

Running the Race
Rev. Dr. Mark Birkholz
Faith, Oak Lawn for Faith, Hope, and Peace Ministries

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

It's hard to run a race all alone. As you are running, you start to worry about how you're doing. You might feel overwhelmed by the road ahead. You might feel tired and want to give up.

It's much easier to run if you have someone to run alongside of you, or if there are people lining the road to cheer you on. It can give you an extra spark of energy to run hard and to finish strong.

One blessing of the race of faith is that we don't run alone. We have Jesus there with us through His Holy Spirit, and we also have this “great cloud of witnesses” that surrounds us.

Hebrews 12 follows the great “Faith Chapter” of Hebrews 11. If you haven't read it lately, look it up and give it a read. It lists all the great examples of faith from the Old Testament, from Abel and Abraham to Moses and David. We have all these great stories of faith and trust in God to inspire us along the way.

You are blessed to have the stories and examples of faith from the Old and New Testaments, but also the people of faith who have personally touched your life as well. Think for a minute about all the people that God has used to encourage you and to bless you as you have run the race of faith. There may have been a parent or grandparent who taught you about Jesus at an early stage and served as a role model for you. You may have had a special pastor or teacher who pushed you to run a little harder. You've probably had a friend or two who has been there to pray with you and speak God's word to you at a difficult time in your life.

All of these saints are part of the great cloud of witnesses who surround us as we run the race of Faith. These saints are still with us even after they have died. Not only do their stories and memories live on, but also their spirits are with Christ, even as their bodies await the resurrection of the dead on the last day. The cloud of witnesses surrounds us as you are with Christ since they are with Him and will live in Him forever.