

HEBREWS

“NO TURNING BACK”

Hebrews Lesson 18

Ice Breaker: What is the longest or toughest race you’ve ever competed in? What did you do to increase your chances of winning or finishing?

INTRO: To win a race you have to prepare both mentally and physically. People who really want to perform well find all kinds of ways to get an advantage... like good equipment, good nutrition, and good training. In many ways, our time here on earth is much like a race. There is a finish line and reward as well as all kinds of things to keep us from reaching them. In this passage the writer of Hebrews gives good instruction on how to find the advantages you need to run your race of faith.

READ: Hebrews 12:1-12

*1 Therefore, 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. **2 Let 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. **3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.***

*4 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”*****

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.** For what son is not disciplined by his father? **8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. **9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! **10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. **11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.******

12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. **13 “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.**

Q: You can’t run a race very well carrying extra baggage. In verse 1, the writer names two categories of baggage that we need to throw off... “everything that hinders” and the “sin that so easily entangles”. What is the difference between these two categories?

- Sin is the off limits stuff, but everything that hinders could include things that aren’t sin, but aren’t helpful for your race.

Q: If you are serious about running this race, how will you respond when someone shows you some baggage you need to get rid of?

Q: In verses 2-3, we are told to “*fix our eyes on Jesus... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart*”. How will fixing our eyes on Jesus keep us from growing weary and losing heart?

- What you fix your eyes on becomes your target, your point of reference you compare yourself to.
- If you’re not thinking about Jesus and what He endured, you’re likely to compare yourself to a brother or sister in Christ.
 - If someone else’s road seems easier, we can start resenting or whining.
- We have to compare our race to Jesus’ ... not other Christians.
 - Other Christians may not have to go through the things the Father has set out for you!
 - If you compare your race to someone else’s, you’ll definitely get weary and lose heart.
- If Jesus is your standard, you will realize you haven’t really faced much trouble yet.

Q: What does the writer mean in verse 7 when he says we must “endure hardship as discipline”?

- Discipline isn’t the same as punishment. Discipline is training.
 - Troubles, frustrations and heartaches are all part of God’s training process.
- To endure hardship, you have to embrace it, not resist it or resent it!
 - James 1:2-4 “**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**”
 - Knowing what hardship produces, would you really want to avoid hardship?
- Hardship Should Be Expected.
 - 1Pet. 4:12 “Dear friends, **do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.**”
 - Many Christians think that if you behave well, you’ll avoid trials.
 - When Christians have troubles, one of the first things they ask themselves is, “what did I do wrong?”
 - If you have believed this, you have believed something the bible does not teach, and you will begin to question God Himself.
 - Your faith will be shaken by sufferings.
 - God has always used hardship to toughen His servants.

Q: What is hardship evidence of?

- That God accepts us as His children.
- That He is training and shaping us so we can “share in His holiness” (vs. 10) and produce “a harvest of righteousness and peace” (vs. 11).

- 1Kings 6:7 *"In building the temple, **only blocks dressed at the quarry were used**, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built."*
 - Why did God care about where the stones were shaped?
 - To teach us something about the good things that were coming.
 - 1Peter 2:5 *"...you also, **like living stones**, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*
 - You are being shaped specifically for a place in His new temple.
 - This world is the quarry... we're getting hammered on here... it won't be allowed in heaven!
 - When you are going through a hardship, that's the sound of the hammer, chisel or other tools making you fit the place you were created for!
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APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. Do you have some baggage you need to throw off? If so, what is it?
2. Who's race do you tend to compare your race with?
3. Do hardships discourage you or reassure you?
 - a. What do you need to do in order to consider them a pure joy?