

"2012: YEAR IN REVIEW" HEBREWS 12:1-3

This Week's Core Competency

Faithfulness – I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to that relationship. Proverbs 3:3, 4

*Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

*Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.*

According to Hebrews 10:25, some in the church were tempted to drop out in order to escape the hardships and persecutions experienced by those who publically professed faith in Christ. To them the writer says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching." We gain insight into the kinds of things these Jewish believers were suffering at the hands of organized Judaism from what he wrote in verses 32-35. "Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so

Those who stayed with or returned to church grew up with both parents committed to the church, pastors whose sermons were relevant and engaging, and church members who invested in their spiritual development.

– USA Today

treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded."

People still drop out of church, especially young adults, but for multiple lesser reasons. In fact, hardship and persecution don't make the top 10 list of reasons they give for no longer attending. Here's the list compiled in a study done by LifeWay Research in 2007:

- Wanted a break from church: 27%
- Found church members judgmental or hypocritical: 26%
- Moved to college: 25%
- Tied up with work: 23%
- Moved too far away from home church: 22%
- Too busy: 22%
- Felt disconnected to people at church: 20%
- Disagreed with church's stance on political/social issues: 18%
- Spent more time with friends outside church: 17%
- Only went before to please others: 17%

USA Today in its analysis of the data had this to say. "Just over half (51%) of Protestant young people surveyed (both the church dropouts and those who stayed on in church after age 22) saw church members as "caring" or had other positive descriptions, such as "welcoming" (48%) or "authentic" (42%).

Among dropouts, nearly all (97%) cited life changes, such as a move. Most (58%) were unhappy with the people or pastor at church. More than half (52%) had religious, ethical or political reasons for quitting.

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Dropouts were more than twice as likely than those who continued attending church to describe church members as judgmental (51% for dropouts, 24% for those who stayed), hypocritical (44% vs. 20%) or insincere (41% vs. 19%).

The news was not all bad: 35% of dropouts said they had resumed attending church regularly by age 30. An additional 30% attended sporadically. Twenty-eight percent said "God was calling me to return to the church."

The survey found that those who stayed with or returned to church grew up with both parents committed to the church, pastors whose sermons were relevant and engaging, and church members who invested in their spiritual development"

(http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-08-06-church-dropouts_N.htm).

Interestingly, the majority of reasons young adults give for dropping out are circumstantial. Dropouts didn't say they quit attending church because they no longer believed. They said they quit attending because their circumstances changed. The same is probably true of older adults. Perhaps they tire of the routine, or no longer have friends that attend. If they no longer volunteer, going just to listen to a sermon may hardly be worth the effort. And Sunday is supposed to be a day of rest. You might say the cares and concerns of this world got the best of them. In any case, their reasons don't measure up according to the author of Hebrews who writes, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith," not our circumstances, "who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame . . . Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (12:2, 3).

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Cf., another translation

1Therefore, 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. 2Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart..
(NIV(c)1984)

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all he hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. (NLT)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle the word "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 1.
- * Circle the word "since" indicating *reason* in v. 1.
- * Box the words "perseverance" and "endured" indicating the *theme* in vv. 1-3.
- * Box the figurative word "cloud" in v. 1.
- * Put parentheses around "of witnesses" in v. 1.
- * Box "entangles" in v. 1.
- * Bracket v. 1b containing the "race" metaphor.

- * Underline once the words "let us" in vv. 1 and 2.
- * Underline twice the verbs "throw off," "run," and "fix" in vv. 1, 2.
- * Box "author" and "perfecter" in v. 2.
- * Put parentheses around "at the right hand" in v. 2.
- * Underline once "consider him" in v. 3.
- * Circle the words "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 3.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. How would you describe the relationship of this passage to Hebrews 11?
2. Do the "witnesses" mentioned have their eyes on us or do we have ours on them? Explain.
3. The main exhortation, "let us run the race," employs a metaphor. To what does the sports analogy refer?
4. Without using the race metaphor, put what verse 1 exhorts us to do in your own words.
5. Give some examples of things that hinder and entangle.
6. What makes the words "with perseverance" worth adding?
7. What can we learn about "running the race" from Jesus?
8. According to verse 3, we should "consider him" so we don't "grow weary and lose heart." How so?
9. **Discussion.** Describe someone you believe is an example of faithfulness.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Competitive running shorts don't have pockets because no one running a marathon carries his wallet and car keys with him. Neither weighs that much, but running with full pockets is a distraction at best, a serious encumbrance at worst. Trust me; I know this from experience. I don't run competitively. I run for fun. But running with something, even one little thing, in your pocket will take all the fun out of it. On a warm humid night last summer I went for a run. I was wearing shorts but not running shorts. The shorts I had on that night had pockets, and when I started running, I noticed I had a car key in my pocket. The key ring in my pocket had just one car key on it along with that remote door locking thing-a-ma-bob. Still I found running with it in my front pocket annoying so I moved it to my back pocket, which made matters worse. As I was running that stupid key ring and thing-a-ma-bob kept tugging on my shorts. I stopped a couple of times to pull up my shorts and then finally just stopped running altogether.

Hebrews 12:1-3 tells us that living the Christian life is like running a marathon. And in light of the examples set by those who have lived the faith life before us, that "great cloud of witnesses" the writer references, we must, in the words of The Message, "Strip down, start running-and never quit!" The analogy is pretty

straight forward. We need to empty our pockets of every weight. Better yet, we need to put on our running shorts, the ones that don't have pockets. "Throw off everything that hinders," is how the writer puts it. Moreover, we need to reconsider our values, and put aside the kinds of wrongheaded thinking and foolish behavior that will only impede us. The writer refers to these kinds of things as "the sin that so easily entangles." And we must focus on running with perseverance, so we can complete end the race and say with Paul, "I have finished the race, I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me-the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return" (2Ti 4:7 NLT).

