

Never Give Up

Hebrews 12:1-3

Introduction

The believers mentioned in Hebrews were struggling. Tired of the challenges and difficulties associated with being followers of Christ, they wanted to throw in the towel. Have you ever felt this way? The whole book of Hebrews is about continuing to press forward. The author writes to encourage believers to shift their focus, persevere and faithfully live for God. As Christ-followers, the believers in Hebrews and believers today should live with the same aim: keep the faith and live for divine approval. To do this, believers should focus on three things – past winners, oneself, and Jesus.

The first point of focus involves intentionally looking at winners – other people of the faith who have already persevered. We see these heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11:4-40. If these people persevered, then you can too. When we are attentive to follow the example of others who have lived with commitment to God, we learn that faith must be active. Faith cannot just be a belief or head knowledge but movement based on your belief. We can learn from these Old Testament saints how to persevere in a New Testament crisis.

Second, believers should focus on themselves to notice what would keep them from walking well with God. In Hebrews 12:1, believers are told to remove encumbrances, hindrances or obstacles. This could be sin, but it could also be something that is not sin yet slows us down and holds us back. Every believer should ask themselves, “How are you spending your time, talents and your treasures in such a way that does not limit you from moving forward?” Followers of Christ must also remove the sin of unbelief because it can become the basis for every other sin. The Christian race must be run with intention and the avoidance of complacency. It is, after all, a Christian *race*, not the Christian *stroll*. The goal is to glorify and please God, and that won’t happen if the believer chooses to live life watching from the sidelines or sitting in the stands. Active faith requires a personal focus in the life of every believer to run well.

Third, every believer should prioritize looking to Jesus. He is ultimately the one who has the power to take the Christian from the starting line to the finish line. Jesus’ death and resurrection offers perspective. When a Christian bears the cross of a problem or hardship in life, they can do so knowing Jesus experienced the same. They can also know that just as Jesus endured His cross looking toward His reward, they can too. The key to living well in difficulty is to live with an expectation of reward instead of focusing on the problem at hand.

If you are a believer who is currently bearing a cross of hardship or difficulty, remember to look to Jesus for encouragement. Ask the Lord to give you the encouragement that you need to keep going. Don't throw in the towel because life is hard. Instead, allow your focus to shift, knowing that you will experience Jesus on another level if you keep going by faith. Focus on winners and get rid of obstacles that hinder you from moving forward spiritually and look to Jesus. These three things will help you persevere by faith and experience spiritual victory and divine approval.

Getting Started

1. Hebrews 12:1 tells us that the Christian life is a race. Thinking about your life in that context, answer this question: When it comes to your commitment to Christ, have you been running hard, jogging, walking or standing still?
2. What are some struggles or challenges that Christ's followers may experience that can make life difficult for them?

Let's Get Personal

1. The believers in Hebrews wanted to throw in the towel and give up. Have you ever felt this way? Would you consider yourself a discouraged Christian now? If so, why?
2. What obstacle(s) or hindrance(s) in your life have kept you from moving forward spiritually in the past? What obstacles(s) or hindrance(s) are keeping you from moving forward spiritually right now?
3. Is your faith head faith or feet faith? Do you believe in God solely on an intellectual level? Is your faith evidenced by your actions? Share with your group the kind of faith you think you have.
4. Think about someone you personally know that persevered like those in Hebrews 11:4-40. What impact did they have on you and others?

Take the Next Step

1. Every believer should prioritize looking to Jesus. What will you do differently in light of this message to prioritize keeping your focus on the Savior?
2. How we use our time, talents and treasures often determine whether or not we are limited in moving forward spiritually. What changes do you need to make in using your time, abilities, opportunities and resources to increase your spiritual capacity?
3. In what ways do you need to shift your focus? Pray and ask the Lord to give you the encouragement that you need to keep going.
4. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following verses: Hebrews 12:1-3, Hebrews 11:1-3, Hebrews 11:4-40, Hebrews 10:35-39, Romans 1:17, Romans 14:23, 2 Corinthians 5:7.

Renew Your Mind

*Therefore, do not throw away your confidence,
which has a great reward.*

Hebrews 10:35
