



MARKED

BIBLE STUDY



B I B L E S T U D Y

The Bible says that when you believed, God MARKED you with His promised Holy Spirit. It also says that you've been MARKED by Him from the beginning of time. He formed you in your mother's womb. He designed the universe so that you would be here at this exact time and place. He has a race MARKED out for you.

But the prince of this fallen world has tried to leave his own mark on you. He's attempted to mark you with lies, insecurity and unbelief in an effort to destroy your identity in Christ. He's on a mission to kill any hope you have of a future.

This 12-week course will help you discover what marks you; both your uniqueness and your weaknesses. You will learn to defend your identity as a believer while you glean perspective from the stories of Biblical characters who—like you—were MARKED by God. Embrace your distinctive purpose and God's ultimate plan for you, and become equipped to make your mark on this world!

DEFINITION

FAITH

/FĀTH/

Complete trust or confidence in someone or something.

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:1, 6

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Hebrews 11:11-12

And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

BIG IDEA

The writer of Hebrews dedicates an entire chapter to several historical giants of great faith and action. In modern terms you might say, "they put their money where their mouth is." Listed among these is Sarah, the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac. Let's take a closer look at her story. God instructs Abraham to change her name from Sarai to Sarah, which means "princess, women of strength," and promises to bless her as the mother of nations and kings. But Sarah is a down to earth gal and laughs when she hears the news. "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure," she asks. Basically, what she was saying is that my eggs have dried up, my husband lost his swagger, and I am way past my baby making years. At 90 years old with a body full of cobwebs, bearing a child seemed like an impossibility. It didn't help that years of hoping and yet never being able to have a child played deep into her disappointment and lack of faith.

How many of us have felt that same way? How many of us have had a hard time believing the promises of His word? Our mind is filled with doubt and our heart is consumed with disbelief. Failed hopes and dreams settle in the deep places of our soul. In Proverbs 13:12 it says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life." That day God was going to fulfill Sarah's dream of having a child, but not only one child, many children, a mother of many nations. I love the response of the Lord after Sarah laughed, He said, "Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son." See, God loves to fulfill His word and promises. God loves to do the impossible. God loves to stretch our faith in ridiculous situations. He loves to prove skeptics wrong. Will you trust him today? Will you trust him with your family, friends, finances, and future? Will you lay down your disappointments of the past and believe he has a wonderful plan for you?

CONVERSATION

1. Read Genesis 21:1-7. In vs 6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." God turned Sarah's doubtful laughter into laughter for joy and thanksgiving! What areas of your life do you need to replace doubt and disbelief with trust and thanksgiving?

2. Discuss building blocks of faith. What scriptures encourage you? What Biblical characters or people have inspired you to grow in your faith? Why? What friends do you have around you that will challenge you in your faith?

3. James 2:14-26 talks about how faith without works (action) is dead, and that as born-again believers our faith is revealed by our obedience. Examine the areas you've been disobedient, and what it reveals about your faith. What action steps do you need to take in order to activate your faith by works? What's one thing you will do this week to put your faith into action?

TAKE AWAY

The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 are mentioned for their extraordinary obedience in the face of uncertainty and ridicule. By faith Noah... By faith Abraham... By faith Isaac... By faith Jacob... By faith the walls of Jericho fell... By faith Rahab... and so on. Through your complete surrender to God and your enduring trust in his promises, you too can subdue kingdoms, administer justice, obtain promised blessings, close the mouths of lions, extinguish the power of raging fire, escape the edge of the sword, be made strong out of weakness, become mighty and unbeatable in battle, put the enemy's forces to flight. How does your faith-chapter begin?

"By faith I _____."

When you find yourself losing hope remember Grandma Esther Marocco's famous equation: Faith + Action - Doubt = A Miracle.