I. Keeping Perspective

A. Florence Chadwick became the first women to swim the English Channel both ways. She failed on her first attempt due to fog. She was successful on her second attempt because despite the fog and being unable to see the coastline she kept a mental image of the shoreline in her mind and focused on it. She refused to give up and kept perspective.

B. Hebrew’s 12:1 reminds us that “we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses”. A witness is someone who says something. Hebrews 11 lists what is often called the “Faith Hall of Fame”. It is a list of the names of so many Biblical men and women who demonstrated faith like Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob.

C. Equally important are the many men and women who are also heroes of the faith, whose names we don’t know.

D. Hebrews 11:35-38 discuss people of faith who have faced jeers, flogging, chains, stoning, imprisonment and death. Martyrdom was common throughout the history of the church. While these individuals are unknown to man God knows them all.

E. God calls us to obedience not significance. It is out of acts of obedience that we find significance. Hebrews 11 demonstrates that your ministry and sacrifice matter to God.

F. Suffering and pain are a part of the Christian life. We can be assured that Jesus always offers us comfort, compassion, and his presence in when we suffer.

G. Holding onto this realization helps us to toughen up as Christians and to see ourselves as overcomers and not pitiful victims.

II. Victim Mentality

A. Are you feeling sorry for yourself?

B. People with a victim mentality tend to whine and complain.
   1. They focus on what’s wrong and ignore what’s right. The “culture of complaint”.
   2. James 3:1-6 the practice of not speaking negatively should be a goal of every Christian.

C. People with a victim mentality tend to blame and criticize God and others.
   1. We must resist the temptation to accuse God or blame others like our family, friends or associates anyone. This type of behavior exists when we are unwilling to take responsibility for our thinking and behavior.
   2. Numbers 16:41 (NIV2011) 41 The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. “You have killed the LORD’s people,” they said.
   3. God dealt with the murmuring and uncooperative attitudes of the Israelites (See Numbers 11:1-3, 4-35; 12:1-15). This feeling may have been building up among some of the Levites who resented being subordinate to Moses and Aaron. Korah was first cousin to Moses and Aaron. Their fathers were brothers. Korah wanted
Aaron’s position.

4. The Israelites also blamed Moses for bringing them out of Egypt and with the fact they had not gone immediately into the Promised Land.

D. People with a victim mentality tend to be cynical and pessimistic.
   1. Numbers 11:1 The children of Israel complained about their hardships instead of praying to God about them. Numbers 11:1-2 (NIV2011) ¹ Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. ² When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down.

III. Change Your Perspective
   A. Kyle Idleman reminds us everyone has difficult seasons.
   B. Every believer must decide to trust in God’s nature and His promises (Hebrews 6:13-19)
      1. Hebrews 6:13-19 reminds us that Abraham waited patiently and God delivered on his promises
      2. God promised Abraham He would bless him and give him many descendants. (Genesis 22:15-18)
   C. Major themes of the book of Hebrews is faith, endurance and maturity.
   D. God’s promises are unchanging and sure. Hebrews 6:17-18 (NIV2011) ¹⁷ Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. ¹⁸ God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.

IV. Talk to Yourself
   A. David faced many challenges yet he had an inner monologue and he let’s us listen to it.
   B. Psalm 42:5 Psalm 42:5-6 (NIV2011) ⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. ⁶ My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
   C. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds and self-talk is key.
   D. An imprisoned Paul understood suffering and wrote in Philippians 4:8 (NIV2011) ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.
   E. We must encourage ourselves with self-talk that lifts us. Kyle Idleman says “Self-talk is speaking courage into yourself”
   F. What are you saying to yourself during this pandemic? What is your personal mantra?

V. Trading Pity for Praise – write your praise on your timeline
   A. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4 (NIV2011) ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
   B. Paul was writing from a Roman prison. He wrote to the church of Phillippi to thank them for a gift they sent to him through one of their members Epaphroditus.
C. From a jail cell Paul, a tough reality Paul could tell Christians at Philippi to rejoice. Paul understood true joy comes from Jesus Christ.

D. Joy is different from happiness because it is rooted in hope in Jesus Christ, and sustained by putting our trust in Him and not what’s “happening”.

E. Kyle Idleman says “one of the most effective ways to keep perspective and stop responding with self-pity is to realize how much we have to be thankful for”.

F. Practicing gratitude must happen every day in the life of the believer.

VI. What You Don’t Know
A. Idleman writes “Faith gives us a confidence in what we cannot see so that we can accept that life is difficult.

B. Hebrews 11:1 (NIV2011) ¹ Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

C. The author of Hebrews defines faith in terms of future reward. Read Hebrews 10:32-39. The “now” can be translated literally as “but” or “and”). Jewish people defined ultimate “hope” in terms of the future day of the Lord. This hope is an unshakable conviction in the present. Another theme of the book of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews wanted the Jewish Christian to understand no matter the persecution they faced Jesus Christ was the Messiah, and all forgiveness of sin was in Him and they had access to Him.

D. When we look at the circumstances in our lives it helps to underline a basic plot point “you don’t really know what God is up to in your life”.

VII. Choose to Overcome
A. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 1:19-20 that the same power that brought Jesus back from the dead is available to us.

B. In Asia Minor many lived in dread of evil spiritual beings and powers who dominated their lives. Paul prayed that His readers would have a knowledge based on their experiences and the realization and confidence that as believers in Christ they possessed divine power. As Christians Paul wanted them to know they never need not bow in fear of any other spiritual powers Ephesians 1:18-20 (NASB) ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ᵃ¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

C. Idleman shares in the book David and Goliath by Malcom Gladwell writes about “desirable difficulties”. He writes “having to face horrible circumstances is actually an opportunity rather than an obstacle.

D. Gladwell suggest “the unbelievable number of people who

E. During these times we must remember we are conquerors, no matter what we have faced or will face, seen and unseen.

F. Because of Romans 8:37 (NIV2011) ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us we exclaim Yes!

G. We must make the choice to keep perspective, have faith and don’t give up.