining the streets of a marathon with signs and noisemakers to cheer on the runners to run their race well.
  - **Let us lay aside every hindrance.** Experienced marathon runners run very lightly. They only bring with them the stuff necessary to run the race, nothing more. In the same way. followers of Jesus should not run weighed down by sin or shame (because Jesus already put those things to death!)
  - **Keep your eyes on Jesus.** Jesus went before us and has already finished (and won!) the race. Jesus faced distraction, but didn't give in. Jesus faced tiredness, but didn't give up. Jesus faced struggle, but completed God's mission for us.

STUDENT CHALLENGE

Set a screen time limit this week and ask God to help you stay focused on Him and what He's called you to do

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OPENING QUESTIONS

Leaders: Choose the one that will work best for your group!

- What is the most random thing you've ever gotten distracted by?
- What's something easy for you to focus on (a sports, a topic, an app, etc).
- If your brain had a "Do Not Disturb" button, when would you use it and why?

ACTIVITY "Count to 30"

Students sit/stand in a circle. The challenge is to count from 1to 30 in random order. They cannot go in order around the circle and only one person can speak at a time. If two people say a number or if a number is skipped, the group starts over at 1. Once the group gets to 30, have them do it again as leaders add in distractions (music playing, leaders asking questions, students stand on one foot and switch feet when they say a number, etc)

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS *(hand out playdough/figets for small group time)*

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- What's something you really want to pay attention to, but still find yourself getting distracted?
- Who are some people in your life who cheer you on to focus on Jesus?
- What are some things in your life you need to 'set aside' in order to not distract you from living out your faith in Jesus? (could be a sin, shame, a bad habit, unhealthy relationship, etc)

HIGH SCHOOL

Use some of the middle school questions as well.

- Have you ever heard someone say, "You just need to have more faith"? What's the problem with that advice? What's something better to tell someone who's struggling with their faith?
- What does it practically look like to 'keep you eyes on Jesus' in everyday life? (ex: reading and memorizing scripture, setting time time to be with God, making God-honoring, decisions)

STUDENT CHALLENGE

Set a screen time limit this week and ask God to help you stay focused on Him and what He's called you to do