**Connected: Created to Belong**

**Module 4: Belonging to What?**

**Lesson 4: Belonging to a Cloud of Witnesses**

**Spiritual Aims**

Students will hopefully:

* be encouraged in their faith by the example of a particular historical believer
* strengthen their faith

**Lesson Objectives**

Students will:

* study a historical Christian who persevered in their faith to identify:
  + what challenged their faith
  + how they met this challenge
  + what helped them persevere
* specify 3 common traits of historical figures who persevered in their faith

**Materials Needed**

* 1 copy of Appendix F (or multiple copies if you will have more than 1 group looking at a historical figure
* Minimum of 1 lined sheet of paper per student
* 1 pen/pencil per student
* At least 1 Bible (bookmarked with Hebrews 12:1)
* Optional: Bristol board and markers (if students are to make posters) or costumes (if performing skits)

**Minds On** (approx. 5 min.)

**Think/Pair/Share:** Who are some people your students look up to and why?

**Optional follow-up question:** What is the value in having a hero or role model to look up to?

**Leader’s note:** This discussion will prepare students to think about having a spiritual hero or role model, and the lesson will offer some examples from history.

**Action** (approx. 40 min.)

Ask a volunteer to read Hebrews 12:1.

**Prompt:** In the chapter before this verse, the author gave a long list of believers throughout history who showed strong faith. Some got to see miracles, while others kept their faith even though there was no miraculous rescue. This verse tells us that spiritual heroes of the past can help us be encouraged in our own faith.

**Ask:** Do you have any spiritual heroes? If so, who are they? If not, what would you look for in a spiritual hero?

**Prompt:** Today we are going to study some heroes of the faith and see what helped them stay strong through really hard times.

**Jigsaw Expert Groups:**

1. Divide students into groups of 5 or 6 by numbering them off.
2. Give each group a biography on a hero of faith from Appendix F. If you have a large group, more than 1 group may research the same hero.
3. The group will take 15 minutes to study the information and answer the questions at the top of each biography.
4. Each person should be prepared to share their group’s answers.

**Jigsaw Home Groups:**

1. Students will form a group of 3 (where each hero is represented). Some groups may have 2 members from the same hero but all 3 need to be represented.
2. Each member will report a summary of their expert group’s hero study.
3. The home groups will compile a list of common traits.
4. As a group they should choose 1 trait to focus on and prepare a 2 to 5 minute presentation (could be a poster, a skit or other creative approach) to share with the other groups.
5. Allow the groups to present to one another. If you have more than 6 home groups, it would be more timely to create pods of 3 or 4 home groups that present to one another.

**Think/Pair/Share:** What is 1 step you could take that would help you become like these heroes of the faith?

**Consolidate/Debrief** (approx. 10 min.)

Distribute lined paper and pens to your students for this debrief activity.

**Prompt:** Remember what Hebrews 12:1 (NIV) says: “Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

**Ask:** What hinders you in your faith?

Invite students to use the lined paper to write a letter to any one of the people who were studied in this lesson. Students can write about the challenges they have faced in their lives and the obstacles they have in persevering in their faith, or they could ask for advice or support based on their “hero’s” experience. Students may choose to keep their letters private and simply write it as a reflective exercise.

Close in prayer thanking God for strong examples of faith and encouraging students to persevere.

**Appendix F: Biographies**

**William Wilberforce**

Answer the following questions:

* What challenge(s) did this person face?
* What was his or her response?
* How did his or her relationship with God affect his or her actions?
* What does this person’s story tell you about faith?
* What from this person’s story inspires you?

From BBC History ([www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\_figures/wilberforce\_william.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilberforce_william.shtml)):

Wilberforce was a deeply religious English member of parliament and social reformer who was very influential in the abolition of the slave trade and eventually slavery itself in the British Empire.

William Wilberforce was born on 24 August 1759 in Hull, the son of a wealthy merchant. He studied at Cambridge University where he began a lasting friendship with the future prime minister, William Pitt the Younger. In 1780, Wilberforce became Member of Parliament for Hull, later representing Yorkshire. His dissolute lifestyle changed completely when he became an evangelical Christian, and in 1790 joined a leading group known as the Clapham Sect. His Christian faith prompted him to become interested in social reform, particularly the improvement of factory conditions in Britain.

