

HEBREWS 12:1-3

Always approach your study of the Bible expectantly. Expectantly but not hurriedly. Pause, relax and take time to pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you all things (John 14:26). Ask Him not only to teach you the Word but to use it in your life to glorify Christ.

In our last lesson we read that in the Old Testament faith is characterized by a person's willingness to wait for the promises of God to come. In the New Testament, faith means following the "Promised One," Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. In this lesson we will learn more about how to follow Him.

Read Hebrews 11:1-12:3.

Re-read Hebrews 12:1-3 several times. _____

A witness is a person who gives a firsthand account of something she has seen or experienced.

1. a. Who are the witnesses referred to in 12:1?

b. Of what do they testify?

c. How are you encouraged by their testimony?

2. To what athletic event is the Christian life compared in these verses? What are some of the similarities between the two?

This is the only place in the New Testament where the Greek word, *agon*, is translated "race." It usually refers to a struggle, fight or conflict as in Philippians 1:30 and I Timothy 6:12.

3. Considering this fact and the exhortation that we "run with endurance," what can we conclude about the kind of race in which we are engaged?

4. How often is some form of the word "endure" or "persevere" found in the first three verses of chapter twelve? _____

Define the word "endure."

Endurance in the Christian life is doing the will of God despite obstacles day after day after day... It's doing the will of God no matter what!

5. a. Define "encumbrance" or "hindrance."

b. Ask God to show you some specific things that are impeding your progress as you run. (These need not be sinful things, but anything that is slowing you down. It might even be certain dreams, hopes, desires, hobbies, etc.)

6. "The sin which so easily entangles us" is such an apt description of what sin does in our lives. What word picture(s) comes to mind as you think about this phrase?

7. a. Give some examples of sin which entangles us.

b. Note the definite article, "the." While it is true that all sin entraps us, the author seems to have a particular sin in mind. What might it be? (Think about the subject of Hebrews 11.)

EXTRA! An exercise to help you run. Do you participate in sports or exercise? On day this week while engaging in jogging, tennis, etc. wear a pack of books on your back. Each time you are aware of their hindrance to your performance think, "this is how encumbrances and sin effect my Christian life." (J. Dwight Pentecost)

8. a. In your own words tell what things we are told to do in 12:1.

b. What new direction for running the race is given in verse 2?

The Greek word, *aphorao*, for "fix" literally means "to look away." So we are to look away from all other things in order to fix our eyes on Jesus. This is not just a cliché but the key to handling difficult situations and antagonistic people. It is a matter of choice and focus. I can choose to constantly think about my problems or to deliberately concentrate on Jesus, who can help me run the race. Fix your eyes on Jesus, and your problems will be put into perspective.

9. This week when you encounter an obstacle as you run the race set before you, make a deliberate choice to focus on Jesus. Record your reactions and the outcome.

10. "Author" means "originator" or "founder." What does it mean that Jesus is the author of our faith? (Ephesians 2:8 may help.)

11. What do you think the phrase "perfector of our faith" means?

12. a. Do you sense the need for faith to run the race? _____

b. Why is faith needed?

13. What do you think was "the joy set before Him?"

14. Jesus ran and endured for "the joy set before Him." Why do you? Note: If you are in Christ (and you are, if you have by faith accepted Him as your Lord and Savior), then eternal life is yours. It is a gift, not something to be earned. In Christ, you are also already loved, redeemed and forgiven. Honestly think about this one. Why do you run?

15. What did Jesus have to endure before "this joy" could be realized?

16. How would remembering that sequence of events be an encouragement to the original recipients of this letter as well as to us?

17. In this race how would you characterize your pace (crawl, walk, etc.)?

18. What have you learned about Christ from this passage?

19. In his book, Waiting, Ben Pattersen writes that "you learn to live by faith by living by faith." What have you learned in the study of this passage that would help you live by faith?