



GOD'S MOTIVATION FOR YOUR LIFE

Hebrews 12:1-3

INTRODUCTION

What motivates you in the daily race of life? If your motivation is anything that the natural world offers (riches, popularity, success, physical gratification, etc.), then you do not have God's motivating factor at the center of your life. If your motivation is related to another person (earning respect, having them serve you, getting your way, experiencing "true love," etc.), then your primary impetus for daily living falls short of God's plan.

From God's perspective, there is one primary motivation for life. The opening verses of Hebrews Chapter 12 state that Jesus Christ is that motivation.

RUNNING LIGHT, RUNNING LONG

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).

In the above verse, note the following:

- Other people of God—mentioned in Hebrews 11 "hall of faith"—have gone before us and have verified that God is faithful.
- Believers in Christ are to put aside life's excess baggage, not only the "personalized sin" that hinders us, but also the everyday deterrents that can slow spiritual progress.

Believers are to run hard and run long (never give up) in the race of life that God has ordained for each follower of Christ.

After drawing our attention to significant aspects of spiritual life, the author of Hebrews reminds us NOT to concentrate on them. Instead, we are to concentrate on Christ.

STAYING FIXED ON JESUS

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2)

What does it mean to "fix our eyes on Jesus?" This phrase means to look away from something—or to look from one direction to another—in order to focus attention on a primary object. As with many of life's situations,

fixing our attention on a specific object helps to keep us going directly toward that object.

I was made aware of that reality when my grandfather taught me, as a ten year old, to plow on his West Texas farm. He placed me in the tractor's seat, showed me where the hand accelerator and foot brake were located, demonstrated how to raise and lower the plow behind the tractor, and then left me in the driver's seat all alone. As he headed for his truck, he said that I was to meet him at the end of the field, almost a half mile away, and that I would do just fine if I fixed my eyes on the fencepost at the end of the field. Grandpa said, "Don't look at anything but that post while you are driving."

Intent on following his instructions, I started driving toward the end of the field. During the journey, however, I gazed at the adjacent farmland, looked directly behind the tractor to see the deep furrow being produced by my new-found farming abilities, and followed the routes of birds in the sky and rabbits running across the field. When I arrived at the end of the field, Grandpa asked me if I kept my eye on the fencepost. I answered, "Yes." He asked me to look back over my shoulder at the tractor's path. To my dismay, the furrow looked like a winding riverbed with curves and turns clearly marked by the upturned earth.

Grandpa gave me another chance and helped me turn the tractor around to try and plow a straight furrow toward the other end of the field. This time, I kept my eye on the post, even to the point of trying not to blink. After arriving at my fencepost destination, I turned around to behold the beauty of a straight furrow extending from one end of the field to the other. I certainly was not an experienced farmer or tractor driver; but, by staying focused on the goal of a distant fencepost, I accomplished the task set before me.

If you are a believer in Christ, there is a similar lesson to be learned in the spiritual dimension. Fixing your eyes on a specific goal will save you a lot of trouble and will help you accomplish God's purpose for your life, that of becoming more like Jesus Christ. With this purpose in view, all the items mentioned in Hebrews 12:1 are necessities for spiritual growth; but they are not to be our focus as we follow Christ.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus is to be the focus of our

lives, not biblical “put-offs” and “put-ons.” *Fixing our eyes on Jesus* is to dominate our everyday thoughts, not a review of everyday trials or how to respond to them. In a nutshell, our daily, life-long focus is to be—Jesus!

What is there about Jesus that keeps us focused on Him in the daily race of life? Hebrews 12:2-3 presents a number of reasons for such an attachment.

- **Jesus pioneered and perfected faith**

To begin with, there is no faith apart from Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 reveals that all religions founded by mere mortals are false. Jesus is the author (the founder, initiator, leader, and pioneer) of faith. Additionally, Jesus is also the one who perfects (completes, finishes, sustains) our faith.

The practical aspect of “author” and “perfecter” was well understood by the first century readers, since it related to an aspect of the Olympic Games. The “author and perfecter” described a specific person involved in Olympic races. This person was known as “the judge of the games.” He admitted the runners to the race, permitting them as qualified contestants to the starting line. This same person awarded the prize to the winner of the race. In a very practical way, this “judge of the games” presided over the beginning of the race, the running of the race (determining if it was run according to the rules), and also gave the award to the winner.