The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson had an enormous influence on Wilberforce. He and others were campaigning for an end to the trade in which British ships were carrying black slaves from Africa, in terrible conditions, to the West Indies as goods to be bought and sold. Wilberforce was persuaded to lobby for the abolition of the slave trade and for 18 years he regularly introduced anti-slavery motions in parliament. The campaign was supported by many members of the Clapham Sect and other abolitionists who raised public awareness of their cause with pamphlets, books, rallies and petitions. In 1807, the slave trade was finally abolished, but this did not free those who were already slaves. It was not until 1833 that an act was passed giving freedom to all slaves in the British Empire.

Wilberforce’s other efforts to ‘renew society’ included the organisation of the Society for the Suppression of Vice in 1802. He worked with the reformer, Hannah More, in the Association for the Better Observance of Sunday. Its goal was to provide all children with regular education in reading, personal hygiene and religion. He was closely involved with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He was also instrumental in encouraging Christian missionaries to go to India.

Wilberforce retired from politics in 1825 and died on 29 July 1833, shortly after the act to free slaves in the British Empire passed through the House of Commons. He was buried near his friend Pitt in Westminster Abbey.

From Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\_Wilberforce](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wilberforce)):

Wilberforce’s involvement in the abolition movement was motivated by a desire to put his Christian principles into action and to serve God in public life. He and other Evangelicals were horrified by what they perceived was a depraved and unchristian trade, and the greed of the owners and traders. Wilberforce sensed a call from God, writing in a journal entry in 1787 that “God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners [moral values]”.

He was supported in his work by fellow members of the so-called Clapham Sect, among whom was his best friend and cousin Henry Thornton. Holding evangelical Christian convictions, and consequently dubbed “the Saints”, the group mainly lived in large houses surrounding the common in Clapham, then a village to the south-west of London. Wilberforce accepted an invitation to share a house with Henry Thornton in 1792, moving into his own home after Thornton’s marriage in 1796.The “Saints” were an informal community, characterised by considerable intimacy as well as a commitment to practical Christianity and an opposition to slavery. They developed a relaxed family atmosphere, wandering freely in and out of each other’s homes and gardens, and discussing the many religious, social and political topics that engaged them.

Pro-slavery advocates claimed that enslaved Africans were lesser human beings who benefited from their bondage. Wilberforce, the Clapham Sect and others were anxious to demonstrate that Africans, and particularly freed slaves, had human and economic abilities beyond the slave trade; that they were capable of sustaining a well-ordered society, trade and cultivation. Inspired in part by the utopian vision of Granville Sharp, they became involved in the establishment in 1792 of a free colony in Sierra Leone with black settlers from the United Kingdom, Nova Scotia and Jamaica, as well as native Africans and some whites.

Wilberforce had shown little interest in women, but in his late thirties twenty-year-old Barbara Ann Spooner (1777–1847) was recommended by his friend Thomas Babington as a potential bride. Wilberforce met her two days later on 15 April 1797, and was immediately smitten;following an eight-day whirlwind romance, he proposed. Despite the urgings of friends to slow down, the couple married in Bath, Somerset, on 30 May 1797. They were devoted to each other and Barbara was very attentive and supportive to Wilberforce in his increasing ill health, though she showed little interest in his political activities.They had six children in fewer than ten years: William (b. 1798), Barbara (b. 1799), Elizabeth (b. 1801), Robert Isaac Wilberforce (b. 1802), Samuel Wilberforce (b. 1805) and Henry William Wilberforce (b. 1807). Wilberforce was an indulgent and adoring father who revelled in his time at home and at play with his children.

The early years of the 19th century once again saw an increased public interest in abolition. In June 1804, Wilberforce’s bill to abolish the slave trade successfully passed all its stages through the House of Commons. However, it was too late in the parliamentary session for it to complete its passage through the House of Lords. On its reintroduction during the 1805 session it was defeated.



