

MAIN POINT

If we want to finish the race of life well, we must have our focus fixed on the right thing.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever run in a race? How did you do? What were the keys to finishing well in your race?

If you could choose, which would you prefer, and why: lightning-bolt sprinter's speed or a marathon champion's endurance?

The Scriptures teach us that the Christian life is more like a marathon than a sprint. The key measure is endurance in faith. The goal is to finish well. And the prize is to hear the Lord Jesus Christ say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" But running the race of faith isn't easy. We must train diligently and practice daily. We must embrace God's discipline. We must keep our focus on Jesus. This was the "pep talk" of faith that the writer of Hebrews delivered to his first readers. If we want to finish the race of life well, we must have our focus fixed on the right thing.

DISCUSSION

> READ HEBREWS 12:1-7.

When you read about a "large cloud of witnesses," what do you picture? Why is such a group significant to believers?

Who encourages you in your Christian life? How? What particular struggles have they helped you through?

How does the sports metaphor in this passage help your understanding of the concept of Christian endurance? Why do you think the writer used this image?

Why do you think the writer mentioned both the sin that entangles and anything that hinders? What's the difference between those two things?

Is there anything in your life that might not necessarily be sin but is still slowing you down? What is it?

If you were to use this passage to encourage a new believer, what parts would you highlight? What parts would you use to encourage a faithful believer who is discouraged?

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "discipline"? Do you see discipline as positive or negative? Why?

How has God used trials of various kinds in your life as a way to refine your faith and deepen your walk with Him? How has suffering helped you endure in faith?

What makes discipline an important part of living the Christian life?

Read Proverbs 3:11-12. How is discipline an example of God's love?

APPLICATION

How is God calling you to put your gaze back on Him today? How will you respond?