

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

Looking to Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-4

April 21st, 2019

Main Point

The only way to successfully run the race of life is by looking to Jesus. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He has given us the pattern and power for life.

Getting Started

In light of the previous examples of faith given in chapter 11 and especially in light of Jesus' own model of endurance, believers are called to endure as runners in a race. The primary directive in this passage is the phrase, "let us run". The writer tells us that we must all run this race and then tells us how: by looking to Jesus. Only by looking to Jesus can we run the race that is set before us.

Observation

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 12:1-4.

Who are the witnesses the author refers to in this passage?

What does the author call on believers to cast aside? Why?

Why do you think the writer separates those things that divide our focus into "sin" and "everything that hinders" in this passage? What is the difference between these two things?

What are some things that aren't necessarily sin, but might keep us from fully seeking God?

What does looking at the work of Christ do for us?

We seek the kingdom that satisfies when we, forsaking our lesser concerns, look to and run to Jesus. Not only this, but God says we get our needs thrown in as well. So, when we feel like we are distracted and out of position we need to simplify our pursuits, repent of our sins, and remind ourselves of the incredible work of the cross.

What does it look like to be disciplined in the battle against sin? What is the difference between looking to God to bring discipline and working harder to discipline yourself? Why does the difference matter?

Jesus battled sin to the point of death and because of that, our battle with sin is very different. We do not shed blood as we war. Instead, we can seek God daily, the one who has already conquered sin, to strengthen and discipline us in the battle against sin. We can surrender to God, letting Him do the work for us. When God disciplines His children, it is meant to bring growth and to bring good. Let us look to Jesus by faith, the author and finisher of that faith.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is something you can lay aside this week in order to more freely seek after Christ? What has you weighted down? Sometimes it feels more like our sins cling to us rather than we cling to our sins. Call on Jesus to save you from damaging patterns of sin in your life.

How can you support someone else in the group as he or she tries to keep from getting spiritually stuck this week? Or how can you help that person get unstuck?

Consider what it looks like for you to run the race with endurance. Ask God to show you what it means for you to look to Jesus by faith and not by trying harder. This passage is not about rolling up our sleeves and working hard to run our race. It's about intently looking to Jesus to save us and to give us the power to run.

Prayer

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God for His work on the cross. Ask Him to help the group members identify the junk that keeps them from seeing and seeking Him. Ask that as the work of Christ overwhelms all lesser concerns, joy and satisfaction would be obvious in our lives.

Commentary

HEBREWS 12:1-4

12:1. The word *therefore* connects the list of Hebrew heroes of the faith in chapter 11 with the exhortation in 12:1-3. The large cloud of witnesses refers to these Old Testament people of faith. The historical personalities testify believers can and must persevere in their faith in God even when they do not experience the fulfillment of all His promises. Witnesses are those who “give testimony” about what they have experienced. Out of their experiences with God, the Hebrew stalwarts gave witness of faith that endures.

The writer urged his readers to lay aside every weight. The image is of marathon runners who remove extra clothing that might hinder winning. Believers are to remove anything that hinders their Christian living.

The Hebrew Christians were to put aside the sin that so easily ensnared them. Ensnared likely has the idea of something that entangles a runner’s legs, such as a long robe. The sin can refer to a, troubling sin or to sin as a reality that will cause believers to trip and fall. Christians must get rid of such sins.

The readers were to run with endurance. Endurance means “perseverance,” “holding out.” Race means “contest” or “conflict.” Lies before us literally is “being set before us”; God has set believers’ racecourse—their work and their prize. The Christian life is a demanding long-distance race that requires perseverance—staying power.

12:2. Believers are to focus their attention on Jesus—the supreme example of enduring faith and the goal toward which we move. The phrase keeping . . . eyes on means “viewing with undivided attention” by looking away from everything else. The tense conveys continuous action: We are to keep on placing our fixed attention on Jesus, who is the source and perfecter of our faith. Source means “author,” “pioneer,” and “leader” (see 2:10). Perfecter can have the sense of Jesus’ bringing faith to its intended goal or of His being the goal of faith. Our faith literally is “the faith”—Christian faith. Old Testament saints were good examples of faith; Jesus is the perfect example. He provides salvation, and He moves believers toward spiritual maturity—being like Him.

Jesus ran His race with endurance and won. His joy was completing His mission of making salvation available. Also, beyond His redemptive death were resurrection and exaltation. He endured a cross, a painful and humiliating method of execution. Considering the joy . . . before Him, He considered crucifixion’s shame to be of no consequence; He disregarded or disdained it. Jesus had faith in and was obedient to God, and now He sits at God’s right hand.

12:3. The word *for* introduces the reason the Hebrew Christians were to fix their attention on Jesus (v. 2). The term *consider* has the idea of weighing something for comparison. The readers were to compare Jesus’ enduring hostility with the opposition they were experiencing. Jesus’ enduring opposition should have inspired the Hebrew Christians to renew their efforts and helped keep them from growing weary and losing

heart. Otherwise, inner exhaustion and faintheartedness would arrest their spiritual development and weaken their service for Christ.

Faithful Christians' perseverance and Jesus' enduring suffering and death encourage believers to endure through any difficulty. Their examples encourage other Christians to maintain their faithfulness.

12:4. The writer contrasted Jesus' death to the readers' suffering. Evidently, they had experienced opposition without loss of life. The phrase struggling against sin probably refers to contending with opponents, perhaps personified as sin. The phrase not yet implies none of these believers had been martyred but that was a possibility.

Adapted from www.smallgroup.com