In order to finish strong, we must run with our minds on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, so when we grow weary and are tempted to drop out, we'll remember how he persevered in the face of hardship and opposition beyond anything we've ever experienced, and remember how in the end he was seated at the right hand of God. If we keep in mind what God has in store for us, we'll run with endurance.

The Message of the Passage

We're in the race of a lifetime, so take off anything that might slow you down and keep your mind on Jesus so you don't collapse and drop out.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“2012: Year in Review”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 1 **therefore** Or "consequently." The Greek word introduces an inference drawn from the previous chapter. "Do you see what this means-" is how *The Message* renders it.
- v. 1 **cloud** The figure of speech indicates a large number, which is made larger by the emphatic words "such a great." The resultant meaning is "so many witnesses" or "a host of witnesses." "As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses around us" (TEV).
- v. 1 **witnesses** I.e., the men and women of faith mentioned in chapter 11.
- v. 1 **everything** Lit., "every weight" (NKJV); however, the term was used figuratively to refer to encumbrances (cf. NASB) both moral and physical. For example, since a long robe would get in the way, contestants removed their clothing before running so that nothing would impede them during the race. "Strip down, start running-and never quit. No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins" (*The Message*).
- v. 1 **easily entangles** Or "easily clinging" (cf. the NET Bible). "The Greek word "possibly refers to something that clings so closely that it impedes movement, but its meaning is uncertain" (George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, 397-98).
- v. 1 **perseverance** "There must be a firm resolve not to drop out of the contest but to exert every effort to cross the finish line despite hardship, exhaustion, and pain. The audience is summoned to an intense perseverance in faith in view of the example of those who have preceded them" (William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47B, *Hebrews 9-13*, 410).
- v. 1 **race** "The comparison of life to engagement in an athletic contest was the common property of preachers of moral philosophy, whose sermons could be heard in the streets of every Hellenistic town in the first century. The metaphor of running a race is taken from the stadium and reflects the recognized preeminence of the footrace in the Greek games. The allusion is to a distance race requiring disciplined commitment and endurance" (408-09).
- v. 1 **marked out** "The picture evoked in 12:1 is that of runners looking down the track at the course they must run. They know where they must go and now must bring their training and commitment to bear on the task of running the race successfully. As runners see the path lying before them, so Christians see the path of the faith life stretch into the future" (Guthrie, 398).
- v. 2 **author** The range of meaning of this Greek word includes: "champion," "leader," "forerunner," or "initiator." Used in connection with the word translated "perfecter" it likely connotes "initiator." As the initiator of the faith life, he "wrote the book on living by faith" and as its author exemplified obedient faith. Put differently, he pioneered the path of faith (cf. NRSV).
- v. 2 **perfecter** "To perfect" in this context means "to express perfectly fully and completely." In contrast to the men and women in chapter 11, who exemplified faith albeit imperfectly, Jesus perfected the faith life. He was the one who "brought faith to complete expression" (411).
- v. 2 **endured** Jesus not only perfected the faith life, he provided the preeminent example of endurance at the same time. "There is no greater example of patient endurance in suffering than Jesus, both in His trial and in his crucifixion. The prophet Isaiah said of Him, 'He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth'(Isa. 53:7)" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *A Faith That Endures*, 213).
- v. 2 **scorning** I.e., Jesus treated the shame of crucifixion as insignificant or of little consequence; he scorned its shame.
- v. 2 **throne** See Php 2:9-11.
- v. 3 **consider** The Greek verb connotes comparison and reflection, which implies the value of meditation on and contemplation of Jesus' suffering.

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.

Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

The Olympics often give us stories of incredible athletes who persevere through many obstacles to rise to the top of their sport. This summer in London was no different. Manteo Mitchell was running the opening leg of the men's 4x400m relay for Team USA. He was off to a strong start when he felt a pop in his leg and then excruciating pain. He knew something bad had happened but he also knew that if he didn't finish his part, his team would be disqualified from the event. Mitchell focused his eyes on the finish line and persevered despite running on a broken femur.

His team ended up winning the heat and then moving on to the finals, eventually earning a silver medal. Mitchell knew that the prize was worth far more than his momentary troubles. This new year gives us opportunity to refocus on the goal - Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. No doubt there will be challenges that will come our way. We will be tripped up by "sin that so easily entangles us" or situations that are beyond our control. But you and I have a fresh opportunity to refocus ourselves and our families on Jesus and to run the race with perseverance, not growing weary and losing heart. I look forward to running with you this year as set our hearts on Him.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Hebrews 12:1-3

1. Who are the great cloud of witnesses written about in verse 1?
2. Who are we to "fix our eyes on"?
3. Fill in the blanks: "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you do not _____ and _____." (verse 3)

What Do You Think

1. What are some ways sin entangles us and gets us off course?
2. What are some specific ways we can fix our eyes on Jesus?
3. What terrible thing did Jesus choose to endure for us?

What R U Going To Do

In this season of new year's resolutions and goals, sit down with your family and decide on a common spiritual goal you would like to set together. Will you attend church more often, pray together, or hold one another accountable to a daily quiet time? Talking about it together will help you be more successful!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Faithfulness - Sticking with God, no matter what, makes me a winner

Memory Verse

Heb 12:1 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC _____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.