

# Hebrews 12

## Day 1

Run the Race. Read Hebrews 12:1-4

1. How are the commands in 12:1 connected to what was said previously? 12:1a

- What two things are we exhorted to lay aside/throw off? 12:1b What difference do you see between these things?

**FYI:** "Our choices are not always between right and wrong, but between something that may hinder us and something else that may not. Is there a **weight** in your life you must **lay aside**?" - David Guzik

"Not all hindrances or weights are sin. In fact, what is a hindrance to you may not be a hindrance in any way to someone else...A hindrance [can be] something, otherwise good, that weighs you down spiritually." - Hughes (159)

2. What is the second exhortation given? 12:1c

- How is the course of this race described? What does that say about comparing our course to others?

### **Digging Deeper**

See Paul's other instructions about running a *race* in Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

**FYI:** "The term endurance (patience) means 'to abide under' or 'to wait with patience.' William Barclay comments...It is a determination, unhurrying and yet undelaying, which goes steadily on and refuses to be deflected. Obstacles do not daunt it and discouragements do not take its hope away. It is the steadfast endurance which carries on until in the end it gets there." - Charles Swindoll (60)

"The course for each runner is unique...I may not be able to run your course, and you may find mine impossible, but I can finish my race and you yours. Both of us can finish well if we choose and if we rely on Him who is our strength and our guide!" - R. Kent Hughes (160)

3. Where should our focus be? 12:2a (See Psalm 25:15; 141:8) In our struggles, what other things are we tempted to focus on instead?

**FYI:** "**Fixing** - *aphorao*. It means 'to look away from all else and fix one's gaze upon.'" - Charles Swindoll (60)

"'Look not on the weights and the besetting sin - these thou hast laid aside; look away from them. Do not even look upon the race-course, or the competitors, but look to Jesus and so start in the race...never cease to look on him who ever looks on you.' (Spurgeon)...One may say that Jesus is with us at the starting line and the finish line and all along the way of the race that He sets before us." - David Guzik

4. In what two ways is Jesus described in 12:2b?

- What does that say about Christ's work in our lives? (Philippians 1:6; 2:13)

**FYI: Author and perfecter** "Our faith, which has its beginning in Him, is also complete in Him; He is both the start and the end of the race. He is also the supreme witness who has already run the race and overcome." - NIV Bible (1874)

5. Why did Jesus endure the cross? 12:2b (Compare 2:10; 5:9; 9:12; 10:14)

- How did He feel about the cross? (See 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- What position/authority has does He hold? (See Ephesians 1:20-22)

**FYI:** "We can list some aspects of his joy. There was the joy of His 'reunion,' as it were, with the Father...There was the joy of being crowned with honor and glory and having all things put under His feet (2:6-8; cf. Psalm 8:4-6). There was also the joy before Him of bringing many sons to glory – making us part of His joy (2:10)." - Hughes (162)

"One of the most prominent elements of the torture of the cross was its extreme **shame**. Jesus did not welcome this shame – He *despised* it – yet He endured through it to victory."  
- David Guzik

6. What example did Jesus leave for us? 12:3 How will that help us? (See also Galatians 6:9)

- What was the extent of the Hebrews' endurance compared to Jesus? 12:4

**FYI:** "Though the Hebrew church had experienced severe persecution early on, under the Emperor Claudius, no one had yet been martyred."  
- R. Kent Hughes (168)

**Applying the Word:** *Think about a sin that easily entangles you. Anger, envy, lust, ingratitude, self-centeredness, self-reliance, willfulness, impatience...? What self-defeating habit are you unwilling to give up? What hinders or weighs you down spiritually? This week, take time each day to pray about this and ask the Lord to give you understanding and His power to walk in obedience. Record any insights or victories you have.*

## Day 2

God's Discipline. Read Hebrews 12:5-13

7. What had the people failed to remember and be encouraged by? 12:5,6 (Compare 2:1)

- In what two ways *shouldn't* we respond to the Lord's discipline? 12:5b

8. How then *should* we respond to discipline? 12:7a

- What does loving discipline indicate? 12:7b,8 (See Proverbs 13:24) *What does that say about any wrath on God's part in our sorrows/difficulties?*

