



FRIENDS OF HOPE DAY (VISITOR'S DAY)

April 9, 2016

Sabbath School Program Heroes of Hope

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SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

Good morning, Sabbath School members. We are delighted to have many Sabbath guests this morning, and our ushering team has collected all their names. We would like to welcome each of our guests in a special way since it is our community guest day.

Project or call the names of the guests one by one and invite each of them to collect a special book or DVD that introduces them to the Seventh-day Adventist Church or Ellen G. White's condensed book Great Hope. While the guests are coming to the front, sing any song that welcomes them to the Sabbath School.

SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

I hope you all feel welcome. Thank you for taking the time to join us this morning. We hope you can stay with us for our special lunch. Once again, we appreciate your visit today. This church is this community's church. Feel free to join us for worship and other services anytime.

We invite all our Sabbath School members and guests to close their eyes and bow their heads as we invite God's presence among us.

Dear God,

We thank You for creating us. We thank You for loving us so much that You sustain us. You give us food. You give us homes. You give us loving family and communities. This morning we invite You and thank You for your presence among us. We pray for each of our guests that are here. We pray that their being here may be a blessing to them and to us. We pray that You inspire all of us with faith and hope in our situations. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Today we are going to hear stories of hope around our theme: Heroes of Hope. This is a selection of some of our heroes of faith in the Bible, specifically in Hebrews Chapter Eleven. Hebrews Eleven has been known as the Hall of Faith because it celebrates the examples of faith that we find throughout the Bible. These are people whose hope stood against all odds. They triumphed against despair and overcame through

their faith in God. These are some of the people who were friends of hope through their challenging circumstances.

Before we share these stories, we invite you to join us as we sing the hymn entitled *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*. This hymn was composed by British hymn writer Edward Mote of the Baptist Church in 1834 in England. Though his parents were ungodly pub owners who were hostile to religion, Mote responded to the preaching of John Hyatt in London. He heard the gospel for the first time at the age of 15, while he was apprenticed to a cabinetmaker. He was converted and became a devout man and a successful cabinetmaker.

When he was 55 years old, Edward Mote became a gospel minister and died a fervent preacher and a prolific hymn writer at the age of 77. Mote composed and published over 100 hymns. He wrote this particular hymn in the morning a week earlier, and the following Sunday Mote took the hymn out of his pocket to sing it for the first time for his fellow churchman's sick wife. The dying Mrs. King was so inspired by the hymn that she requested a copy. That request from his friend's dying wife inspired him to publish the hymn. Let's sing this hymn together meaningfully.

Project the hymn or provide copies for everyone with a well-practiced chorister or praise team leading out.

SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

Thank you very much for singing the hymn. It's a beautiful hymn, isn't? Please welcome to our Friends of Hope program our first Hero of Hope: Abel, the first martyr of faith.

HERO # 1: ABEL (YOUNGISH MALE)

Project the name of ABEL and Hebrews 11:4, or have it tagged on his chest as he walks in from the vestry.

My name was Abel, the second son of the first human beings on earth, Adam and Eve. Vapor is what my name means. My brother was Cain. I was a sheep farmer. I loved my brother and my parents. I was obedient to my parents and to God. I followed my parents' teaching about God, about faith, and faith practices. From time to time we were to give sacrifices to God.

One day Cain and I went to worship God. It was an important and exciting day for me. It was my first day to offer a sacrifice. I was so thrilled that I took my choicest sheep to sacrifice and my brother brought his vegetables. We both presented our sacrifices to God. My brother's sacrifice was rejected, while mine was accepted. You can imagine my joy. While we stood there, suddenly I overheard God talking to my brother about his sacrifice. Afterwards, Cain looked at me as I stood at some distance. He was wearing a

very sad face. Then he asked that we go to a nearby field together. I followed him not suspecting anything, still excited about my worship experience.

When we got to the field he became angry and violent toward me. When I least expected it, my jealous brother attacked and overpowered me. I fell down on my bloodbath. I lay there helpless and eventually died.

Although I died young, I look forward to the Messiah who will come and the hope of resurrection that my parents told me about everyday. I would like to encourage you to live for God so that if you die, you will also be resurrected when the Messiah Jesus comes again. Put your hope in Jesus Christ the ultimate and perfect Sacrifice, Life, and Resurrection. I will be resurrected with some of you one day soon.

SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

Thank you, Abel, for sharing your story with us. Please welcome to our Friends of Hope program our second Hero of Hope: Enoch. This is Mr. Endurance.

HERO # 2: ENOCH (MIDDLE-AGED MALE)

Project the name of ENOCH and Hebrews 11:5, Genesis 5:24, or have it tagged on his chest as he walks in from the pews.