Unfinished portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1828

Wilberforce was generous with his time and money, believing that those with wealth had a duty to give a significant portion of their income to the needy. Yearly, he gave away thousands of pounds, much of it to clergymen to distribute in their parishes. He paid off the debts of others, supported education and missions, and in a year of food shortages gave to charity more than his own yearly income. He was exceptionally hospitable, and could not bear to sack any of his servants. As a result, his home was full of old and incompetent servants kept on in charity. Although he was often months behind in his correspondence, Wilberforce responded to numerous requests for advice or for help in obtaining professorships, military promotions, and livings for clergymen, or for the reprieve of death sentences.

**Corrie Ten Boom**

# Answer the following questions:

* What challenge(s) did this person face?
* What was his or her response?
* How did his or her relationship with God affect his or her actions?
* What does this person’s story tell you about faith?
* What from this person’s story inspires you?

From Read the Spirit ([www.readthespirit.com/interfaith-peacemakers/corrie-ten-boom/](http://www.readthespirit.com/interfaith-peacemakers/corrie-ten-boom/)):



Corrie Ten Boom (1892–1983)

During World War II a 50-year old single woman had a brick wall built through her bedroom to create a “hiding place” for Jews and other fugitives from the Nazis who had occupied her country. Corrie ten Boom and her family suffered and some of them died in providing shelter during the genocidal storm that swept Europe.

The ten Booms lived in Haarlem, Holland, where Corrie came from a long line of watchmakers. She learned the trade and became the first woman licensed in Holland as a watchmaker. She also engaged in social work, organizing girls clubs and also groups for families with developmentally disabled children.

Then in 1940 the German army invaded and occupied Holland. The Nazis banned Corrie’s girls clubs, but the heaviest restrictions fell upon the Jews of Holland. As Jews started to be arrested and their property seized, the ten Boom family joined the Dutch underground in assisting Jews to escape. At first they kept small numbers of fugitives for a night or two before helping them make their way to other safe houses and eventually to neutral countries or to remote places where they could hide throughout the war.

Corrie helped secure a hundred precious food ration cards that were only supposed to be given to non-Jews. Corrie took the illegally gained ration cards and distributed them to help feed the Jews in hiding. When the ten Booms were sheltering a family with a baby, a friend who was a pastor of a church in a village outside Haarlem visited them. They asked if the pastor would take the family to their home for the next step of their journey, but the pastor replied, “Definitely not! We could lose our lives for that Jewish child!”

Corrie’s father Casper ten Boom picked up the baby and held it tenderly in his arms: “You say we could lose our lives for this child. I would consider that the greatest honor that could come to my family.”



Soon the ten Booms were faced with refugees who were difficult to place in other safe houses, people too old or too sick to travel or with such strongly Semitic features that they could not be disguised safely. They decided they needed to provide some permanent shelter within their own home, so they constructed the “hiding place” up in Corrie’s third floor bedroom, the furthest point from the door where searching police might enter. An elderly cantor from a local synagogue, Meyer Mossel, was their first permanent hide-away guest. Mossel and Casper ten Boom would recite the Psalms together. Eventually a core group of seven fugitives joined their family household along with the on-going steady flow of visitors who would stay for just a few nights.

The ten Boom family not only hid the Jews but honored their culture and faith. The entire household kept the Sabbath. They celebrated Hanukkah. They prepared kosher food as long as possible until the time when food shortages left them without meat for weeks. When Corrie’s sister Betsie secured some sausage for the hungry household, Mossel said, “There’s a provision for this in the Talmud … and I’m going to start hunting for it, too, just as soon as dinner’s over!”

The graciousness of these Jews and Christians living intimately together under grave threat brought much joy and even humor amid the fear and anxiety.

In February 1944 someone betrayed the family to the German Gestapo. The house was raided, and a trap set to seize anyone who came to the house throughout the day. Thirty people in all were arrested, but the hiding place was not found. The four Jews and two Dutch underground workers who had been hustled into the hiding place stayed in that cramped wall cavity for 47 hours until the underground finally rescued them. Three of the four Jews who had been hiding during the raid and one of the underground members survived the war.

