

# Hold On!

#### What's It All About?

Late one night, Angie was awakened by the telephone. She heard her grandma answer it and gasp. There had been a serious train accident that had left four passengers dead. Many others, including Sister Marie, were in critical condition. Several members of Angie's church gathered at the house to pray for Sister Marie and the other passengers' recovery. They formed a prayer team and agreed to meet every day to pray.

Angie was among the youth who'd joined the prayer team. Sadly, after weeks of constant prayer, the doctors reported that Sister Marie was not getting any better.

"I just don't get it," a frustrated Angie said. "It's like

our prayers aren't even making a difference. What's the point? I mean, why keep praying when nothing is changing?"

"Be patient. Things may not change for a time yet, and until then we keep on praying," Grandma responded. "Why? Because God will never change. He is faithful to those who endure in faith."

How easy or hard do you think it is to be patient in such a situation? What does Angie's grandma mean when she encourages her to "endure in faith"? How do people endure in faith, especially when it seems their circumstance is not changing?



#### Learning From God

God is faithful, now and forever. That's the realization that kept the ancestors of our faith (the cloud of witnesses) strong when they faced hardships that challenged their faith. It's important to know that sometimes you will face challenging times. When you do, put your faith into action—keep your focus on Jesus, pray for strength, be patient, and trust Him.

Hebrews 12:1–11, NIV—Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set

before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. **4** In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6** because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." **7** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? **8** If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. **9** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! **10** They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. **11** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

### What I Have Learned

Complete the following statements.

1. We're surrounded by ("compassed about with") this (Hebrews 12:1)

# **Keep In Mind**

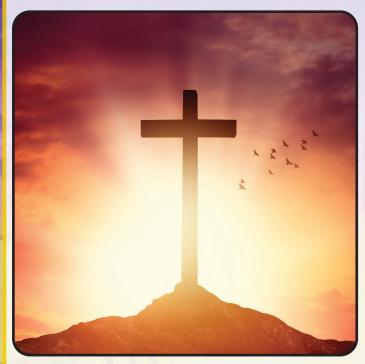
"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1–2, NIV).

### **Choosing What's Best**

Are you convinced that you can endure in faith? Write some encouraging words for Angie from the "What's It All About?" story. How can she endure?

- 2. We're advised to "lay aside" (throw off) this (v. 1)
- 3. Jesus is the "author" and perfecter ("finisher") of this (v. 2)
- 4. For the joy "set before" Him, Jesus endured this (v. 2)
- 5. The Lord's chastening (discipline) is for our good, so we can partake of (share in) this (v. 10)
- 6. This is the "fruit" or reward of enduring His "chastening" (discipline) (v. 11)

### Doing My Part

Your challenge this week is to develop a plan to reach your spiritual goals through faith. For example, if your goal is to learn more Bible verses, then your plan should include reading and studying verses. Faith comes into play when you trust the Lord to bring those verses to mind when you need them. 

# A Grateful Heart

## What's It All About?

Javon and his father walked into the hospital. They were there to pick up Uncle Isaac. He was coming home that day after a long bout of pneumonia. Just over a week ago, Uncle Isaac's doctor had told the family that Isaac was near death and to prepare for the worst. Then suddenly, he started getting better. Javon was thankful.

As he got on the elevator, Javon recalled a conversation he'd had with his uncle. He'd told Javon he was not afraid to die; his eternal life was secure.

He had encouraged Javon to love God with all his heart, the same way he did. He had said that when he accepted Jesus as Savior, it was the best choice he'd ever made. He had told Javon that he'd done a lot of unpleasant things in his life, but that he had asked God to forgive him. From that special day on, Uncle Isaac had dedicated his life to Jesus. He'd said with joy, "I am forever thankful to God for His forgiveness and grace." Javon said a quick prayer. He was thankful too, and he told God so.

What did Uncle Isaac mean when he told Javon that his eternal life was secure? How did he know? Are you sure that you will live with the Lord in eternity? Why or why not? How does God's forgiveness make you feel? How important is it to you?



### Learning From God

Today you will learn about God's kingdom. Two benefits of being a part of God's kingdom are forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life. This kingdom is unshakable. Every citizen of this kingdom has a reason to be thankful.

Hebrews 12:18–29, NIV—You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must

be stoned to death." **21** The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." **22** But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, **23** to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, **24** to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. **25** See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? **26** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also

the heavens." **27** The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, **29** for our "God is a consuming fire."

### What I Have Learned

Match each word from today's lesson with the correct meaning.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_Forgiveness
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Grace
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Eternal Life
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ Gratitude
- A. A show of thankfulness and appreciation
- B. When God forgets the wrong we have done
- C. When God gives us a blessing we did not deserve
- D. Life with the Lord beyond death

### **Keep In Mind**

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe," (Hebrews 12:28, NIV).

### **Choosing What's Best**

Discuss any fear(s) you may have about death. How can the assurance of God's grace for those who ask for forgiveness ease any fear(s) you have?

### **Doing My Part**

Your challenge this week has two parts. First, repent for sometimes rejecting God's grace. Next, start each day this week by showing gratitude to God through prayer and praise.