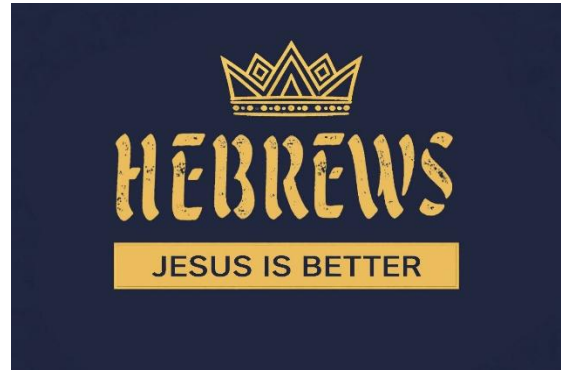


“The Race of Endurance”

Session 11 – Hebrews 12:1-17

Bible Study Method:
Commentary



INTRO

Read It:

Last week, we looked at the 'Hall of Fame' . . . ordinary people who did extraordinary things by faith. Today, Hebrews 12 tells us that we are surrounded by that same 'cloud of witnesses.' They've finished their laps and are now in the stands cheering for us. But to run well, we have to deal with the things that slow us down. Today, we're talking about the work of the race and the training that makes us more like Jesus.

Warning: Today's text uses the image of a Father. We know that for many, that word is complicated. If that's you, try looking at this through the lens of a 'Perfect Coach'. . . someone who knows your potential, is 100% on your side, and is training you because He wants to see you stand on the finish line.

SECTION 1 – Training an Athlete

Hebrews 12:1-3

Read it:

- Hebrews 12:1-3

Questions:

- 1. Weights vs. Sins:** Verse 1 distinguishes between "every hindrance" (weights) and "sin." A weight isn't always a sin; it's just something that adds drag (like a busy

schedule, a toxic relationship, or a perfectionist mindset). **What is a "weight" in your life right now that is making it hard for you to run the race God has for you?**

- 2. The Joy Set Before Him:** Jesus endured the work of the cross because of the “joy of set before Him” (the finish line). **How does keeping your eyes on the finish line change how you handle the uphill parts of your current season?**

SECTION 2 – The Heart of a Coach

Hebrews 12:4-11

Read It:

- Hebrews 12:4-11

The author shifts from the imagery of an athlete to the imagery of a child. Take a moment to notice how many times the word “discipline” (or a form of it) appears in these verses. (10 times) Before we dive further into these verses, we’re going to practice another Bible study method. We can find the backstory and original meaning of a text in commentaries or by looking up the original meanings of Biblical words. Everybody, take out your phones and search for the definition of the Greek word 'Paideia' (pronounced: py-dee-ah), which is the word used for 'discipline' in this passage. Shout out what you find.

Questions:

- 1. Training vs. Punishment:** When life gets hard, we often feel like God is punishing us, but these verses describe Him as a father who acts like a coach. He trains those He loves. **How does it change your view of your current hardships when you remember that a coach only pushes the athletes He believes in? His training (discipline) is a sign that He sees potential in you, not that He is angry with you.**
- 2. The Harvest:** Verse 11 admits that training is painful at the time, but it produces a "harvest of righteousness." **Can you think of a past struggle that eventually produced the joy of growth or character in your life?**
- 3. The Motivation of the Heart:** While we use the image of a "Coach" to understand the work of the race, the text uses the image of a "Father." A coach wants us to win, but a father wants us to be transformed. **How does knowing that God is both your**

Coach (pushing you toward the finish) and your Father (loving you regardless of your stats) help you stay in the race?

SECTION 3 – (Optional) Race Assessment

Read It:

In Hebrews 12:12, the author says, ***'Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.'*** In the ancient world, this was a call to an athlete who was about to collapse. Before we can strengthen our knees, we have to identify why they are shaking. We're going to take 7 minutes of silence to work through the Race Assessment worksheet (attached). This isn't for anyone else to see; it's a moment for you to be honest with your Coach.