9. How were difficulties instrumental in Jesus' life? Hebrews 5:8

- How did God use discipline to instruct Paul? 2 Corinthians 12:7,8
- To instruct David? Psalm 119:67,68,71

10. From our earthly experiences, what should we understand about discipline? 12:9 *What do you think of a parent who refuses to discipline their child?*

- When we are subject to the Father, what does that bring? 12:9b (See John 10:10; Romans 6:21,22)

11. How is God's discipline far better? 12:10

**FYI:** "Every earthly father, if he is candid, will admit he has metered out imperfect discipline at best. All fathers have learned by doing. Sometimes we were too severe, other times too lax. Sometimes we showed favoritism. Sometimes we punished the wrong child...But God has never made such a mistake. No discipline of His was ever capricious or ill-informed or ill-tempered. None of His discipline has ever been misplaced." - Kent Hughes (173,174)

12. Notwithstanding, what is a hard reality about discipline? 12:11a *How would apply to the instructions and warnings the writer of Hebrews had been giving his readers?*

- If we endure and are trained by it, what can we trust will happen? 12:11b (See James 1:2-4)
- What analogy is used in John 15:1-3?
- Even in the pain of the process, what can we be assured God is doing? Romans 8:28

13. What response do we often have to hardship? 12:12

- Because God uses discipline to grow and bless us, how should we respond? 12:12,13a (See Ephesians 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:13)
- What do you think making "level paths" looks like emotionally, physically or spiritually? (See Proverbs 4:26,27)

14. What goal does God's discipline have? 12:13b (See Ephesians 4:15,16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14)

15. Summarize the positive aspects/benefits for discipline:

- 12:6,7 *evidence of God's love/that you are His child*
- 12:9
- 12:10
- 12:11
- 12:13

**Food for Thought:** "We must arrange our lives so that sin's opportunities to ensnare us are significantly recued. Should we fail to clear our paths, we will not find healing and will remain out of joint...but we have a hard time obeying this command. Rather than making our paths straight and running after Jesus, we avoid opportunities for accountability and entertain our sin just enough to keep it alive. The danger in this, of course is that we are never healed, remain crippled in our sin, and eventually turn away from the Lord. Clearing our paths and following Jesus, on the other hand will spiritually restore us."  
- R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (201)

"The strong among us must hold up the dangling hands and wobbling knees of the weak with our prayers and acts of mercy. Those who are strong must make straight paths for the weak by the exemplary distraction of their lives...Their lives must never cause the weak to stumble. We have to run tough, and we have to run together!"  
- R. Kent Hughes (180)

**Applying the Word:** *When have you seen the Lord use discipline to grow you? How was it corrective or protective? How did you feel about it at the time? How do you feel about it now? What "peaceful fruit of righteousness" did it yield?*

*Since sin is "self-defeating behavior" or "missing the mark" of God's best for our lives, what does that say about discipline/correction being the most loving and beneficial thing to do? See Proverbs 3:12; 19:18; 22:15 What does that indicate about accepting/loving a person versus accepting the things they do? How are the two often confused?*

### Day 3

Live Holy Lives. Read Hebrews 12:14-17

16. What is the first characteristic we should pursue in our relationships? 2:14 (Compare Romans 12:18; 14:19)

- Instead of saying "be at peace," what does "*pursue/make every effort*" communicate about this? See Romans 12:18

17. How does James describe this more fully? James 3:17,18

- What can make this difficult? John 15:18

**FYI:** "The word 'make every effort' or 'pursue' is a uniquely aggressive word. It is often used in the sense of 'to chase after one's enemies – to persecute,' We must chase after peace!...Those who pursue peace will to forgive and will to forget and will to be kind and will to be thoughtful and will to help others and will to pray for their enemies!"  
- R. Kent Hughes (181)

18. What is the second characteristic we should pursue and why? 12:14b (Xref, 12:10)

- In what sense do we "see" God in our pursuit of holiness? 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:2-3

