



## Frisco First Baptist Church

Distracted • Removing Hindrances • Heb 12:1-13 • Feb 2, 2025

### MAIN POINT

**NEXT WEEK is Start the Party Early!** Every year, on Super Bowl Sunday, we encourage LIFEGroups to "Start the Party Early!" This is a causal time of food, fellowship, and inviting new people into your LIFEGroup. As a church, we want everyone to find a place to belong, and Start the Party Early is their excuse to try out some of the LIFEGroups. Make every effort to create an environment where everyone is belongs. Thank you.

Today's Lesson is **Removing hindrances.** (Heb 12:1-13) What hinders you from a more Christ focused life? The writer of Hebrews gives us the challenge to identify and remove the things that hinder our progress in pursuing God's will for our lives. In this message, we will address the things that hold us back and encourage us to be more intentional.

### INTRODUCTION

The author [of Hebrews] applies what he has been saying about the superiority of Christ by warning his readers of the danger of discarding their faith in Christ (10:19–39). The faith that the readers must maintain is defined in chapter 11, verses 1–3, and illustrated in chapter 11, verses 4–40. The triumphs and accomplishments of faith in the lives of Old Testament believers should encourage the recipients of "something better" (11:40) in Christ to look "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (12:2). Just as Jesus endured great hostility, those who believe in Him will sometimes have to endure divine discipline for the sake of holiness (12:1–29). The readers are warned not to turn away from Christ during such times, but to place their hope in Him. The character of their lives must be shaped by their dedication to Christ (13:1–19), and this will be manifested in their love of each other through their hospitality, concern, purity, contentment, and obedience.<sup>1</sup>

1. **Do you even like football? Do you have any special plans for the Super Bowl next week? Who do you hope wins?**
2. **How were you disciplined or corrected as a child? What do you think was good or bad about the way you were disciplined as a child?**
3. **Can you share a time when you felt inspired by someone else's faith journey? What impact did it have on you?**

# UNDERSTANDING

## HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ Hebrews 12:1-3

4. When did you endure difficult or arduous circumstances only because you knew you would later be rewarded?
5. What warning is given to those who would run the race of the Christian life? ([12:1](#))
6. What are some of the things that might be included in “everything that hinders” ([12:1](#))?
7. What should be the focus of those who would live for Christ? ([12:2](#))
8. What do you think it means to “fix our eyes” on Jesus? ([12:2](#))
9. Jesus’ motivation for enduring the cross and its shame was “the joy set before him” ([12:2](#)). What joy is set before you that can motivate you to endure and persevere? (*Optional: See [Romans 8:18–23](#); [2 Corinthians 4:17](#); [Philippians 3:20–21](#).*)
10. What is the benefit of remembering what Christ has done? ([12:3](#))

12:1–2. The life of faith has been amply attested by this great cloud of Old Testament witnesses. (This does not mean that they watch believers today.) Hence believers ought to run with perseverance (*hypomonēs*; cf. 10:32, 36; 12:2–3, 7) the race marked out in their Christian lives, setting aside whatever hinders and the sin that so easily entangles (*euperistaton*, “ambushes or encircles”). Their supreme Model for this continued to be Jesus, however admirable any Old Testament figure might be. He is both the Author and Perfecter of our faith. The word “author” (*archēgon*) was used in 2:10 (see comments there) and suggests that Jesus “pioneered” the path of faith Christians should follow. He also “perfected” the way of faith since He reached its end successfully. He kept His eye on the joy set before Him, the “joy” alluded to in 1:9 wherein He obtained an eternal throne. The believers’ share in that joy must also be kept in view. After enduring (*hypemeinen*, the verb related to the noun *hypomonē* in 12:1; cf. vv. 3, 7) the cross and scorning its shame, Jesus assumed that triumphant position at the right hand of the throne of God (cf. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12) which presages His and the believers’ final victory (cf. 1:13–14).<sup>ii</sup>

## HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ Hebrews 12:4-13.

11. What measures does the Lord sometimes take toward those who are His “sons”? Why? ([12:5–6](#))

- 12. What do we learn about God from the fact that He disciplines us? ([12:6–7](#))**
- 13. What are some specific ways God disciplines us?**
- 14. How can we tell when God is disciplining us?**
- 15. What state might your life be in if God neglected to discipline you when you went astray?**
- 16. Practically speaking, what would be involved in putting the exhortations of [12:12–13](#) into practice?**

12:5–8. The readers also seemed to have forgotten the encouragement found in Proverbs 3:11–12, which presents divine discipline as an evidence of divine love. Thus they should not lose heart (cf. Heb. 12:3) but should endure hardship (hypomenete, lit., “persevere”; cf. vv. 1–3) as discipline and regard it as an evidence of sonship, that is, that they are being trained for the glory of the many sons (cf. 2:10 and comments there). All God’s children are subject to His discipline, and in the phrase everyone undergoes discipline the writer for the last time used the Greek metochoi (“companions, sharers”), also used in 1:9; 3:1, 14; 6:4. (Lit., the Gr. reads, “... discipline, of which all have become sharers.”) In speaking of those who are not disciplined and are thus illegitimate children, he was probably thinking of Christians whose disloyalty to the faith resulted in their loss of inheritance (i.e., reward) which is acquired by the many sons and daughters. (In the Roman world, an “illegitimate child” had no inheritance rights.) What such Christians undergo, the author had shown, is severe judgment. On the other hand believers who undergo God’s “discipline” are being prepared by this educational process (paideia, “discipline,” lit., “child-training”; cf. Eph. 6:4) for millennial reward.

12:9–11. Drawing on the analogy of the discipline of earthly fathers, the author encouraged a submissive spirit to the discipline of the Father of our spirits which is life-preserving (and live) as well as productive of an experience of His holiness, which involves a rich harvest of righteousness and peace. But Christians must let this discipline have its full effect and be trained by it.<sup>iii</sup>

## APPLICATION

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

- 17. What is one of your favorite ways to stay motivated during challenging times, similar to how runners focus on their race?**
- 18. How well are you running the Christian race? How can we help?**
- 19. How can you focus your thinking on Christ this week?**
- 20. In what ways can you practically 'throw off everything that hinders' you in your faith today?**

## PRAYER

### Sample Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come before You today with grateful hearts for the opportunity to gather and dive into Your Word. Thank You for the gift of community and for calling us to run this race of faith together. Lord, as we reflect on Hebrews 12:1-13, we recognize that we often carry unnecessary weights and let sin entangle us, hindering our walk with You.

Forgive us for the times we've held on to distractions or failed to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Father, we ask for Your help in identifying and removing the things that hinder our progress in becoming more like Jesus. Reveal the areas in our lives where we need to let go of pride, fear, busyness, or anything else that keeps us from fully surrendering to Your will. Give us the courage and discipline to throw off these hindrances and to run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Lord, we are encouraged by the witnesses of faith who have gone before us, and we are inspired by the example of Jesus, who endured the cross for the joy set before Him. Help us to find joy in our journey, even in times of difficulty, knowing that Your discipline is a sign of Your love and a tool for shaping us into Your image. Teach us to embrace Your correction, trusting that it leads to holiness, peace, and righteousness.

As we prepare for "Start the Party Early" next week, we pray for open hearts and welcoming spirits. Let our LIFEGroups be a place where people feel they truly BELONG, where we BECOME like Jesus together, and where others BENEFIT through our sharing. Use this time to draw people closer to You and to one another. May we reflect Your love in all we do, creating an environment that invites everyone into deeper relationships with Jesus and each other.

We lift up our lives, our church, and our community to You. Strengthen us as we fix our eyes on Jesus and run this race with endurance. May we grow in faith, bear fruit for Your kingdom, and bring You glory in all that we say and do.

In Jesus' name, we pray,

Amen.

## COMMENTARY

### B. Demonstrating Necessary Endurance 12:1–13

The writer followed up his scriptural exposition with another final exhortation (chs. 12–13). This is the pattern he followed consistently throughout this epistle. He first called on his readers to persevere faithfully, so that they would not lose any of their reward. He advocated three practices to remain faithful: keep your eyes on Jesus (vv. 1–3), understand God's use of trials in your life (vv. 4–11), and grow stronger as a Christian (vv. 12–13)...