Meanwhile, Corrie ten Boom and her family were taken to a series of prisons and concentration camps. Caspar ten Boom died within ten days. Corrie’s nephew Christian ten Boom died in Bergen Belsen. Her brother Willem, an ordained Protestant minister, died shortly after the war from tuberculosis he contracted in prison. Corrie and Betsie were sent to the notorious Ravensbruck concentration camp. As she was dying from starvation and disease Betsie told Corrie, “There is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still.”

On December 30, 1944, Corrie ten Boom was freed from Ravensbruck on what appeared to be an administrative mistake. She spent the rest of the war recovering from the deprivations she had suffered.

Following the war Corrie established rehabilitation centers for disabled people and for survivors of the Nazi concentration camps and prisons. She began to write down her stories, writing a number of books including “The Hiding Place,” which was later made into a movie. Corrie ten Boom is honored as one of the “Righteous Among the Nations” by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

It is estimated that Corrie ten Boom and her family helped rescue about 800 Jews during the Holocaust. She died on her 91st birthday. Jewish friends said that only very blessed people are allowed the special privilege of dying on their birthday. She may have been blessed, but she certainly had been a blessing to many.

From Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrie\_ten\_Boom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrie_ten_Boom)):

## Early life

Born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Corrie ten Boom grew up in the nearby city of Haarlem as the youngest of four children born to Cornelia and Casper. She had two sisters and a brother.

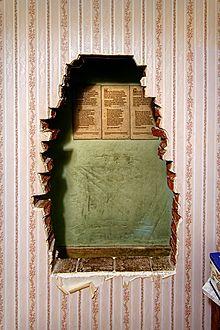
Casper ten Boom worked as a watchmaker, and in 1924 Corrie became the first licensed female watchmaker in the Netherlands. Corrie and Betsie never married, and until their arrest they lived their entire lives in their childhood home in Haarlem. Corrie also ran a church for mentally-disabled people, raised foster children in her home, and did other charitable works.

## World War II

In 1940, the Nazis invaded the Netherlands. Among their restrictions was banning a club which ten Boom had run for young girls. In May 1942 a well-dressed woman came to the ten Booms’ with a suitcase in hand and told them that she was a Jew, her husband had been arrested several months before, her son had gone into hiding, and Occupation authorities had recently visited her, so she was afraid to go back. She had heard that the ten Booms had helped their Jewish neighbors, the Weils, and asked if they might help her too.

Thus the ten Booms began “the hiding place.” Corrie and Betsie opened their home to refugees--both Jews and others who were members of the resistance movement--being sought by the Gestapo. They had plenty of room, although wartime shortages meant that food was scarce. Every non-Jewish Dutch person had received a ration card, the requirement for obtaining weekly food coupons. Through her charitable work, ten Boom knew many people in Haarlem and remembered a couple who had a disabled daughter. The father was a civil servant who by then was in charge of the local ration-card office. She went to his house one evening, and when he asked how many ration cards she needed, “I opened my mouth to say, ‘Five,’“ ten Boom wrote in *The Hiding Place*. “But the number that unexpectedly and astonishingly came out instead was: ‘One hundred.’“He gave them to her and she provided cards to every Jew she met.

### Secret room



The Hiding Place in Corrie ten Boom’s closet.

With so many people using their house, the family built a secret room in case a raid took place. They built it in ten Boom’s bedroom because it was on the house’s top floor, hopefully giving people the most time to hide and avoid detection, as searches usually started on the ground/first floor. A member of the Dutch resistance designed the hidden room behind a false wall. Gradually, family and supporters brought building supplies into the house, hiding them in briefcases and rolled-up newspapers. When finished, the secret room was about 30 inches (76 cm) deep, the size of a medium wardrobe. A ventilation system allowed for breathing. To enter the secret room, a person had to open a sliding panel in the plastered brick wall under a bottom bookshelf and crawl in on hands and knees. In addition, the family installed an electric raid-warning buzzer. When the Nazis raided the ten Boom house in 1944, six people were using the hiding place.

