

MARATHON FAITH

1 – LOOK WHERE YOU WANT TO GO – JESUS

- Have you ever completed a race or an endurance event? What happened that you didn't expect, or what did you learn from your experience?
- How can you look ahead and dream but follow through in the process?
- Looking to Jesus first is vital to finishing strong. The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 are meant to encourage and strengthen us, but they shouldn't be our initial go-to. Were you ever tempted to look to anyone or anything else instead of going to Jesus first?
- Of the three incorrect views of Jesus (Low View, Distorted View, No View), which do you struggle with most and how can a right view of Jesus help you run your spiritual race better?
- Read Proverbs 29:18 and Psalm 119:105. According to these verses, how can you look where you want to go instead of focusing on the "big" problems in life?
- Are you someone who needs a tangible reminder for your "why," like the missionary's picture on John's bike? Take an evening to get creative this week and make something to remind you of your "why" to urge you on when things get tough.

2 – DIE DAILY – ABEL

- Have you ever failed and had a wake-up call? Share how you overcame and what long-lasting effects it had on your life.
- Cain kept the best for himself instead of “dying” to his own selfish desires. In what area of your life do you struggle to “die daily” as Cain did? Read 2 Chronicles 7:14 to discover the process of repentance.
- What does Lordship mean to you and how can this area of your life look differently if you submit it to Jesus?
- According to John 5:19 and Philippians 2:8, how did Jesus model submission for us?
- Read Psalm 139:23-24, then ask the Lord to help you surrender whatever is hindering your closeness to God.
- What practical step can you take to die to yourself and give God your very best?

3 – WALK WITH GOD – ENOCH

- The wicked world Enoch lived in made it difficult for him to have a personal relationship with God. What in your culture makes it difficult for you to walk with the Lord?
- Read John 15:1-17 and use the S.O.A.P. method. What verse did you focus on? What are your observations? What is your application? Explain what Jesus means to “abide.”
- How can you personally “take a walk” with God? Is it in the woods? In the solitude of your prayer closet? Or perhaps in the early morning? Pray and consider how you can find your secret place to spend quality time with the Lord.
- Study the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 and write down the specific methods Jesus laid out for a relationship-driven prayer.
- List all the characteristics of the Lord that speak to your heart and then meditate on how you can practically strive for closeness with God through your love for Him.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to one book of the Bible and spend this week implementing the S.O.A.P. method into your personal time with the Lord every day. Choose one verse from the week to memorize and record on your own key-ringed index card.

4 – SWING THAT HAMMER – NOAH

- Like Noah did with the Ark, share a personal story that you felt God was calling you to do that seemed a little “crazy.”
- What does it mean to you to fear the Lord?
- What is an area in your life you can be faithful in even if it seems small?
- In what way does Matthew 6:33 and Matthew 7:7-8 provide wisdom concerning patience?
- Have you lost the faithfulness to swing your own hammer and fulfill God’s vision for you? What can you do today that will rekindle that first excitement you felt at the dreams and hopes God shared with you?
- Do you see your daily life, whether it’s at work or school, or at home as a parent or spouse, as an opportunity for discipleship? How can you change your perspective to fulfill Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:19 right now?

5 – BETTER TOGETHER – ABRAHAM AND SARAH

- Abraham and Sarah had a dream of becoming parents, but they had to wait much longer than expected. Have you ever had to wait for a dream to be fulfilled?
- What are the dangers of having a “non-Christ”-centered marriage?
- If you’re still single, has your dream for a spouse ever dominated your life to the point of driving you further from the Lord? How can you surrender that dream without “settling” as Abraham and Sarah did with Ishmael.
- Of the four ways to wreck your marriage—losing your first love, staying out five nights a week, never going to counseling, and expecting perfection—which one can you relate to most?
- Read 1 John 3:16 and Ephesians 5:22-33. What are your observations of these scriptures and how can you apply them to your relationships?
- What would a marriage look like if both people embraced a relational philosophy of mutual submission and unselfish love?
- What is one change, boundary, or fresh, new idea you can introduce this week to help improve the health of your marriage?

6 – PASS THE BATON – ISAAC

- Who was a spiritual influence in your life and what was one thing they did to help your relationship with the Lord mature?
- Did you ever have a moment with your child that made you realize how important their life is?
- According to Scripture, what does it mean to dedicate your child to the Lord?
- Isaac blessed his own sons in a specific, unique way to them. What does blessing your child look like in your own household, or how can you bless those you are discipling as your “child in the faith” as Timothy was to Paul (1 Timothy 1:2)?
- How will you “play” together as a family this month?
- Describe what your family devotion can look like this week. If your children are young, how can you make it interesting for them, like using a puppet or music?
- In what way can your family volunteer together this month to help others?