SECTION 4 – Hidden Injuries

Hebrews 12:14-17

Read It:

- Hebrews 12:14-17

Questions:

- 1. The Hidden Injury (The Bitter Root):** Verse 15 warns against a "bitter root" that grows up and causes trouble. In training, a small, ignored ache (like a stress fracture) can eventually sideline an entire team. **How have you seen one person's unresolved "bitter root" or hidden resentment "injure" the rhythm of a family, a friendship, or a small group?**
- 2. The "Single Meal" Trap (The Esau Example):** Esau was exhausted and hungry after a "workout" in the fields. He traded his entire inheritance for a single bowl of soup—choosing temporary relief over a permanent prize. **What "temporary relief" (a quick fix for your pain or a shortcut in your character) are you tempted to trade your joy of finishing well for right now?**

DO IT:

- **The 24-Hour "Weight" Fast:** Choose the "weight" you identified in your Race Audit (e.g., social media, a specific habit, or a busy-work task). Commit to laying it aside for 24 hours this week to see how much more "room to run" you have without it.
- **The Commentary Challenge:** Pick one verse from our study (like Heb. 12:1 or 12:11) and look it up on a free site like *BibleHub* or *Enduring Word*. Read one Commentary on that verse. Then, write a one-sentence summary of how that historical info changes how you will run your race this week.
- **The Injury Consultation:** If you identified a "hidden injury" (a bitter root or resentment) during the audit, schedule a time this week to talk to a trusted friend, mentor, or pastor about it. Don't keep running on a "broken leg."
- **The Sideline Cheer:** Look for someone else in your "race" (a family member or coworker) who looks like they are limping. Send them a text of encouragement this week to "strengthen their weak knees" and remind them of the finish line.
- **The Finish Line Visual:** Take the "Joy" you wrote at the bottom of your handout and put a physical reminder of it somewhere you'll see it daily—a photo, a sticky note, or a screensaver—to keep your eyes on the trophy when the training gets hard.

PRAY IT:

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we thank You that You are the Author and the Perfecter of our faith, having run the race before us to show us the way to the finish line. Help us to lay aside every weight that slows us down, trusting that Your training is never meant to punish us, but to prepare us for a harvest of peace. We thank You that You are both our Expert Coach, pushing us toward our potential, and our Loving Father, holding us in our weakness. Even when our knees are weak and the path is uphill, remind us that we are never running alone, but are cheered on by a great cloud of witnesses and sustained by Your unconditional grace. Pull up any bitter roots of resentment before they sideline us, and keep our eyes fixed solely on You, the one holding our trophy and our heart. Amen.

Race Assessment (Hebrews 12:12-13)

"Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet."

The Weight Check

An athlete doesn't just avoid "bad" things; they avoid "heavy" things.

- **Identify one "Weight":** What is something in your life that isn't necessarily a sin, but it is making your spiritual life feel like a struggle?

(e.g., Anxious scrolling, a "need to please" others, an over-packed calendar, a perfectionist mindset).

My Weight: _____

The Knee Assessment

"Weak knees" happen when we lose sight of the "Why" behind the work.

Where are you wobbling? Check the box that best describes your current "race" pace:

- Sprinting:** I'm energized but might be heading for a burnout.
- Jogging:** I'm steady, but I've lost my passion for the finish line.
- Limping:** I've been hurt by a hardship and I'm struggling to keep moving.
- Sidelined:** I've stopped running because the training feels like punishment.

The Injury Report

Is there a "Bitter Root" (vs. 15) starting to grow? Is there a person or a circumstance you are holding onto with resentment? Write a one-sentence prayer asking the Father to pull that root up before it spreads.

My Prayer: _____

The Finish Line

Look at the Trophy: Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him. What is one "Joy" you are looking forward to at the end of this difficult season?

The Joy: _____