



Revive Our Hearts™

FAITHFUL
TO THE
Finish Line
LEADER CHALLENGE

YOUR CHALLENGE:

Fix your eyes on Jesus and the finish line by reading
Hebrews 12:1-3 every day for ten days.

Day 1

It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint

by Leslie Bennett

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” Hebrews 12:1

The name of an elite runner from Tanzania was written in sports history books at the 1968 Olympics—without him winning one medal.

John Stephen Akhwari joined the field of seventy-eight competitors in Mexico City for a twenty-six-mile marathon. Around the halfway mark, Akhwari suffered severe injuries when he became entangled with other runners, stumbled, and hit the track with full-body force.

A medic team rushed to his aid, bandaging his bloody wounds and dislocated knee, and recommended the obvious—withdrawal from the race. Akhwari refused to give up. The tenacious athlete limped in agony over the remaining thirteen miles to cross the finish line one hour after the race was over.

When asked how he endured under excruciating pain and impossible odds, his answer is still remembered over fifty years later, “My country didn’t send me 5000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5000 miles to finish the race.”

A commitment to starting and finishing doesn’t just apply to sports heroes. The same is true for ministry leaders. Many will enter the race, but not all will finish.

Far from a burst-and-bust sprint, the race of faith is a marathon that requires leaders to look beyond the daily ministry challenges (even painful circumstances and difficult people) by fixing our eyes on Jesus and the finish line ahead.

Where does the perseverance to run faithfully come from? Ministry endurance comes from our forerunner, who ran with nail-pierced feet. The author and perfecter of our faith never gave up, so we can follow in His footsteps. Jesus started and finished the work the Father gave Him to do (John 4:34). How can we do less? Because Jesus is worthy; quitting isn’t an option.

Friends, we’re a mixed bag of plodders and joggers who all run at different speeds. What matters most in the race of faith is that we finish. When our eyes fixate on the promised prize at the end, we’ll cross the finish line in victory. We can keep the pace, knowing Jesus is cheering us on to victory and will award us with a gold medal inscribed, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Prayer:

Jesus, I look to You, not myself, for endurance to run the race. Teach me to focus on You to avoid being sidelined by the frustrations, disappointments, and failures in ministry. Thank you for providing Holy Spirit stamina all the way to the finish line. I run for Your glory, for You alone are worthy. Amen.

Reflect and Respond:

- Make a list of the ways the God of “endurance and encouragement” (Rom. 15:5) has supplied everything you need to run with perseverance.
- Who can you ask to become a running partner—someone to encourage you when the race gets hard and you feel like quitting?

Running Further:

- Consider how Jesus ran with faith and dependence on His Father. Read Luke 6:12–13, John 15:15, and Heb. 10:7. What lessons can you learn from Him?
- Memorize Hebrews 12:1.

Day 2

The Cheering Section

by Christina Fox

“Therefore, **since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses**, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”—Hebrews 12:1

I’ve spent many evenings and weekends sitting in the stands, watching my son play basketball. I yell and cheer as he steals the ball and runs up to the basket to make a shot. “Go! Go!” I shout, along with all those on the sidelines.

At the end of this past season, we attended a banquet to celebrate the team’s efforts.

- We listened to the team members who were graduating share about their experiences.
- We heard testimonies of how they improved their athletic ability.
- We learned how their perseverance and hard work paid off.

These stories encouraged my son, who now gets to follow in their steps.

The book of Hebrews was written to a group of struggling believers. They were weary in their race of faith. They faced severe persecution. Perhaps they were tempted to drop out of the race altogether. To encourage them forward, the author listed heroes of the faith who believed God and followed Him where he led, heroes such as Moses, David, and Rahab. They too endured great suffering but stayed in the race of faith. *They persevered.*

Hebrews 12 begins, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.” All those listed in faith’s “hall of fame” are the witnesses the writer of Hebrews was referring to. Like a witness in the courtroom, they testify to who God is and what He has done. Their lives are testimonies for us. They faced hardship and persecution; yet, *they endured.* Their lives of faith testify of what it looks like to run the race well. Their lives shout at us to keep going: *Jesus is worth it!*

Just as my son looks to the older boys on the team as examples of what he can attain in his favorite sport, we too have heroes of the faith we can look to as godly examples. This “cloud of witnesses” encourages us forward by their perseverance, despite the obstacles and hardships. Let us learn from their witness to run hard for Jesus.

Prayer:

Father in heaven, I thank You for the men and women throughout the centuries whose lives testify to who You are. I thank You for their witness. I pray that I would learn from them and that their example of endurance would help me to push forward in my own race of faith. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Reflect and Respond:

- Read Hebrews 11. Were these “heroes” perfect? If not, why were they included? What is it that makes them witnesses to learn from and follow?
- Who are some other heroes, or witnesses of the faith, you can look to as an example?

Running Further:

- Read 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Philippians 3:17, 4:9. In imitating Paul, who would these Christians ultimately imitate?
- Read Hebrews 13:17. Name some leaders in your life that you can imitate.
- Find other ways to learn from mature believers. Read a biography of a missionary. Join a Titus 2 discipleship group and learn from an older woman. Ask those who are more mature in the faith what they have learned from following Jesus.

Day 3

What's Slowing Your Pace?

by Heidi Jo Fulk

“Let us also **lay aside every weight**, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance.”
—Hebrews 12:1

I bring my own reusable bags to the grocery store and kindly ask the bagger to pack those bags full and heavy. Some have questioned my method—and perhaps my strength—with raised eyebrows, a head tilt, and half-smile. But they’d be convinced if they followed me home to watch as I skillfully load bags on my shoulders and in the crook of my arm while carrying at least one additional bag in each hand. I look like a pack mule as I shuffle into the house, but at least I only have to do it a few times.