7 – FIGHT – JACOB

- Share an experience or embarrassing moment that resulted in shame.
- Did you, as Jacob did, experience failure after failure but God still redeemed you? Read Romans 8:28 and describe one instance of God using your failure for good.
- What price have you paid for being a fighter and standing your ground, wrestling with God over something He allowed in your life or called you to, and how did God bless you afterwards?
- Read 1 John 1:9 and James 5:16 together and discuss how they are connected to confession. After meditating on these verses, take a moment right now to prayerfully confess your sin to God. The enemy wants you to keep your sin secret. What is one thing you can confess right now for prayer, healing, and accountability?
- How can a life of gratitude affect your obedience?
- Share a personal experience where you ran from temptation.

8 – TRIALS POSSESS GREAT PURPOSE – JOSEPH

- How would you respond if you were betrayed, tempted, or forgotten, like Joseph who was sold into slavery, tempted by Potiphar's wife, and forgotten in the prison by the cupbearer?
- Has God ever delivered you from a "fiery" trial (1 Peter 4:12)? Describe one way you grew stronger as a result. How did the Lord help you remain faithful and remember the great purpose through your pain?
- Was there ever someone else's life story or quote, or a moment you witnessed, that affected you deeply enough to help you keep going in the midst of your own trial?
- What is a trial you are burdened with right now?
- John stayed away from Google. How can you personally fight the temptation to worry in the face of trials?
- How can God use your trial as a testimony to others?
- How can you be a friend and pray for someone in your small group right now who's going through a trial?
- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to someone who is struggling with a trial so you can become their pain partner and "fulfill the Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

9 – BE BRAVE – JOCHEBED

- What inspired you most after reading Jochebed's story of overcoming fear?
- What has been your greatest fear? Going into more debt? Getting fired? The fear of death?
- Like Bryce with his bike accident, was there a scary or painful experience that made you lose sight of who the Lord says you are?
- Jochebed didn't fear the edict of the pharaoh; who are you fearing more than God and *His* edicts?
- What has God already done in your life that can help you resist the temptation to worry? Do you believe what God did before, He can do again?
- Read Philippians 4:6-7 and discuss how these verses can help you overcome fear. Pray for each other.

10 – KNOW WHO YOU ARE – MOSES

- Just as Moses used his stuttering mouth as an excuse to not go back to Egypt, what excuses have you given God that have prevented you from becoming who you are in Christ?
- In New Hampshire, John tried to refashion himself into a cowboy. Have you ever tried to become someone you're not in order to become popular or get other people's praise?
- Have you looked for your identity in anything other than God and His Word?
- What voice (yourself, culture, others) needs to be silenced?
- What negative things have you spoken over yourself?
- People's words can cause lifelong pain and a distortion of your identity. It takes forgiveness to heal. Discuss how Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:14-15, and Hebrews 12:15 provide a fuller picture of the process towards continued forgiveness and the why behind it.
- What is God saying to you personally about your identity? Pray and ask the Lord to reveal who He says you are.

11 – ALL IN – RAHAB

- What inspires you from Rahab's story?
- Rahab was daring on several occasions with the spies. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you had to stand firm in your faith more than once to claim victory? How did you feel when you realized "it wasn't over," and you had to be brave once again?
- Describe a time when you didn't feel "good enough" to be used by God.
- Read Philippians 3:8 and share one thing, no matter how small or seemingly absurd, you gave up in obedience to the Lord.
- Do feel God sees your failures instead of your faith? How can you be more like Rahab and not use your past as an excuse to sit on the sidelines?
- How are Deuteronomy 31:6 and the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20 connected, and how can these passages help you be bold enough to go all in?
- In what area of your life can you go "all in?"

12 – DROP THE DEAD WEIGHT – GIDEON

- How does the story of God doing more with Gideon’s 300 than with his 32,000 inspire you to believe God can do more in your life with less?
- How did John “drop the deadweight” during his hunt for Hogzilla?
- According to 1 Corinthians 10:7 and Ephesians 5:5, does idolatry have to do with statues or something else?
- Why does obsessing over the negative make you look more like an unbeliever?
- What “deadweight” is God calling you to get rid of?
- What is one way you can trust in the Lord to help you become healthier in this area?

13 – DON'T LET SUCCESS GET TO YOUR HEAD – BARAK

- Barak trusted God first and foremost, resulting in success. How did he do this? Read 2 Chronicles 20:15 and discuss.
- On the eve of battle Barak chose to depend upon Deborah. How did he know Deborah was the person he needed? Why do you think God created us to depend upon Him and others more than ourselves?
- Describe a time when God humbled you because of pride?
- What is the enemy's most effective strategy to keep you from finishing?
- How did John respond to *Outreach Magazine's* big announcement and what can you learn from his example when you achieve success?
- According to Jesus in Mark 10:43-45, what does it mean to be successful in the Kingdom of God?
- What is one way in which you can keep yourself humble in the wake of success?