How many of you know me? I was Enoch. My father was Jared, and my son was Methuselah. I was Noah's great grandfather. I lived on earth for 365 years, the youngest of my contemporaries at that time. Some of my contemporaries and my elders lived to be about 900 years. I lived the shortest life. I walked with God all the days of my life. Then one day God took me away into the clouds, in the sight of my fellows, up to the sky and to heaven. Though all my forbearers and contemporaries died, I was translated into heaven without ever dying.

In my days, my peers and contemporaries were corrupt and crooked. I spent my life as a loyal follower of God. Sometimes this got me into trouble with my fellows. I lived faithfully in the hope of the promised Messiah. I walked with God all the days of my life, living among my fellow human beings. I had developed such a close relationship with God that I was ridiculed by some of my peers.

God had revealed to me that when Methuselah dies, there would be a flood that will wipe away humanity. That is why I named him that way. Although I warned them about this, they did not change their ways. My contemporaries did not repent, even though I spoke to them about their sinful ways. I did not abandon them. I was not a hermit, living alone. No, I was a religious man among them. I had a wife and children, like them. I lived with my people but maintained a strong spiritual relationship with God, hoping they would see my example and change their evil ways.

Since you live among your contemporaries who disregard God, I want to urge you to live faithfully anyway. Please walk with God all the days of your life and maintain a vibrant connection with God since you are waiting for God to translate you when Jesus returns. I will see you in heaven when Christ comes again. Keep your hope alive.

SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

Please welcome to our Friends of Hope program our third Hero of Hope: Noah. This is Mr. Perseverance who stood and persevered for 120 years.

HERO # 3: NOAH (SENIOR-AGED MALE)

Project the name of NOAH and Hebrews 11:7, Genesis 5:24 or have it tagged on his chest as he walks in from the side door of the church.

Do you remember me? Your children sing a song: *Who Built an Ark?* I was Noah. My father was Lamech, and my grandfather was Methuselah. I had three sons.

My great grandfather told you how the people of our world became so corrupt, saturated with evil, continually evil thoughts and imagination. People in our days were becoming godless and violent. Like Enoch, I also became the only follower of God among the people of my time, so God decided to clean the whole world. But he first gave them 120 years to change their ways, and that entire time I preached to them. But all of that was futile – they would not repent at all. Instead they ridiculed me. I continued to plead with them to return to God.

I was asked to build a big ship. It's as though they hardened their hearts with each and every nail I hammered. We completed the shipbuilding project with painstaking effort and precision, just as God had specified. We made sure we did everything exactly as God told us, and as a result, the ship was watertight throughout the 150 days of the flood. Every day we did two things – preached and built the ship – until the very last nail of the project. If they did not hear our voices, the people had nails and hammers echoing the coming flood. So while we lived as farmers, we became shipbuilders and preachers. We trusted God and he saw us through. Our hope was tested in every way possible. But we persevered because we trusted God.

You know what was the saddest moment for me? It was when the rain eventually fell and some of the folks who had helped us in the project were outside the door that God had locked. We pleaded with these folks to come on board, but they laughed it off and refused to board the ship. If there is anything I could say to you folks, trust God. When God says He will do it, be sure it's going to happen. It may take 120 or 1200 or 12,000 years, but it is sure to happen.

Right now the whole world is knowingly or unknowingly anticipating Jesus' second coming. We don't know when He is coming, but make sure you are in and are

safe. It will be sad to have only eight people saved, so trust Him and follow Him faithfully to the “T” without wavering.

SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

Incredible, Noah! 120 years preaching the same message to the same people. It is heart breaking that only eight people in the millions that were on earth were saved! I wonder how many people of the seven billion will be saved when Jesus comes again?

Friends, let's now welcome to our Friends of Hope program our fourth Hero of Hope: Abraham. This is Mr. Faith. He is called the father of the faithful because of his example of tenacious faith.

HERO # 4: ABRAHAM (SENIOR-AGED MALE)

Project the name of ABRAHAM and Hebrews 11:8-12 or have it tagged on his chest as he walks in from another side of the church.

Some of you will remember me as Sarah's husband, Isaac's father, Jacob's grandfather and Joseph's great grandfather. My name was Abram which means exalted father. After my long journey with God, God renamed me Abraham or the Father of Many. I am the father of the great nation that no one can number. I became a rancher.

I was called to leave my family to go to a foreign country I did not know. My intentions were not quite understood by my family, friends, and neighbors. Some asked where I was going, and, frankly, I did not know, and I did not pretend as if I knew! All I knew was that God had asked me to leave my hometown to go to a land far away. By faith I travelled and eventually ended up in Canaan, after delaying in Haran. I was just obeying God because I believed he was calling me to something extraordinary. For sure, God had a grand plan! I had to learn to obey God through my many trials.

