We ought to learn from the example of God's faithful people in the Bible

It's always interesting and enjoyable to think about the characters who are portrayed in the Bible. The more we learn about them, the more fascinating they become. But the point of studying these heroes of the faith is not merely to enjoy the stories; it's to profit from their teaching. *We ought to learn from the example of God's faithful people in the Bible.* These people can actually help us to do a better job of serving God.

The Hebrew writer gives us this encouragement: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hb. 12:1,2). In this text, the "cloud of witnesses" refers to all those faithful people in the past who have lived obediently before God and gone on to their reward. What they did, we can do also — and they are urging us to keep going forward.

It should help us to understand that the people in the stories of the Bible were real people, and not just imaginary heroes in a fictional presentation. These people lived long ago, but they lived in the same world we live in. They were not perfect, and many of them struggled with serious problems in their lives, but they learned to make the choice to serve God faithfully — and there is no reason why we can't make the same choice.

One thing we learn when we study the individuals in the Bible is that God's will is possible — it is "doable." To be sure, God often requires things that involve some difficulty, for He loves us too much to protect us from hard experiences. But the men and women we read about in the Bible show us that we can do God's will if we take it one step at a time, as they did.

As we go through this week, let's pause from time to time and think how we can use the stories of God's faithful people long ago to strengthen our faith as we live in the present day. If we faithfully obey the Lord as they did, one day we will go to be with the Lord as they have!

Monday: Genesis 22:1-14

Key Idea: Abraham is a great example of faith.

Questions for Family Growth: In this story, what was it that God told Abraham to do? Even though he did not understand everything about God's command, why did Abraham trust God? How can we learn to trust God more when we face tough decisions?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 26:28.

Tuesday: Genesis 45:1-15

Key Idea: Joseph is a great example of forgiveness.

Questions for Family Growth: What had Joseph's brothers done to him? What do you suppose Joseph's feelings might have been concerning his brothers' treatment of him? What does it mean to forgive someone? Why is it hard to forgive others?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:1.

Wednesday: Exodus 3:1-12

Key Idea: Moses is a great example of leadership.

Questions for Family Growth: What was the great work God wanted Moses to do? Did Moses want to do it at first? Why do you think he decided to do it anyway? Thinking about the characteristics of Moses, what kind of person makes a good leader in God's work today?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:2.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 17:31-54

Key Idea: David is a great example of courage.

Questions for Family Growth: How would you define courage? Why did it take so much courage for David to do what he did? What was the thing that gave David his great courage? What are some situations that require us to have courage today?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:3.

Friday: John 13:1-20

Key Idea: Jesus is our perfect example in all things.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Jesus do for His disciples in this particular story? What practical lesson was He teaching? If we want to follow Jesus' example, what are some ways we can serve others? Consider Gal. 6:2.

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 27:4.

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com