14 – DON'T LET FAILURE GET TO YOUR HEART – SAMSON

- Describe a D.N.F. (Did Not Finish) moment in your life.
- What did you observe about Samson's story and how God redeemed his failure?
- What is keeping you from pursuing a comeback through the supernatural power of God?
- How can you keep failure from getting to your heart?
- Read Matthew 26:75 and John 21:15-17. Discuss Peter's journey. Then read Acts 2:38-41. How did God turn Peter's greatest failure into a powerful ministry?
- What is the role of an accountability partner and how do you choose the right one for you to help you get back up after you mess up?
- God desires to redeem your failure by using it to help others. How do you think this will look in your life?

15 — GRIT — JEPHTHAH

- Describe a time in your life when you felt like an underdog.
- Were your parents despised or scorned by society, or have they brought you shame? How did Jephthah overcome his own parental heritage and shame?
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-30. What are the parallels between Paul's description of the Corinthian believers and Jephthah's humble beginnings?
- The enemy uses the words of someone to speak louder than the voice of the Lord. Is someone else's words drowning out the voice of God in your own life? As the Lord gave John Zechariah 4:10, search the scriptures and ask God to reveal your own personal verse to help you overcome discouragement.
- Is your shame preventing you from answering God's call on your life?
- How can you show grit in your own life right now to overcome the odds and become more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37) through Christ?

16 – CONSTANT FORGIVENESS – DAVID

- Describe a moment when someone hurt you deeply and how the power of forgiveness helped you.
- What inspires you about David's story to forgive Saul, even though Saul had been trying to murder him for decades?
- Was there ever a time when someone forgave you? How did it make you feel? Uncomfortable? Overjoyed? Defensive? Convicted?
- If you are struggling with unforgiveness, what stage of the Bitterness Cycle are you in? How is it negatively affecting your life?
- Read Matthew 18:21-35 and describe Jesus' method for resolving conflict.
- Read Colossians 3:13 and describe the #1 reason for extending forgiveness to others. How can this verse lead you to eliminate unresolved conflict in your relationships?
- Who do you need to choose to forgive and what would that look like if you did it tomorrow? Ask the Lord to give you the strength to submit to His call to forgive.

17 – REST TO BE YOUR BEST – SAMUEL

- Did you ever give in to the temptation to overexert yourself? Describe a time when you felt like you were burning out.
- Remember success is not summiting. Are you saying yes to too many things with work? Ministry? Exercising? What are the signs you may be burning out? What is keeping you from slowing your pace and obeying God?
- Like Moses in Exodus 18, do you ever insist upon “going it alone” and doing everything by yourself? What is the root cause behind this behavior?
- Samuel lived in the Temple in the presence of God since birth until he was sent out into ministry. How do you think this helped him to not burn out later in life?
- What can Exodus 31:16-17, Matthew 11:28, and Mark 6:31 teach you about rest?
- What change can you make today so you won’t burn out later when God sends you out to fulfill His purpose for your life?

18 – PERSEVERING WITH PRAYER – DANIEL

- What is your biggest struggle with prayer?
- What inspires you most about Daniel’s priority to prayer and how God’s power was manifested as a result?
- Sometimes even praying before a meal at a restaurant can be a daunting task. Daniel faced far worse consequences for his faithfulness to publicly pray. How does fearing God more than man apply to these situations?
- How does John 15:5 and Matthew 19:26 relate to praying when faced with your own “lion’s den?”
- Go over the P.R.A.Y.E.R. acrostic points. What are some practical ways to revolutionize your prayer life so you don’t get stuck in a rut? How can you practically devote daily time for prayer? A prayer accountability partner? A calendar alert? Ask the Lord to reveal a way in which you can persevere in prayer.
- Have you ever fasted? What did you learn from your experience? What is the Holy Spirit asking you to fast from this month?
- What is something we can agree in prayer over together right now?

19 – AMIGOS – SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO

- Describe how a good friend was there for you during a difficult time.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to obey God rather than bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's image. How did the power of friendship help them not compromise?
- Did you ever witness or fall victim to how "bad company corrupts" (1 Corinthians 15:33 and Proverbs 13:20)? What actions can you take right now to distance yourself from a toxic relationship?
- John lists several qualities of a good friend (Loyal, Fun, Encouraging, Honest, Unselfish). In which of those areas can you improve to become a better friend to others?
- Who is your squad of amigos? If you don't have any yet, pray and ask the Lord to provide the squad you need to finish the race. Don't wait for them to come to you. How can you be a friend to others who will also build you up in your faith?
- How can you help a friend or family member during a trial right now?

20 – THE FINISH LINE – YOU

- What does it mean to finish strong?
- What do you feel God's greatest purpose is for your life? What is one action you can take right now to start fulfilling it?
- How can you answer Jesus' call to make disciples in your current daily life?
- Has God called you to a specific ministry or place? Tell the story of the moment you heard the call from God.
- Are you a stay-at-home Mom, or feel isolated, or as if your talents are being wasted at work? How can you flip the script like Susanna Wesley did and see where you right now as an important calling in the Kingdom of God?
- What's preventing you from pursuing training to become a small group leader and making disciples?
- What do you need most right now so you can cross the finish line?