



Part 2: Fix Our Eyes on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-3

When we are discouraged by the challenges of following Jesus, we fix our eyes on him.

I. The danger of losing heart (Hebrews 12:3).

Our current cultural moment...the social cost of following Jesus has been growing steadily for decades...The last couple of years of the pandemic and political polarization have brought the stress squarely into the church as people...

“In virtually every church there is a smaller or larger body of Christians who have been radicalized to the Left or to the Right by extremely effective and completely immersive internet and social media loops, newsfeeds, and communities. People are bombarded 12 hours a day with pieces that present a particular political point of view and the main way it seeks to persuade is not through argument but through outrage. People are being formed by this immersive form of public discourse – far more than they are being formed by the Church. This is creating a crisis.” – Tim Keller

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful. ...You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” Hebrews 10:23, 36

Hebrews was most likely written in the 60s A.D. during Emperor Nero’s reign when Christians were increasingly becoming the object of public scorn and hostility. There was a great temptation to Jewish Christians to return to Judaism as an accepted religion, great temptation to leave the faith.

II. **Fighting discouragement when following Jesus is hard (Hebrews 12:1-3).**

- A. Recover the biblical perspective of reality (Hebrews 12:1; 1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

“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.”
Hebrews 12:1

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” 1
Corinthians 9:24-25

The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. It takes perseverance that comes only through training. Training is more important than inspiration.

Hardship in following Jesus is promised and normal. Hebrews 11 describes the experiences of some of the great heroes of the faith in the Old Testament. Church history is full of examples of people who faced great challenges and hostility in following Jesus. The global Church is mostly full of brothers and sisters who face much greater challenges than we are currently facing.

- B. Shed every hindrance and sin (Hebrews 12:1).

Hindrances are not sins, but commitments and habits that distract us from giving our best focus to following Jesus. (i.e. the way we use our time, the things we give our attention to, etc.).

- C. Fix our eyes on Jesus as our source and leader (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Jesus is our great pioneer or leader who has made a way for us to come home to the one he calls Father. Jesus is also the perfecter of our faith as he is the one who supplies the grace we need to persevere in hope and joy.

See: <https://greenwoodcc.com/life-with-jesus-in-worship/>

III. **Fighting for joy (Psalm 16:7-11; Philippians 1:25-26; John 15:11).**

The fight against discouragement is really the fight for joy, faith, and hope.

Discussion Questions/Actions:

1. The larger context of Hebrews 12:1-3 is the reality that many Jewish Christians are growing discouraged and fearful of the culture's opposition to them as followers of King Jesus. What has been your experience with facing challenges and social costs for being a follower of Jesus? How tempted have you been to "lose heart"?
2. Doug highlighted three actions from Hebrews 12:1-3 in fighting discouragement from the challenges of following Jesus. Which one do you find the most challenging and the most helpful? Why?
3. How do you practice "keeping your eyes on Jesus"? What has been most helpful to you? Have you tried any of the practices in our resource section? What has been your experience?
4. Will you commit to memorize Hebrews 12:1-3 and recite it to a friend?