With the “judge of the games” in charge of every aspect of the race, all the runners gave him their undivided attention. In a similar fashion, believers are to be attentive to Jesus, the “judge of the games” in the race of life.

There is another characteristic about Jesus that keeps us focused on Him. This is not about His authority over the race of life that others run, but it concerns the race that the “author and finisher” Himself ran. As we look to Him, we will realize that no aspect of our lives can be compared to the race that He ran and decisively won.

- **Jesus joyfully endured the cross, thinking nothing of its shame**

Jesus knew the joy before Him included the eternal defeat of Satan. With this triumph, Jesus provided for His followers to be forgiven of sin, to be released from the power of sin, and to receive eternal life. Jesus knew that His completion of the race would bring glory to God the Father. The only way, however, that all these results could be eternally accomplished was through the ordeal of being crucified on a cross.

In addition to the excruciating pain that accompanied crucifixion, this type of death was shameful and made one “accursed of God” (Deuteronomy 21:23). Yet, this curse

actually became a blessing through Jesus. Galatians 3:13 states, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ ”

In spite of the shame that would fall on any Jewish person who was crucified, Jesus thought little of it, because He knew the joy that would result from the Cross.

The crucifixion of Christ is more than enough to draw our attention to Him. Still, there are other reasons to remain fixed on Jesus.

- **Jesus is now enthroned with honor & authority**

Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God. No angel or any other created being deserves that position which expresses the majesty and glory of God.

Christ’s exalted position also denotes POWER as 1 Peter 3:22 says, “. . . who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”

When we realize that the Lord Jesus Christ, from the beginning to the end of our race of life

- Is in total control (Colossians 1:15-20),
- Has established the guidelines (John 14-17),
- Chose us to run in this race (John 15:16),
- Sustains us with His power so we do not have to rely on our own inadequate wisdom and strength (Philippians 4:13), and
- Will welcome us at the finish line with His physical presence and rewards, with all the authority of heaven at his disposal (Jude 24-25)...

...then it is no wonder that He is to be our focus of life, each and every day that we live.

The writer of Hebrews then turns our attention from the realms of heavenly authority to the practical dimensions of everyday life.

CONCENTRATE ON JESUS OR COLLAPSE ON YOURSELF

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:3).

This verse does not mean to “consider Jesus as an afterthought” or “consider Him as one of many options.” Consider means “to compare” or “to weigh.” In other words, any time you think you have it tough, compare or weigh your situation with that of Jesus.

- **We will never have it harder than Jesus**

How did Jesus live? He lived a perfect life, without sin. How did He speak? His speech always gave glory to God and was a blessing to others. What did He do?

Everywhere He went, He did good works with God's glory in mind and with no impure motives or self-centered perspective. Yet, in spite of coming to earth with one purpose—to bring glory to God by destroying the works of Satan and granting redemption to lost sinners—the very people He came to rescue turned on Him. They even accused Him of being a representative of the devil!

There has never been a person in earth's history who was so mistreated and maligned and who endured such unjust treatment as Jesus. Remember, He was totally righteous! No one can comprehend injustice such as this, and no one can comprehend the severity of trials and challenges that Jesus encountered. Instead of thinking primarily about ourselves in our difficulties, compare (weigh) our challenges to those of Christ. When we make that comparison, any panic or self-pity over our own trials will soon be replaced by thankfulness for Christ Jesus, who has gone before us.

Difficulties become overwhelming in our lives because we do not discipline ourselves to think about Jesus. If He has gone through situations of infinitely greater proportion than any of us will ever experience and is now seated at the right hand of the Father to help us, where should we place our attention? Should we focus on our limited wisdom and meager strength, or should we dwell on His matchless wisdom and power? Should we concentrate on our seemingly hopeless situation or on His faithfulness and help?

Disciplining one's mind to think on Jesus is the key to dealing with doubt, fear, or hopelessness that we may encounter in everyday living. What happens when we do not discipline our minds to stay fixed on Jesus? In all probability, we will give up. Or, we will end up zigzagging all over the field of life, much like a first-time tractor driver who is not disciplined to focus on the goal set before him. If that happens, the furrows will not be all over a field but will, instead, tend to be rather pronounced on our brows.

- **We will think we cannot go on when we forget Him**

When your mind is not fixed on Jesus, Hebrews 12:3 says that you will become weary, referring to your physical strength; and you will become discouraged, referring to your spiritual vitality.

