

**SHARE** Your highs and lows

**SAINTS AND OUR CLOUD OF WITNESSES**

Martin Luther—In the New Testament, the word “saint” is used only to refer to all Christians—as in “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus” (Ephesians 1:1). In the New Testament, the word “saint” is *never* used to refer to the best, most virtuous, or most faithful Christians—as in St. Mary or St. Peter.

The idea that there is a group of super Christians who are called saints simply is not biblical.

So what is a saint? Not a super Christian. Rather, according to the New Testament, a saint is one who has been “sanctified” (*to be made holy or freed from sin*) by baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Paul writes to the church in Corinth, “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

So what is a saint? A saint is a Christian and a Christian is a saint—one who has been made holy by Christ. All Christians are saints and all saints are Christians. At least that is what the New Testament usage of the term implies. Every Christian is a saint. *Rolf Jacobson, Luther Seminary, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=5461>*

**CONNECT**— WE TALK ABOUT SAINTS AS OUR CLOUD OF WITNESSES. READ THE BIBLE VERSES TO THE RIGHT, THEN DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

**START ANYWHERE** \*LISTEN \*NO RIGHTS OR WRONGS \*NO DEBATING  
\*GO WITH FIRST THOUGHTS \*TAKE TURNS

**DEEP**

- Who is someone you loved who has passed away? What is a favorite memory you hold of them?
- A unique story told about one of my ancestors is . . .

**DEEPER**

- When a person has faith, are there certain ways we expect that person to be? How so? Behaviors? Morals? Personality? Politics? Church participation?
- What would a shallow response to faith be? What would a deep response to faith look like? Is it possible to misuse faith?

**DEEPEST**

- Whose faith do you admire? How has this person influenced your faith? What in them lives in you?
- What qualities has your cloud of witnesses passed on to you? What in them lives in you?
- What do you hope people are learning from your life? Who looks up to you?
- What is the world’s greatest need?
- For what would you like to be remembered?

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**The Message—Hebrews 11** <sup>3</sup> By faith, we see the world called into existence by God’s word, what we see created by what we don’t see.

**12** <sup>1-3</sup> Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on *Jesus*, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever!

**NRSV—Hebrews 12:1** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

**12:1** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,<sup>[a]</sup> and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,

**PRAY**

- *Do the luminary activity together. Instructions are inside the white bag. You will need a pen or pencil.*

**BLESS** You are a child of God.

**For your Discussion Partner . . .** *I see God in you when . . .*