

All In: Run with Perseverance

Hebrews 11:1 NLT

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.

Hebrews 11:39–40 NLT

All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us.

Hebrews 12:1–4 NLT

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

Points to consider as we run our race:

- 1. Get rid of the weight (entanglement or obstacle) of sin that so easily trips us up.**
- 2. Run with endurance.**
- 3. Keep our eyes on Jesus and what He endured on our behalf.**

Hebrews 12:5–11 NLT

And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."

As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward, there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

Hebrews 12:12–13 NLT

So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

4 Keys to Running with Perseverance

1. Receive God's discipline as love, not rejection.

James 1:2–4 NLT

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

Romans 5:3–5 NLT

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

2. Let go of what's slowing you down.

3. Fix your eyes on Jesus, not on your pain.

Philippians 4:6–7 NLT

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which

exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 139:23–24 NLT

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

4. Embrace times of endurance as training, not punishment.

Small Group Guide: Run With Perseverance

Opening Question

Think of a season of difficulty you have been through that you can now see clearly from the other side. What did it produce in you that easier circumstances couldn't have?

Hardship Is Not Evidence That God Has Left the Building

It can be easy to misunderstand what it means to be blessed by God. *If God is good and loves me, the thinking goes, then my path should be smooth, my kids should be fine, and my life should be relatively free of obstacles.* The problem is not just that this isn't true — it is that when hardship arrives, as it always does, this belief breaks down. While there can be a variety of reasons why hardships come our way, including the consequences of our own choices, the truth is that even if God doesn't cause the challenges we face, He allows them. And if God is good and He allows challenges, then they must be for our good and the good of His kingdom.

The Greek word translated as “divine discipline”, used in Hebrews, is *paideia* — a word that does not mean punishment for wrongdoing, and does not mean mere instruction. Its primary meaning is corrective training: the kind of work a loving father does to clear out what is weak, faulty, or sin-shaped in a child's life, not to harm them but to ready them for more. No athlete is surprised when training is hard. The difficulty is the point. What God is producing in us through hardship is not a consolation prize for suffering — it is character: the kind of endurance, depth, and perception that can only be formed under pressure.

Character is not just about how we respond to the world. It is also about how we perceive it. God's discipline works on both. Where one person sees a closed door as rejection, another sees redirection. Where one person concludes they are being punished, another concludes they are being trained. The difference is not in the circumstance — it is in the lens. And that lens is what perseverance, over time, develops.

The race image in Hebrews 12 is deliberate. No one runs a race looking at their feet, you fix your eyes on where you are going. In the life of faith, that means keeping your eyes on Jesus, who ran the same course first and finished it. He endured the cross, Hebrews says, “because of the joy awaiting him.” The joy on the other side of the suffering was real enough to sustain Him through it. That is the model: not ignoring pain, but fixing your gaze on what is beyond it. In this sermon, Pastor Jimmy gave us

four keys to running our race with perseverance – which of the keys resonates most with where you are right now?

For Discussion

1. Key one says to receive God's discipline as love, not rejection. Is there a current difficulty in your life that you have been interpreting as God's absence or displeasure? What would it look like to reframe it as His training?
2. Key two says to let go of what's slowing you down — and your notes list several categories: sin, habits, unforgiveness, unhealthy relationships, wrong beliefs. Which of those is most honestly weighing on you right now? What would it take to set it down?
3. Character is described as both how we respond to the world and how we perceive it. Think of a situation you are currently in. How are you perceiving it — as a problem, a punishment, or a training ground? What would a different perception make possible?
4. Hebrews frames the Christian life as a relay race — we are running a lap that others started before us and that others will finish after us. How does that framing change your sense of urgency or purpose in what you are doing right now? Is there something you are carrying that is meant to be handed off?

Closing Prayer

Father, You are a good Father — and good fathers do not shield their children from everything hard. They train them for what is coming. Forgive us for the times we have called difficulty a sign of Your absence when it was actually a sign of Your attention and training. Thank You that You do not leave us to run alone. Jesus, You endured the cross because of the joy on the other side. Give us that same vision when our race feels long and our legs feel heavy. Holy Spirit, build in us the kind of character that only comes through training: the endurance to keep going, the perception to see hardship clearly, and the confidence that the peaceful harvest You have promised is worth every step of the race. In Jesus' name, Amen.