

Run Your Race

What an honor to be here today!!! Visited for years!!! (My Parents, Pastor Noel, Doug, Janet, Sue Frazee, Georgie Decker, Etc.)

3 Weeks Ago - Father's Day Service - Finishing Strong!!!

(Great Message from Pastor Matt Skool – Wow, So Good)

Finishing Strong – made me think of Hebrews (Show Hall of Faith Pic)

Is it just me? How did some of these people get there? Abraham, Sarah, David, Rahab, Samson, etc. They weren't perfect at all.

It's like God really does cast our sins as far as the East is from the West. He only focuses on what we've done good.

Today's Message is entitled "RUN YOUR RACE" Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)

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. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.^[a] Because of the joy^[b] awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Verbs – Strip Off, Run, Keeping = ACTION!!!

Faith without action is dead and useless!!! **PRAY!!!**

Theme:

God has called every believer to run a race of faith. To run our race and finish strong, we must remove what hinders us, endure what challenges us, and focus on Jesus above everything else.

Opening Illustration:

Imagine an Olympic runner lining up at the starting blocks wearing a backpack full of bricks. **(Show Olympic Runner Pic)** No matter how gifted they are, they will never run effectively carrying unnecessary weight. The writer of Hebrews tells us that many believers are trying to run their spiritual race while carrying things God never intended them to carry.

The question is not, “Have you started the race?” The question is, “Will you finish the race God has called you to run?”

Point 1: Remove Every Weight That Hinders You

Hebrews 12:1

“Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.”

Notice the writer distinguishes between weights and sins.

A sin is something that is wrong.

A weight may not be sinful, but it is still slowing you down.

(It's not a sin to swim with a bowling ball, it's just dumb!!)

(Show Swimmer with Bowling Ball Pic)

Many Christians spend all their energy avoiding sin while never addressing the weights that keep them from God's best.

Common Spiritual Weights:

Unforgiveness

Offense

Fear

Worry

Distractions

Wrong relationships

Busyness without purpose

Regret from the past

Comfort and complacency

Material things (Nice car? Lifestyle? Do I have to have it?)

Get rid of the bowling ball!! (Get to a point where all u need is Jesus)

The enemy doesn't always need to destroy you; sometimes he only needs to distract you. Distraction leads to destruction.

BIBLE TIME, PRAYER TIME, CHURCH TIME = KEY!! B.U.S.Y.

Supporting Scripture:

Ephesians 4:31 (NLT)

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander..."

Paul says, "Get rid of it."

You cannot run carrying bitterness.

You cannot run carrying yesterday's wounds.

You cannot run carrying offenses from ten years ago.

Illustration:

When a hot air balloon needs to rise, the pilot doesn't add more fuel first. He starts by dropping weight.

Many believers are asking God for more power when God is saying, "Drop the weight."

Questions:

What am I carrying that God never asked me to carry?

What relationship, habit, fear, or offense is slowing my spiritual growth? What do I need to release today?

Key:

You cannot run freely while holding tightly to things God is asking you to release.

Our Prayer should be:

Lord is there anything I need to release?

Point 2: Run With Endurance the Race God Has Assigned You

Hebrews 12:1

"Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us."

The Christian life is not a sprint.

It is a marathon.

The word endurance means steadfastness, perseverance, and staying power.

God isn't looking for people who start fast.

God is looking for people who finish faithfully.

Notice The verse says:

“The race God has set before us.”

Not someone else's race.

Not your neighbor's race.

Not your pastor's race.

Not your spouse's race.

Your race.

Comparison is one of the greatest thieves of endurance.

It is thief of contentment and the enemy of joy!

When Peter asked Jesus about John's future, Jesus replied:

John 21:22 (NLT)

“If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.”

In other words:

Stop looking sideways.

Keep running your race.

Supporting Scripture:

Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

“So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.”

The harvest belongs to those who refuse to quit!!!

Illustration:

The greatest victories in Scripture often came after long seasons of perseverance:

Noah built for years before rain came.

Abraham waited decades for Isaac.

Joseph endured prison before the palace.

David was anointed king years before wearing the crown.

God develops endurance before He releases destiny.

Some of you are one step away from your breakthrough but you’re considering quitting. (Show Diamond Pic)

Don't quit praying.

Don't quit serving.

Don't quit giving.

Don't quit believing.

Don't quit trusting.

Key:

God rewards faithfulness more than He rewards speed.

Point 3: Keep Your Eyes Fixed on Jesus

Hebrews 12:2

“We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.”

This is the secret to everything.

The Christian life is not about trying harder.

It is about focusing better.

The writer says we run successfully by looking unto Jesus.

The problem with so many of us is that we spend more time looking at:

Our problems

Our circumstances

Our critics

Our failures

The news

The economy

Then we spend looking at Jesus.

Circumstances will never define you, but your choices will...

You are born looking like your parents, but you die looking like your choices!!!

Why should we keep our eyes on Jesus?

Because He is:

The Author of our faith

The Finisher of our faith

The Example of our faith

Supporting Scripture:

Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)

“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!”

Peace follows focus!!!

Peter walked on water, while focused on Jesus. (Show Peter Pic 1)

Matthew 14:30 (NLT)

“But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink.”

The moment his focus shifted, he began to sink. (Show Peter Pic 2)

The same is true for us.

Hebrews 12:2 goes on to say:

“Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross...”

Jesus looked beyond the pain and saw the promise.

He saw:

Your salvation

Your redemption

Your freedom

Your future

The cross was painful, but the joy beyond it was greater.

Mom Analogy – Moms bears the pain, the suffering and the risk.

We are not given physical birth through our effort and our labor, but through the labor and effort and the risk of our moms.

We are not able to have spiritual birth except through Jesus’ labor and Jesus’ suffering and Jesus’ agony not at the risk of His life, but at the cost of His life!

But just as when a mom gives birth, she forgets her pain because of the joy of seeing her child. Jesus is looking at you today and He's saying, "In spite of all the pain and suffering I went through, you're worth it. I died for your sins! I took the penalty for your sins, but it was so worth it!"

Romans 8:18 (NLT)

"Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later."

When our eyes are on eternity, temporary struggles lose their power.

Key:

Whatever has your focus, will ultimately shape your future.

The Christian race is not won by the fastest.

It is won by those who refuse to quit.

Hebrews gives us three keys:

1. Remove Every Weight

Let go of anything slowing your walk with God.

2. Run With Endurance

Stay faithful through every season.

3. Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

Fix your focus on the One who started and will finish the work in you.

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”

Final Thoughts:

Today, what is your weight? Your distraction?

What is causing you to lose focus?

Bring it to Jesus. Lay it down.

Pick up your faith. You're Still Here!

God has a plan and a purpose for your life (Jer 29:11)

Let's run the race God has called us to run.

Because one day, every one of us wants to hear these words:

Matthew 25:21 (NLT) (Show Heaven Pic)

“Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

First Pres, Lets...

Strip off the weight,

Run with endurance

and Let's Keep our eyes on Jesus!!!

The finish line is so worth it!!! Amen!!!