This verse continues the reference to the Olympic Games. Whenever an athlete became fatigued while wrestling his adversary, he was said to be "weary" or "exhausted" and would yield his palm to his opponent. When that happened, it was a sign that his spirit had dissolved and that he was disheartened to the point of losing all bravery and courage to go forward.

We all can remember times like that, can't we? Wasn't the "I can't go on" condition a result of taking our focus away from Jesus and placing it, instead, on our problems? We have all "been there, done that." So, what can we do to stay focused on Him?

APPLICATION: HOW TO STAY FIXED ON JESUS

- **Remember that Jesus is the only reason God has accepted us**

We have no standing before God apart from Jesus. That reality, by itself, should keep us focused on our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

- **Remember that the Cross cancelled the penalty of our sin**

We are free from the penalty and bondage of sin. We have access to God Almighty because our sins have been forgiven. Satan no longer has power over us. [Read Romans 6 again and again until that truth sinks in]. Sin, the biggest problem of our lives, has been solved through the Cross of Christ.

Since the biggest problem of our lives has been solved through Jesus, then that should certainly help to keep us focused on Him, providing hope for everyday living. If God has solved our biggest problem by providing His Son as the answer, surely He can take care of all other challenges. [Read Romans 8:28-32 repeatedly until the truth of the sufficiency of God through Christ on our behalf becomes personalized truth for daily living.]

Remember that the Resurrection gives us power to follow Christ

We have the power of the resurrected Christ within us through the Holy Spirit. This means we can live victoriously over sin. We can choose to run the race of life in a manner that gives glory to God. [Review Romans Chapter 6 to see how the crucifixion has rendered sin a death blow and how the resurrection gives us the power to live victoriously for the glory of God.] No matter what comes our way, we can live as conquerors. As Paul tells us in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

With an overcomer's perspective, Paul reminds us in Romans 8:31-37 of the following truth:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall

separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written "For your sake we face death all day long we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

The realization of the abiding presence and power of Christ should keep us focused on Jesus. Our resurrected Lord said in Matthew 28:20, ". . . and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." There is even more that will help us stay fixed on Jesus instead of being distracted by the challenges of everyday life.

- **Remember that Jesus has promised to complete the work He began in us**

Just as Jesus has guaranteed the start of our race of faith, He has promised to complete it. Philippians 1:6 says, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

No situation, no person, and no power in any form can deter that promise from being completed. In the process, all things will work out for good in conforming us into the image of Christ, as Romans 8:28-29 proclaims:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

- **Remember that this life is not all there is—the best is yet to come**

By His Spirit, Jesus is with us always in this life. He has also promised to be with us physically in the life to come, when He will rule over the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 21:1-27, 22:1-5). The bottom line is this: Our earthly lives may encompass many decades, but we will live throughout eternity with Jesus. Even nine or ten decades in this life are nothing compared to eternity with Him. When we have the long view of eternity in mind, it is easier to stay fixed on Jesus in our everyday lives.

CONCLUSION

When all is said and done, living in a victorious manner that brings glory to Jesus is a matter of disciplining our minds—**Fixing our minds (our attention) on Him.**

When we are fixed on Jesus, devotions are a joy, not a chore. When we are fixed on Jesus, praying and being in the Word are aspects of living we cannot live without and will joyfully anticipate. When we are fixed on Jesus, ministering for the benefit of others is something we race to do, not something we are recruited to do. When we are fixed on Jesus, giving of our time, money, and efforts for the cause of Christ are not items that require a specific challenge for us to share; but, instead, these items are managed for God's glory.

Our motivation for life is not difficult to understand—**it is Jesus.** Let's stay fixed on Him.

GOD'S MOTIVATION FOR YOUR LIFE

Hebrews 12:1-3—Outline

God has given us insight for a joyful, overcoming life in the opening verses of Hebrews 12. This passage presents the greatest motivation for all of life ... Jesus Christ!

RUNNING LIGHT, RUNNING LONG

Hebrews 12:1, 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.

- Remember who has gone before.
- Remove the baggage.
- Run faithfully to your destiny.

STAYING FIXED ON JESUS

Hebrews 12:2, Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Jesus pioneered and perfected faith.
- Jesus joyfully endured the cross, thinking nothing of its shame.
- Jesus is now enthroned with honor and authority.

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- Remember that the Resurrection gives us power to follow Christ.
- Remember that Jesus has promised to complete the work He began in us.
- Remember that this life is not all there is—the best is yet to come.