As soon as we arrived in the Promised Land, we were surprised to notice that the inhabitants were still in the land. We were in danger of being killed by the hostile occupants. That was our first test of faith. Our second crisis was a famine. There was no rain and no food for the animals. We had to make a decision to trust God or to go back. We went to stay in Egypt for a while, hoping the famine in the region would subside. We had livestock to keep alive.

When we were approaching Egypt, I turned to my wife and asked her to lie in order to protect me – that was not a smart move at all, even though I did it twice. In both instances, my lying backfired, but thank God I was spared. An act of grace!

When we returned from Egypt, we, our herds, and flocks had increased. Then Lot and I had to part ways because our increased livestock was too much for our limited grazing land. It got to a point where tensions were building up between our herdsmen. So

I suggested we go separately. I had to trust that God would supply whichever portion of the land Lot chose.

Later on I was beginning to stress over not having an heir. How would I be a father of a great nation, yet I did not have a son? I struggled with that and eventually yielded to Sarah's suggestion to have one of our maids as a surrogate mother. God was faithful and gracious through this all. He eventually gave me a son through my wife. I should have trusted God on this one, as this arrangement brought turmoil in my life. I was caught up between my two fighting women and my two sons. I had to let go of my first born as domestic tensions were brewing, as a result of polygamous proposal – if only I had trusted God to realize His plan for my life, in His own way and in His time! I had moments when I trusted God, but there were moments my faith failed dismally, and this is one of them.

In faith, I had to face a fierce coalition of the region with a small army. It was by grace that we survived because we were outnumbered. Even in strategy we would have been defeated because we lacked military experience.

The greatest test I had to face was giving up my dearest and cherished son as a sacrifice. It was heart rending, but I had to learn to trust God, even when I did not understand.

Friends, trust God in all circumstances! Let your faith save you from many troubles. Don't lose hope. God will realize his plan for you whether the Promised Land has stumbling blocks, or simply dries up, or whether you go childless. Keep your hope in God high and allow Him to reward you in His way and in His time. Don't go back or take matters into your hands. Go forward in faith all the time. Keep God's long range plan and promises in mind. He wants us to be in the Promised Land in Heaven one day. Focus on this big picture, always. Trust God, even in your trying moments.

SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

In spite of your shortfalls, we admire your faith. Thank you for sharing this incredible story with us. Please welcome to our Friends of Hope program our fifth Hero of Hope: Mrs. Miracle.

HERO # 5: SARAH (SENIOR AGED FEMALE)

Do not project the name of SARAH and Hebrews 11:11 until she says it. Do not have it tagged on her chest at the beginning. She walks from the back row and starts telling her story.

If my story does not inspire hope in you, then I don't know what would. I did not have a child for a long time. On record, I was infertile from my younger years. Many years passed without a sign that I would ever have a child. Then God said I would give birth to a great nation.

Years later, when I had gone past childbearing age, I was told I would be a mother. It was laughable! Unbelievable! I had already messed up by the time I held a child in my arms. Earlier, out of panic and despair, I had already pressured my husband to give me a child through our maid. When she became pregnant, she became arrogant and contemptuous. This led to serious tensions and tussles. Eventually, the whole plan had boomeranged on me and everybody else. I blamed my husband for its failure, though it was *my* plan. I needed a scapegoat for the failing surrogate plan.

God's plan got realized, not only when my plan was already evidently miscarried, but also when I had lost all hope of childbearing. Which woman at my age had given birth to a child, far past menopause? I did not believe it would be possible! When it happened, I called my son Laughter, because it was still laughable to me that I could have a child that late in my life. I almost lost hope, and almost missed it, but God is capable of anything. He had promised it, but I doubted it. I had looked at what I know and could not see past it.

From this ordeal, I learned to believe God's promises. I also learned to endure the test of delay, because God is truthful and faithful. Finally, I learned that *nothing* is impossible with God.

I was Isaac's mother, and the wife of Abraham. My name is Sarah.

SABBATH SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT:

Thank you, Sarah, for your story with us. It sure will inspire some of us to trust God's capability to do the unthinkable.

Thank you very much to our team for the lives of some of our Heroes of Hope. We hope this has inspired to keep your hope and faith against the challenges that you may have in your life.

Let's sing the hymn *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less* again while our credit list comes up on the screen.

Project a credit roll of all the role-players:

Sabbath School Superintendent

Mission STORYTELLER

Abel

Enoch

Noah

Abraham

Sarah

Ushers

Invite one of the team members to offer the closing pray.