

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Have you ever won a race? Perhaps it was a school field day, maybe the "Dizzy Lizzy"? Or maybe you won a race in a neighborhood game of "kick the can" where you raced the person who was "it" to get to the can first to set everybody "free"? Could it have been the time you raced to return the ball in Pickle Ball? How did that go? (You have permission to brag...if appropriate). What did it take to win? The race is a metaphor for the Christian life. How would you describe the unique aspects of your "race" of faith? What is "the race" that God has given you?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24. In a race a runner who chooses to shoulder a backpack filled with 45lbs of weight has a clear disadvantage over any other runner in the race. From Hebrews 12:1 what is meant by "a weight"? What are some examples of weights for a Christian? What is the difference between a weight and a sin? How can sin hurt a Christian when it comes to living the Christian life?

3. Read verse 1. What is the goal in a race? Describe the similarities and differences between the finish line in a race and the finish line in the Christian life. What does Pastor Jonathan mean by "the right race"? Because Jesus was the first man to successfully run the race and win the prize, he not only finished that race, but according to FF Bruce "he blazed the trail or created the path". How is the path of our race marked for us?

4. Read verse 2. What is the difference between looking like a runner and running in a race? How can this inform our concept of living the Christian life? Refer to Hebrews 11. What kept the saints of the Old Testament running the race? How can they be an example to us? How is Jesus the "pioneer" of our faith (refer to Hebrews 2:10).

5. Read verse 3. Imagine being in the longest race of your life in which you are exhausted, you see a crowd ahead and you begin to sprint, only to realize that you have successfully made it half-way through the race! How would you respond? Imagine what it might feel like when soon after the half-way point someone who has finished the race shows up along the course cheering you on and describing the finish line as you run. What did Christ receive for his endurance? How can considering Christ give us the fuel we need so that we will not grow weary?

Praise to Jesus - Take some time to reflect on the reality that Jesus ran the same race that we are running but he ran it perfectly. Praise him for the reality that he ran for his Father, to complete the work that the Father had started (which was to save his people) and because he did, through his righteousness accounted to us by grace through faith, we can run well, no matter how hard the course (vs. 12:5, 6; Philippians 1:6; Galatians 3:26). Consider the places in your Christian life where "the race" hasn't been or isn't going well and give praise to Jesus that success or failure doesn't define you, but rather who you are in Christ. You are a child of God who is dearly loved.

Repentance through Jesus - Take a moment to pray for the Holy Spirit to show you the hinderances in your life which are keeping you from living the Christian life well. As you reflect, re-read the passage. Is there an area of sin which has drawn your attention away from Jesus? Repentance is ours through Jesus because he has broken the power of sin. Confess your sin and fix your eyes on Jesus. Do you feel that past sins have disqualified you from running the race (refer to Romans 8)? Confess this and repent through Jesus.

Consecration for Jesus - Because Jesus Christ ran well, we can consecrate ourselves to Jesus to run in his righteousness like he ran. Because Christ is the pioneer of faith, from that faith we can consecrate ourselves to focus our attention once again on Jesus and run with perseverance. Jesus finished the race and in Christ we will too! Let's us consecrate ourselves to Jesus to finish strong.

"Pastoral discipleship from the pulpit for you through the week.
Each of our pastors has designed content with you in mind."

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

If you want to connect with our family ministries, contact Pastor Ken (kenc@fpcrome.org)

1. This passage describes how we are to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). Ask your children if they like to run in a race. Why or why not?

a. Ask your children if they know what this race is that is described in this verse. Talk with them about how this race is our Christian life of following Jesus.

b. Ask your children if they know what "endurance" is. Ask them what kind of race requires "endurance". Talk with them about how this race is a long race. Ask them if knowing that the Christian life is a long race is an encouragement or a discouragement. Why or why not?

c. This verse reminds us that we have a "great cloud of witnesses" cheering us on in our race. Ask your children if having people cheer for us helps us run this race. Talk with them about how this great cloud of witnesses are believers that have gone before us and remind us to keep trusting God and His promises.

2. Ask your children what we are told in verse 1 to get rid of to run this race. Talk with them about our sin and how we get rid of it by confessing it to God and seeking His forgiveness. Talk about how we do this every week in worship.

3. Hebrews 12:2 reminds us to look to Jesus throughout our Christian life. Ask your children why it would be important to stay focused on Jesus. Make sure to talk about how looking to Jesus reminds us how much He loves us, how He promises to be with us always, and how His death and resurrection won our salvation.

a. Ask your children if they know what it means that Jesus is "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). Talk with them about how Jesus starts our faith and how He completes our salvation. Everything we have and need for our life of faith is found in Jesus.

b. Ask your children what the end of verse 3 teaches us about why we should stay focused on Jesus. It says, "so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted".

Big Idea

We must each run the race God has given us, but to run that race well, there are four things we must practice: throw off, run, focus, and consider.

Outline

1. Throw Off (vs. 12:1)

a. Sin that entangles

b. Everything that hinders

2. Run (vs. 12:1)

a. The right race

b. Run with perseverance

c. Marked out before us

3. Focus (vs. 12:2)

a. Jesus "our pioneer"

b. Who for the "joy set before him..."

4. Consider (vs. 12:3)

a. The example of Jesus

b. "So that you will not grow weary..."