12:1 The cloud of witnesses refers to the Old Covenant saints whom the writer just mentioned (ch. 11). They are witnesses, not just because they presently view our actions, as spectators, but more importantly because by their lives they bore witness to their faith in God. The preceding chapter presented them as bearing witness to their faith. ... In view of this encouragement we

should rid ourselves of every obstacle that impedes our running the Christian race successfully (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24; 2 Tim. 4:7–8; Tit. 2:12). Popular moral philosophers, who spoke on the streets of every sizeable Hellenistic community in the first century, commonly used an athletic contest as an illustration of life. Obstacles are added weights (burdens) that may not necessarily be sins but nevertheless make perseverance difficult. The Greek word translated obstacle is *ogkos*, which means protuberance. A protuberance is a tumor or swelling, an excess growth. So the idea seems to be that we should lay aside anything that is superfluous, that we do not need, in order to run the race successfully. Too much of anything, even any good thing, should be left behind. This is a call to moderation in order to keep in spiritual shape so that we can run with endurance. “Some one is recorded to have asked whether a certain thing would do a person harm, and the reply was given, ‘No harm, if you do not wish to win.’” “We should also rid ourselves of sin of any kind. The sin that the writer warned his readers against especially in Hebrews is unbelief, apostasy. In view of the immediately preceding context, it might refer to losing heart, quitting the race, or giving up the fight. However many different kinds of sin can trip us up, and we should avoid all sin for this reason. “This might have reference to the love of wealth, attachment to the world, preoccupation with earthly interests, or self-importance.” The reason for this self-discipline is so that we can keep on running the Christian race with endurance. Here the writer returned to the thought of 10:36: “You have need of endurance.” He viewed the Christian life as an endurance race, a marathon, not a 50-yard dash. “Many start well in the race of faith ‘lying before us,’ which is like the track laid out for runners, but they do not hold out to the end, they fail in regard to perseverance.” “... the real test of life is the steady, normal progress of the soul—’not paroxysms [spasms] of effort but steady endurance.’

12:2 Like a runner keeps looking toward his or her goal, so we should keep looking only at Jesus, not primarily at the other witnesses, much less at other distractions (v. 1; cf. Acts 7:55–56; Phil. 3:8). When we take our eyes of faith off Jesus, we begin to sink, like Peter did (Matt. 14:22–33). Jesus should be our primary model when it comes to persevering as He is our primary source of strength for persevering. “The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the perfect One.” The writer used the simple personal name Jesus to accent our Lord’s humanity, especially His endurance of pain, humiliation, and the disgrace of the cross. “The writer now returns to the duty of *hupomone* [endurance] as the immediate exercise of *pistis* [faith] (1036f.), as the great Believer, who shows us what true *pistis* means, from beginning to end, in its heroic course (*ton prokeimenon hemin agona*) [the race that is set before us].” He is the originator (lit. file leader, captain, pioneer; 2:10) of the faith. It was by looking to Him in faith that we were saved. Jesus set the example of living by faith for us, one evidence of His faith being His prayers. Jesus perfected the faith in the sense that He finished His course of living by faith successfully (cf. 2:13). “As the ‘perfecter of faith’ Jesus is the one in whom faith has reached its perfection.” “He alone is the source of hope and help in their time of need. Looking to Him in faith and devotion is the central theological and practical message of Hebrews.” The joy that Jesus felt at the prospect of His reward, namely, His victory over death, glorification, inheritance, and reign motivated and encouraged Him, as it should us (1:9, 13–14; 8:1; 10:12). This is the only occurrence of the word *cross* outside the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles, and its presence here stresses the shame associated with Jesus’ crucifixion. What we look forward to is very similar to what Jesus anticipated. Such a prospect—resurrection bodies, glorification, inheritance, reigning with Christ—will help us to endure suffering and despise the shame involved in living faithful to God before unbelieving critics.