19. What warning is given in 12:15a? (Xref 2:1)

**Digging Deeper**  
What did Paul know about God's grace in his life? 2 Timothy 1:12-16; 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

- To what could this lead? 12:15b (See also Galatians 5:9,15)

**FYI:** "When we live by `the rigid requirements of the Law, we fall short of God's best for our lives. God's best is a supple life characterized by grace. It is a life that's free, ruled only by one law – the law of love, written on our hearts (...2 Cor. 5:14a; Eph. 5:2)."  
- Charles Swindoll (74) [See Galatians 5:4]

"Bitterness corrupts many, rooted in a sense of personal hurt, and many hold on to the bitterness with amazing stubbornness. What they must do is remember the grace of God extended to them, and start extending that grace towards others – loving the undeserving.  
William Barclay wrote that the phrase **fall short of the grace of God** might also be translated *failing to keep up with the grace of God*. The idea is that the grace of God is moving on, past the pain and hurt of the past. We should move on also."  
- David Guzik

20. What else are we to avoid? 2:16 *Why do you think sexual immorality is linked with Esau being godless/irreverent/profane (showing a lack of a relationship with God)?*

**FYI:** "Essentially worldliness is a mentality that discounts and denies Christ as Lord...Esau is a perfect illustration of a worldly person – one who values material realities over spiritual ones, one who lives by sight rather than by faith, one who lives for today rather than for eternity...(Gen 25:27-34). No doubt, his immorality and godlessness stemmed from the low value he placed on spiritual things, which amounted to the paltry sum of a hot meal." - Swindoll (75)

21. What loss did Esau suffer? 12:17 How could this example apply to the situations the Hebrews were in? 6:4-6; 10:26,35,38

**FYI:** "If Esau sought forgiveness (and perhaps he did), God would have given it to him. But there was no way Esau's pleading could undo what was done. He had to live with the consequences."  
- R. Kent Hughes (184)

"The readers were thinking of compromising their faith in order to gain relief from persecution. But to trade their spiritual birthright for temporary ease in this world would deprive them of Christ's blessing." - NIV Study Bible (1875)

22. Although we also cannot change what we have done, what comfort do we have in Christ?  
Colossians 2:13

- How does Colossians 3:5-10 describe the process of transformation to holy living we should take as believers?

**Applying the Word:** *What difference do you see between regret and repentance?*

## Day 4

Approaching God Under the Old and New Covenants. Read Hebrews 12:18-29

23. List the words and phrases that describe the experience of the Israelites when they encountered God at Mt. Sinai. 12:18-21 (See Exodus 19; 20:18-19; Deuteronomy 5:24-27 for a full description of this encounter.)

- What does that say about how approachable God was before the cross and about how much our sin separates us from a holy God?
- How did Moses explain the reason for this encounter? Exodus 20:20

### ***Digging Deeper***

What did the law show the people?  
Acts 15:10

What purpose did it serve? Gal. 3:24,25

**FYI: stone to death any animal** "The severity of this command demonstrated the costliness of uncleanness in the midst of God's holy presence...The author of Hebrews used the command to execute animals to show just how incomprehensibly terrifying God's presence on 'Sinai was to the people of Israel." - R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (207)

"The writer used Mount Sinai to represent the Law and all its requirement. Like a painter with his skillful brush, he brings to life all the old emotions that accompanied the Old Covenant: the fear, the trembling, the awe."

- Charles Swindoll (80)

"In addition to providing a glimpse of God's holiness, the blazing fire atop Sinai emphasized that His holiness rendered Him a judge - 'a consuming fire.' (cf. Deuteronomy 4:24, Heb. 12:29). The effectiveness of these physical signs was to display in no uncertain terms the absolute unapproachableness of God."