Scriptures for further study:

Matthew 11:28-30

John 4:13-14

John 6:35

Colossians 1:15-20

"Run the Race"

Scriptures for further study:

Ephesians 4:22

1 Corinthians 9:24

Hebrews 6:18

Luke 24:26

Philippians 2:8

Isaiah 53:11

Hebrews 1:3

Hebrews 12:1-3 ESV

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Historical Context

"Hebrews moves from providing examples of faithful saints to providing challenges for the people of its own day. Like the rest of the New Testament, Hebrews describes the Christian life as full of hardships. We are to endure these hardships as measures of God's fatherly discipline. Through them, we come to share in Christ's holiness and righteousness. Just as the Son came under discipline and so was perfected (Heb. 5:7-10), God's sons and daughters undergo the same process. It is the most common thing in the world for us to interpret our hardships as divine punishment. Those who oppose us may even view it as such, hurling our very real sins and faults in our faces. But Hebrews reminds us there is no punishment for those who have been forgiven through the all-sufficient, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ." Jon C. Laansma

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FOR STUDENTS

If you want to connect with our student ministries, contact Pastor Jimmy (jimmyl@fpcrome.org)

1. Who is the cloud of witnesses, and what are they witnessing (Heb 12:1a)?
2. What should we lay aside and why (Heb 12:1b-2)?
3. Make a mental list of the weights and sins which are "clinging closely" in your life. Continue to ask God to take them from you each day.
4. If all else fails, on whom should we lean (12:2)?
5. How can we "run with endurance the race set before us" (12:1-2)? Hebrews 11 provides some examples.
6. What should we keep in mind that Jesus did for us when faced with sin, opposition and burdens (12: 3-4)? Our situations may be difficult, but with Christ we can overcome.

**Selected questions borrowed and adapted from Hebrews: How Jesus speaks into everything by John D. Barry*

Scriptures for further study:

Hebrews 11

Matthew 11:25-30

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

If you want to know more about Jesus and Christianity, contact Pastor Jonathan (jonathans@fpcrome.org)

1. Can you name some individuals you have either read about, or those you have known personally, whose faith and character inspire you? Who are they and how have their lives been exemplary?
2. What are some particular sins that tend to “entangle” you? Would you spend some time confessing those sins and asking the Lord to provide forgiveness and renewal in these areas of your life?
3. As a new (or mature) believer, can you begin to identify those things that are hindering your progress in the faith?
4. Consider your life as a whole. Are you even running the right race? Are you living for God and his glory? Are you living according to the purposes he has established for you?
5. Jesus is to be the ultimate focus of our lives. This text declares him to be not only the one who saves you (the means of salvation), but also the example for us (the model of salvation). If you were to be totally honest with yourself, would you say that Jesus is currently the true focus of your life? Are your eyes fixed on him?
6. Life is difficult. Period. Maybe you have even been tempted at times to give up. Do not quit! God encourages us in his word not to lose heart. He will help you to endure, and he promises to not only get you through this life, but to provide you with great joy and unimaginable blessing in the end!!

Like Christina. But even more so...we need something to fix our gaze upon...we need a home to pull us forward...and according to Hebrews, that is Jesus Christ...like the home on the hill in the painting, Jesus is the pinnacle of God’s plan of redemption...so considering this painting and background, here these words afresh from Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1-2:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

And so, church, let’s begin this journey in Hebrews together...which is not disconnected from our humanity and our struggles...for we to live in Christina’s world...a world of suffering, pain, and hardship...but we are in a relationship with the savior, Jesus, who has overcome the world...and because of His supremacy, calls us to fix our eyes on Him in order that we might persevere in faith. -Tremper Longman, EBC, 23-25

About the artwork

Andrew Wyeth is perhaps the most famous American artist of the 20th century. He, along with John Singer Sargent, are the only two American artists invited into the Academy of Fine Art in Paris, France. President Kennedy awarded Wyeth the presidential medal of freedom, the only visual artist to receive such an award. He was also awarded presidential medals from George H Bush and George W Bush.

His art is connected to his humanity. He was a man that experienced loss and grief in this broken and fallen world and often expressed his pain in visual form through art.

His most famous work, and the one that best expresses his struggle with pain and grief, is a painting called Christina's World (1948). Christina is a friend of Wyeth and had a disease that left her unable to walk. Instead of choosing a wheelchair, she preferred to crawl using her arms. The painting is a picture of her struggle...but it is also a picture of her hope...in the painting her hands are gripped to the ground portraying her daily suffering, yet her body is leaning towards the farmhouse, which was her home. Life was a struggle, but her gaze and hope were on her home, which kept her moving forward and not giving up.

The book of Hebrews has a very similar theme...the writer expresses the hope and gaze of home in the person and work of Jesus Christ...the struggle to give up or turn back was very real for the audience...most scholars believe the original audience was Jewish Christians who were facing persecution...it would have been a struggle for them to keep moving forward in the profession of Jesus Christ because with that profession came pain and hardship.

ADDITIONAL NOTES



What is Pulpit Driven Discipleship?

Discipleship from the pulpit to communities therein pressed into the head, heart and hands of image bearers of God every day.

Pulpit Driven Discipleship is the name of a process of discipleship. Discipleship begins on Sunday with the sermon faithfully preached by our pastors then the message of sermon is digested and pressed into the heart throughout the week through prayer reflection and discussion in the home or in smaller discussion groups. It is in this context that life transformation and growth occur.

The pastoral leadership team and the Adult Discipleship Ministry Team are excited to walk together through the Book of Hebrews. Please prayerfully consider incorporating PDD as your primary means of discipleship. We believe that PDD is appropriate for individuals, couples, families, and groups of all kinds. This great resource can be found in the bulletin on Sunday, and will be available on-line and via email each week.

Director of Adult Discipleship Rob Davis welcomes discussion, questions, and comments of all kinds. Rob Davis 706-252-5216, RobD@fpcrome.org

PULPIT DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP



Andrew Wyeth, Christina's World, 1948 ;

Perseverance by Promise ***A Study of the Sermon to the Hebrews***

May 29, 2022
Hebrews 12:1-3 ESV