12:3 The readers should consider (think upon) Jesus, so that they might not grow weary of persevering and lose heart. Meditation on Jesus and the cross encourages us to continue to follow God's will faithfully. It is natural for us to overestimate the severity of our trials, and the writer did not want us to do this. "Understanding Jesus is the key to the whole problem, the cure for doubt and hesitation." "The clear implication for the audience is that if they were to relinquish their commitment to Christ under the pressure of persistent opposition they would express active opposition against themselves (as in 6:6!), just as did Jesus' tormentors [cf. 10:38–39]."

2. The proper view of trials 12:4–11 The writer put his readers' sufferings in perspective so that they might not overestimate the difficulty they faced in remaining faithful to God. "Suffering comes to all; it is part of life, but it is not easy to bear. Yet it is not quite so bad when it can be seen as meaningful. ... The writer points out the importance of discipline and proceeds to show that for Christians suffering is rightly understood only when seen as God's fatherly discipline, correcting and directing us. Suffering is evidence, not that God does not love us, but that he does."

12:4 The readers had not yet resisted sin to the extent that their enemies were torturing them, shedding their blood, or killing them for their faith—as had been Jesus' experience. Evidently there had been no martyrs among the readers yet, though the writer and the readers undoubtedly knew of Christians elsewhere who had died for their faith (e.g., Stephen, James, et al.). Their striving against sin probably refers to both resisting sinful opponents and resisting inward temptations to depart from the faith in their own lives (v. 1; cf. Luke 18:1; Gal. 6:9).

12:5–8 We also need to remember that God allows us to experience some opposition in order to make us stronger in the faith (Deut. 8:5; Prov. 3:11–12; James 1). It is easy to become discouraged when we encounter hard times. The Israelites certainly gave evidence of this when they left Egypt following the exodus. Verses 5–11 constitute an exposition of Proverbs 3:11–12. Another value of divine discipline is that it prepares us to reign with Christ (cf. 2:10). God's discipline assures us that we are His sons. All believers are partakers (cf. 1:9; 3:1, 14; 6:4) of discipline. The illegitimate children in view seem to be genuine children of God but not approved sons. (See Romans 8:14–17 for the contrast between children and sons.) ... The writer seems to be saying that God disciplines all Christians, but when a believer apostatizes, God may let him go his own way without disciplining him further, especially if he has not responded to previous discipline but has hardened his heart. God disciplines Christians to prepare them for future service, but when they apostatize, He stops preparing them for future service.

12:9–11 As Christians we need to submit to God's discipline in our lives, because it will result in fullness of life, and greater holiness and righteousness along with peace ("the peaceful fruit of righteousness," v. 11). ... God always designs discipline for our welfare, even though it may not be pleasant to endure. "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." ... It is essential that we view our sufferings as being the Lord's discipline, rather than an indication of His displeasure, His punishment, or even worse, His hatred (cf. Deut. 1:26–27) in order to persevere faithfully. There is a real, as well as a linguistic connection between the words discipline and disciple and discipleship.

3. The need for greater strength 12:12–13 The writer next urged his readers to take specific action that would facilitate their continuance in the faith. This word of exhortation, as well as the others, reveals that the original readers were spiritually weak. Consequently the writer urged them to build up their strength (cf. Isa. 35:3) so that they could work effectively and walk without stumbling (cf. Prov. 4:25–27)...The writer probably intended this exhortation to include

laying aside sin (v. 1) and avoiding compromising associations with apostates who might throw harmful barriers such as false teaching in the Christians' path. This encouragement completes the thought of verses 1–13. The writer began with an exhortation, expounded the value of discipline, and ended with another exhortation. “A depth of pastoral concern is evident throughout this section. The writer understood that faith can be eroded by constant exposure to harsh circumstances.”<sup>iv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Wilkinson, B., & Boa, K. (1983). Talk thru the Bible (p. 459). T. Nelson.

<sup>ii</sup> Hodges, Z. C. (1985). Hebrews. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 809–810). Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Hodges, Z. C. (1985). Hebrews. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 810). Victor Books.

<sup>iv</sup> Constable, T. (2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Heb 12:1–12). Galaxie Software.