What characters come to mind when you hear the phrase or title of “People of Faith in the Bible”? Abraham (has to be on the top 1 for sure), Noah, Moses, King David, prophets like Elisha, Mary mother of Jesus, or any of his disciples for sure.

What all of them had in common was their faith and how they acted on them. Abraham trusted God with the life of his only son; Noah believed in God against the mockery of those around him; Moses was raised as a liberator because he believed in God’s promise; king David faced enemies and overcame them because he acted on his faith.

All of them, along with many others, were anchored in faith and driven by hope. Their solid ground was the belief in God and God’s goodness and power, and their decisions and actions reflected that. And because of that, their faith and hope gave them a vision for better days ahead.

Do our actions reflect our faith? Are we anchored in faith and driven by hope? Are we hopeful for a better future? If there is a New Year’s resolution worth having, it is this one: To be anchored in faith and driven by hope!

To learn about this, we will look into the lives of wise men from the East who traveled a long distance to meet Jesus, the promised Messiah, who trusted a sign in the sky. Have you ever thought of them as great examples of faith and hope?

Let’s hear their story and see what they have to teach us today,

“In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

“Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

As the story of Christmas unfolds, we now have people from faraway East lands who have studied the signs of the birth of Jesus and have traveled to meet him and honor him. These wise men were not Jews but gentiles that studied ancient wisdom and astrology. In their search for truth, they found the prophecy regarding the one who would come from God to bring salvation to the world. They learned there would be a sign in the sky, a star, that would point the way and place of the birth of the Savior, and they followed it.

Who are these men? What do we know about them? They are described as “wise,” which means they were studied persons held in high esteem and taken seriously. Just the fact that King Herod welcomed them himself tells us enough to understand they were very important individuals. We also know they were from out of town, way out of town. The text does not explicitly say where they came from; it just says from the East, probably from an area in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, or northern Syria.

Another thing that we know is that although they are often called the “Three Kings,” the Bible does not say how many there were or that they were kings. Did you know that? The gospel never mentions the number and only says “wise men.” Still, most Christians traditionally assumed them to have been three in number based on the statement that they brought three gifts. And their kingship is historically linked to Isaiah 60:1-6, which refers to “kings [coming] to the brightness of your dawn” bearing “gold and frankincense.”

So, here we have however many wise king men from somewhere in the East, believing and trusting wholeheartedly in what was said about this baby King, Jesus. These men were not only wise but full of faith and hope; otherwise, how can we explain their commitment to their journey? You do not take on a long, dangerous, and costly journey unless you have confidence in your actions and the outcome.

These wise men are remarkable examples of faith and hope that we need to learn from. Their faith and hope are on full display when they endeavor with nothing more than each other’s company, a prophecy regarding a foreign king, and a sign in the sky, risking everything to find Jesus.

So, what do they teach us about faith and hope? These men believed in their hearts that there were better days ahead. They did not quench the voice in their hearts or ignore the gut feeling that there was something up ahead, around the corner, in sight that was good and God-given. When they left their homes searching for the baby, they had to believe strongly and confidently to risk everything they had—even their own lives. Their faith and hope were not based on positive thinking or personal goals but on who God was and said—on a person and a promise. Their anchor was not their feelings or wishful thinking but the promise of God. Their faith and hope were in God, who promised something. They could feel sad, happy, angry, hopeless, or doubtful, but their anchor was unwavering.

Just like it happens to us, right? Imagine for a moment that God’s blessings were contingent upon our feelings and thoughts. What a crazy world that would be! But when the anchor in our lives is Jesus, and the hope that drives us is his promise, we can go through life in all kinds of ways, but we still find our way through the noise, confusion, shame, and disappointment. Even when we go away, we can come back; and when we get lost, we get found. Thank you, Jesus!

My friends, today is a great day to believe that there are better days ahead and to have a vision for a good future despite all the challenges we may face. This belief is what we need to drive us forward because it changes us and how we live and interact with the world. A person who is driven by hope focuses on the good, which has a big impact on their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Do you want to get healthier this year? Let hope drive you.

Here is the good news and invitation: As this new year brings new opportunities and challenges, let us be anchored to the solid rock, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When the storms rage, stay anchored; when sickness comes, stay anchored; when our backs are up against the wall, stay anchored. And if you wonder how the end could be happy, let faith remind you that all darkness must pass. So, whatever the name of your challenge is, stay anchored in faith, remembering the promise of a good future, and that is worth fighting for. And then, don’t just keep the faith, do what faith says. Act on it; be driven by it just as all the men and women of faith that have come before us. If our hope is in God’s promises, then let us live by his words.

And know and remember this: God can accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine according to his power working in us (Ephesians 3:20).