### Arrest, detention, and release

On 28 February 1944, a Dutch informant told the Nazis about the ten Booms’ work; at around 12:30PM the Nazis arrested the entire ten Boom family. They were sent to Scheveningen prison; Nollie and Willem were released immediately along with Corrie’s nephew Peter; Casper died 10 days later. Corrie and Betsie were sent from Scheveningen to Vught political concentration camp, and finally to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany, where Betsie died on December 16, 1944. Before she died, she told Corrie, “There is no pit so deep that He [God] is not deeper still.”

Corrie ten Boom was released on December 28, 1944. In the movie *The Hiding Place*, she narrates the section on her release from camp, saying that she later learned that her release had been a clerical error. She said, “God does not have problems--only plans.” The Jews whom the ten Booms had been hiding at the time of their arrests remained undiscovered and all but one, an old woman named Mary, survived.

## Life after the war

After the war, ten Boom returned to The Netherlands to set up a rehabilitation center. The refuge houses consisted of concentration-camp survivors and sheltered the jobless Dutch who previously collaborated with Germans during the occupation. She returned to Germany in 1946, and traveled the world as a public speaker, appearing in over 60 countries. She wrote many books during this time.

**Eric Liddell**

# Answer the following questions:

* What challenge(s) did this person face?
* What was his or her response?
* How did his or her relationship with God affect his or her actions?
* What does this person’s story tell you about faith?
* What from this person’s story inspires you?

### From The Eric Liddell Centre [www.ericliddell.org/ericliddell/biography](http://www.ericliddell.org/ericliddell/biography):

### A Short Biography of Eric H. Liddell (1902–1945)



The Liddell Family in 1920. Back Row: Eric, Rob. Front Row: Jenny, Ernest, Mrs Liddell

Eric Henry Liddell was born on 16th January 1902 in Tientsin (Tianjin) I North China, second son of the Rev. & Mrs. James Dunlop Liddell who were missionaries with the London Mission Society.

He was educated from 1908 to 1920 at Eltham College, Blackheath, a school for the sons of missionaries. Eric, with his older brother Rob, were left at their boarding school while their parents and sister, Jenny, returned to China.

During the boys’ time at Eltham College, their parents, sister and new brother Ernest came home on furlough two or three times and were able to be together as a family – mainly living in Edinburgh.

In 1920, Eric joined his brother Rob at Edinburgh University to read for a BSc in Pure Science. He graduated after the Paris Olympiad in 1924.

Athletics and rugby played a large part in Eric’s University life. He ran in the 100 yards and the 220 yards for Edinburgh University and later for Scotland. He played rugby for Edinburgh University and in 1922 played in seven Scottish Internationals with A.L. Gracie.

As a result of having insufficient time for both running and rugby, he chose the former, aiming for the 100 meters in the Paris Olympics. When he learned that the heats were to be run on a Sunday, he switched to the 400 metre competition as he was not prepared to run on a Sunday. He won a gold medal for the 400 metres and a bronze medal for the 200 metres at the Paris Olympics.

After the Olympics and his graduation he returned to North China where he served as a missionary from 1925 to 1943 – first in Tientsin (Tainjin) and later in Siaochang. During his first furlough in 1932 he was ordained as a minister. On his return to China, he married Florence Mackenzie (of Canadian missionary parentage) in Tientsin in 1934. They had three daughters; Patricia, Heather and Maureen, who now all live in Canada.

Living in China in the 1930s was potentially very dangerous and in 1937 Eric was sent to Siaochang where he joined his brother Rob. He was now crossing the Japanese army lines.

In 1941 life in China was becoming so dangerous that the British Government advised British nationals to leave. Florence and the children left for Canada.

During 1941 – 1943 Eric stayed in Tientsin, then in 1943 he was interned in Weishien camp until his death in 1945. Even in the Weihsien Internment Camp, where he was in charge of all sports and athletics, he refused to be responsible for planning Sunday sports.’

From Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric\_Liddell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Liddell)):

Liddell’s first job as a missionary was as a teacher at an Anglo-Chinese College (grades 1–12) for wealthy Chinese students. While he is best known for athletics, his true passion was found in his missionary work. It was believed that by teaching the children of the wealthy, they would become influential figures in China and promote Christian values. Liddell used his athletic experience to train boys in a number of different sports. One of his many responsibilities was that of superintendent of the Sunday school at Union Church where his father was pastor. Liddell lived at 38 Chongqing Dao (formerly known as Cambridge Road) in Tianjin, where a plaque commemorates his former residence. He also helped build the Minyuan Stadium in Tianjin. He suggested that it be copied exactly from Chelsea’s football ground, where he had competed and was said to be his favourite running venue.

During his first furlough from missionary work in 1932, he was ordained a minister of religion. On his return to China he married Florence Mackenzie of Canadian missionary parentage in Tianjin in 1934. Liddell courted his future wife by taking her for lunch to the famous Kiesling restaurant, which is still open in Tianjin. The couple had three daughters, Patricia, Heather and Maureen, the last of whom he would not live to see.

In 1941 life in China had become so dangerous because of Japanese aggressiveness that the British government advised British nationals to leave. Florence and the children left for Canada to stay with her family when Liddell accepted a position at a rural mission station in Xiaozhang, which served the poor. He joined his brother, Rob, who was a doctor there. The station was severely short of help and the missionaries there were exhausted. A constant stream of locals came at all hours for medical treatment. Liddell arrived at the station in time to relieve his brother, who was ill and needing to go on furlough. Liddell suffered many hardships himself at the mission.

As fighting between the Chinese Eighth Route Army and invading Japanese reached Xiaozhang, the Japanese took over the mission station and Liddell returned to Tianjin. In 1943, he was interned at the Weihsien Internment Camp (in the modern city of Weifang) with the members of the China Inland Mission, Chefoo School (in the city now known as Yantai), and many others. Liddell became a leader and organiser at the camp, but food, medicine and other supplies were scarce. There were many cliques in the camp and when some rich businessmen managed to smuggle in some eggs, Liddell shamed them into sharing them. While fellow missionaries formed cliques, moralised and acted selfishly, Liddell busied himself by helping the elderly, teaching at the camp school Bible classes, arranging games and by teaching science to the children, who referred to him as Uncle Eric.

It was also claimed that one Sunday Liddell refereed a hockey match to stop fighting amongst the players, as he was trusted not to take sides. One of his fellow internees, Norman Cliff, later wrote a book about his experiences in the camp called “The Courtyard of the Happy Way” (Chinese 樂道院, also translated as “The Campus of Loving Truth”), which detailed the remarkable characters in the camp. Cliff described Liddell as “the finest Christian gentleman it has been my pleasure to meet. In all the time in the camp, I never heard him say a bad word about anybody”. Langdon Gilkey, who also survived the camp and became a prominent theologian in his native America, said of Liddell: “Often in an evening I would see him bent over a chessboard or a model boat, or directing some sort of square dance – absorbed, weary and interested, pouring all of himself into this effort to capture the imagination of these penned-up youths. He was overflowing with good humour and love for life, and with enthusiasm and charm. It is rare indeed that a person has the good fortune to meet a saint, but he came as close to it as anyone I have ever known.”

In his last letter to his wife, written on the day he died, Liddell wrote of suffering a nervous breakdown due to overwork. He actually had an inoperable brain tumour; overwork and malnourishment may have hastened his death. Liddell died on 21 February 1945, five months before liberation. Langdon Gilkey later wrote, “The entire camp, especially its youth, was stunned for days, so great was the vacuum that Eric’s death had left.” According to a fellow missionary, Liddell’s last words were, “It’s complete surrender”, in reference to how he had given his life to his God.

In 2008, just before the Beijing Olympics, Chinese authorities revealed that Liddell had refused an opportunity to leave the camp, and instead gave his place to a pregnant woman. Apparently, the Japanese and British, with Churchill’s approval, had agreed upon a prisoner exchange. News of this final act of sacrifice surprised even his family members.