



Discussion Guide

Date: 11/2/2025

Sermon Title: What is a saint?

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-2

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious and loving God, You have surrounded us with saints of the past and present who bear witness to Your faithfulness and love. As we gather today, open our hearts to see how even the smallest acts done in Your name carry eternal significance. Inspire us by the example of those who have gone before, that we might run the race with perseverance and great love. Amen.

Opening Question:

1. When you hear the word “saint,” who or what comes to mind?
2. Who are some of the “heroes of faith” — biblical, historical, or personal — who have shaped your journey?
3. In what ways have ordinary people in your life revealed extraordinary love or faith?

Digging into the Word:

Read aloud: Hebrews 12:1-2 (NRSV) and a few other versions if you or group have them.

1. What does it mean to you that we are “surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses”?
2. How might remembering the saints strengthen or encourage our faith today?
3. What does it mean to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us”? Why do you think the writer of Hebrews emphasizes perseverance rather than speed or immediate success in running our spiritual race?
4. How does understanding that we are connected to all believers, past and present, through the communion of saints change your sense of isolation or community?
5. How does keeping our eyes “fixed on Jesus” help us persevere in faith and love?
6. In what ways do small acts of faith in prayer, kindness, and generosity become part of the saints’ ongoing witness?

Other scriptures to consider:

- **Micah 6:8** (NRSV) – “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Saints live out their holiness not in perfection, but in faithful love and humble service.
- **1 John 4:19-21** (NRSV) - “We love because he first loved us...” We love God by loving others.

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- **Matthew 5:14–16** (NRSV) – “You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others.” Even small lights make a difference in a dark world.
- **1 Corinthians 12:27** (NRSV) – “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” Saints are not isolated heroes; they form a living, loving community.
- **Philippians 1:6** (NRSV) – “He who began a good work among you will bring it to completion.” God works through small beginnings toward great purposes.

Sermon Questions:

1. How does it change your perspective to think of those who've gone before you as still "cheering you on" in your faith journey?
2. Why do you think we need other people in our lives? What happens when we try to run our race alone?
3. Pastor Clayton uses the illustration of ankle weights. What specific "weights" are you currently carrying that might be slowing you down spiritually? What are some "weights" that people commonly carry in life? (Examples: grudges, wounds, scars, guilt, shame, regrets)
4. The sermon emphasized that the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. Where are you in your marathon right now? What does "perseverance" look like in practical terms? Can you share a time when you needed perseverance to keep going in faith?
5. Pastor Clayton reminds us Jesus is our “focal point”. In what practical ways can we "look to Jesus" throughout our week?
6. The sermon mentioned that communion connects us to the "communion of saints." What does this mystical union mean to you? How do these saints who've gone before us point us to Jesus? How can we do the same for others?

Applying it:

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” — Mother Teresa

1. What would it look like for you to do small things with great love this week, and who might be watching from their own race, encouraged by your faithfulness?
2. In what ways do you find yourself trying to run someone else's race instead of the unique race God has set before you?
3. How can the practice of communion help us lay aside the sins and weights that cling so closely to us, and what does it mean to rise from the table unburdened?
4. What does it mean to you personally to look to Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of your faith, and how does this shape your daily decisions?
5. How can your group support one another in running with more perseverance?
6. What does it mean to partner with Jesus in your daily life — even in seemingly ordinary ways?

Wesleyan-Theological Reflection:

John Wesley understood *saints* not as perfect people, but as those who are being perfected in love.



"The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness. Faith working by love, is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection." — **John Wesley**, Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739), Preface, page viii.

Wesley believed that holiness was lived out in community — through acts of mercy, compassion, and love. Saints are not distant icons, but living examples of God's grace at work.

1. How does Wesley's idea of "*social holiness*" connect to our series theme, "*Small Things. Great Love*"?
2. Who in your church or community models this kind of "everyday sainthood"?
3. How might we be called to join that cloud of witnesses through our own faithful actions?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all the saints, we thank You for those who have gone before us for their courage, faith, and love. Help us to follow their example, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Empower us to do small things with great love, that our lives, too, may bear witness to Your grace in the world. In Christ's holy name, we pray. Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND (or challenges for you this week)

1. Write a letter or make a call to someone living who has been part of your cloud of witnesses. Thank them for the specific ways they've blessed your life.
2. Identify one specific weight you're carrying (a grudge, worry, guilt, etc.) Pray daily this week, specifically giving that weight to God.
3. Identify someone in your life who needs encouragement and commit to doing a "small thing(s) with great love" for them this week. Examples: a note, a text, a meal, a visit, a listening ear, an act of service.