- R Kent Hughes (189)

24. List the phrases that describe Mount Zion and who is there. 12:22-24

25. What enables believers to approach God in this manner? 12:24b

26. What do the phrases “*you are not come*” (12:18) and “*but you are come*” (12:22) emphasize about the change under the new covenant? (Crossref. Hebrews 7:18,19)

**FYI:** “In that day Jewish Christian were being taunted by their newly estranged relatives and friends and synagogue officials for leaving the historic Jewish faith. As they followed Christ...they were hearing discordant voices: “You are on the wrong path. You are headed away from Sinai and Jerusalem. You have left your heritage in Abraham and Moses. You have forsaken your nation that has had the great blessings of God.’...Zion, to which they had come, is a spiritual mountain whereas Sinai was a physical mountain that could be touched only at pain of death...In effect, the writer is admonishing his people as they attempt to run with perseverance the race that is marked out for them to not listen to voices of their old friends who are still immersed in the futile pursuit of attempting to live up to Sinai, but rather to do everything in their power to maintain a straight path to Zions’ grace.” - R. Kent Hughes (189) (See Acts 15:1,5; Galatians 2:4; 3:1-3,10-14]

27. What warning is given in 12:25a? (Cf. 2:3a)

- Why is refusal to believe Jesus Christ even more solemn? 12:25b
- What did Jesus say refusal to believe Him indicated? Matthew 12:30; John 3:36; 8:24

***Digging Deeper***

Name some ways that the Israelites refused to listen to God’s warnings? (e.g. Numbers 14:29; Joshua 2:10-12; Psalm 106:6-29)

**FYI: Do not refuse/reject** “The gospel is never presented solely as an offer to be considered. It is presented as an ultimatum, as something to be either received or rejected. Presenting the gospel always produces a response. One either hears the gospel and believes it unto salvation or hears the gospel and rejects it unto eternal judgment.” - R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (215)

28. Why is understanding God as both the consuming fire of Mt. Sinai and as the Savior who died on a cross on Mt. Zion so essential to our understanding of sin and salvation? To our understanding of God’s grace and mercy?

**FYI:** “The author paints this terrifying picture of Sinai for his readers in order to make the contrast with the radiant, glorious, and gracious new covenant. The awful terror of Sinai, which is not the mount to which we have come, shows the radical mercy of Zion...The distinction drawn between Sinai and Zion shows us that Christ perfectly fulfilled what Sinai represented. Christians do not come to Sinai, since Christ fulfilled the law of Sinai. Jesus did not nullify or invalidate the the old Testament law. Rather, He did what no sinful human could do; He perfectly obeyed and fulfilled the law...Thus, God’s people no longer identify with the place that God’s law was given, but with the place that God’s law was fulfilled.” - R. Albert Mohler, Jr (208)

29. How much more momentous and encompassing will God’s appearance be in the future? 12:26 (See Haggai 2:6-9)

30. How would this perspective and hope have helped the Hebrew Christians to persevere?  
How does this compare to the perspective of the patriarchs? 11:16

31. What will happen to God's creation? 12:27 (See 2 Peter 3:10) How does that display of power compare to Mt. Sinai?

- Why will God do this? 12:27b

32. Because of this, what two responses should believers have and why? 12:28,29 (xref. 4:13)

- Why do you think "grace/gratitude" leads to serving God with reverence and awe?
- How do you think the idea of God being a "consuming fire" fits with "acceptable worship/service"?

**FYI: Have grace/be thankful** NT:5485 *charis*; graciousness (as gratifying); especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude)

"In contrast to the instability of the world around us, the **kingdom** of Jesus **cannot be shaken**, and **we are receiving** this kingdom.

The truth that **God is a consuming fire** is a *comfort* to the believer. They realize that the Father poured out His **consuming fire** of judgment on the Son in our place. When He did, it completely *consumed* the guilt of sin in all who believe. The penalty of sin was *consumed* in Jesus at the cross."  
- David Guzik

"We come before Him in awe because He is the Judge. But we do not come in craven dread, because His Son has borne the judgment for us. This is our *highest delight* – to gather before God! It is a miracle of grace... When we come to worship, we must keep both mountains in view – the approachable Zion with its consuming love, and the unapproachable Sinai with its consuming fire – and then come in reverent boldness."  
- R. Kent Hughes (193,203)

**Applying the Word:** How does remembering that God is a consuming fire affect your gratitude and love for the closeness we have been given in Christ?

*...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,*

*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.*

*Hebrews 12:1,2*