Once I offload the grocery bags in the kitchen, I begin stocking my cabinets and refrigerator. This quirky habit of mine is a practical illustration of a phrase in Hebrews 12:1, “Let us also lay aside every weight.”

Could this describe your approach to women’s ministry? You’re weighed down not only by all the necessary preparations and duties, but also the pain, suffering, heartache, and doubts of the women you’re serving. (Not to mention your own).

But women are hurting (and often, so are we). The challenges we face in this broken world are real and constant. What does God ask us to do with that weight?

Lay it aside. Some translations say “throw off.” Both phrases indicate a purposeful, conscious action on our part to surrender something we’re not intended to carry on our own. Notice, too, we’re not just counseled to lay aside some, but every weight. This description of running unhindered was understood by the original readers of Hebrews, because the Greco-Roman runners of the day competed naked. They took off everything (literally) to run their race.

Gratefully, we can stay fully clothed while we lay aside every burden—ours or someone else’s—that slows us down and distracts us from the goal.

Don’t forget the ultimate goal. My goal when I get home from the grocery store isn’t just to get those bags in the house, it’s to stock my kitchen with everything I need to feed my family. As we lay aside the weights that can and should only be carried by Christ (Matt. 11:28–30), we are enabled to serve, love, and care in ways that are needed and display Christ. With eyes fixed on Him, we’ll resolutely persevere to the finish.

Prayer:

Father, show me what is weighing me down. Help me to clearly identify what You do not intend for me to carry. Bring to light whatever is keeping me from pursuing Your purposes and anything that is hindering a display of Your glory. Then enable me to lay those things at Your feet, to throw them off and persevere,

focused on You, until I see You face to face. Oh, “Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. *Selab*” (Ps. 68:19) and amen.

Reflect and Respond:

- What are you carrying that is hindering or distracting you from the purposes God has for you as you serve and live for Him?
- What practical steps can you take to lay them aside? Make it your goal to throw them off and run!

Running Further:

- Listen to Susan Hunt share decades-worth of wisdom gained from running her race faithfully for Jesus in this podcast episode, “[Soaring to Glory](#).”

Day 4

Race Free From Sin

by Jean Wilund

“Let us also lay aside every weight, and **sin which clings so closely**, and let us run with endurance.”
—Hebrews 12:1

A one-inch barnacle. That’s all it took to sink Uku Randmaa’s racing hopes.

A one-inch barnacle clinging to a boat may seem no match for a thirty-six-foot yacht, but when Randmaa competed in a race around the world, barnacles proved to be like blisters on the feet of a marathoner. These tiny shrimp-like creatures latched onto his hull, built their one-inch cement-like fortresses, and then multiplied like sea rabbits. They didn’t sink his vessel, but they slowed it and capsized his chance of winning the race.

After 333 days of sailing—and dragging a thick layer of ever-increasing barnacles—Randmaa crossed the finish line thirty-eight days behind the winner, Jean-Luc van den Heede. Thirty-eight *days*. Not hours.

Van den Heede had coated his hull with several layers of barnacle protectant. Randmaa thought one coat would suffice. Christians make a similar mistake if we think a quick coating of prayer and Bible study will keep sin at bay. Sin eats through thin coats of truth, plasters our hearts with its fortress of lies, and then multiplies like barnacles.

Like one tiny barnacle latching onto a large vessel, a casual smile to a male friend can lead to an innocent commiserating over trials. Then perhaps a comforting touch leads to a text of encouragement. Before long, the sin of adultery has latched onto the heart of the most faithful wife, and she wonders how she got there.

Even in the most dedicated Christian, the smallest sin can encrust an unprotected heart and dull it to the Holy Spirit’s conviction. Sin drags us down as it multiplies until we either deal with it or it destroys us.

Don’t let it.

Don’t dare let it.

Sin may be sneaky, strong, and dangerous, but we’re not helpless. Soak in the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. Strap on the armor of God and stand firm (Eph. 6:10–18). Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (Rom. 13:14). And do not fear. Whatever God calls us to do in our hearts and minds, He empowers us to do by His Spirit.

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, and lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and race free. Your reward awaits you.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your Holy Spirit's power at work in me. Search me, O God, and show me what's truly in my heart. Reveal any sins clinging in secret places. And make my way pleasing to You. Amen.

Reflect and Respond:

- Make a list of any sins clinging to your heart (Gal. 5:7, 16–24).
- Confess your sins before the Lord and to your racing partner. Pray for each other and hold each other accountable to flee every temptation (James 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:13).

Running Further:

- Consider David's sin with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11. How did it begin? What do we learn about how we should respond to sin? (See also Psalm 51.)
- What does Romans 6:6–11 say about sin's power over Christians?
- According to Philippians 2:13, what is God's responsibility? What is ours?

Day 5

Run Your Race, Not Hers

by Shannon Popkin

“Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance **the race that is set before us.**”—Hebrews 12:1

That word endurance paints an image of a long road, not a short sprint before collapsing in a lawn chair. Endurance requires pressing on, even when I grow tired, frustrated, or bored. Or even when challenges arise and incline grows steep.

Jesus must be my example, the writer of Hebrews says. “Consider him who endured . . . so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted” (Heb. 12:3). There’s something about returning my gaze to Jesus—who endured the steepest climb of all up Golgotha’s hill—which gives me strength to take the next step. And the one after that. And there’s something about glancing sideways which makes me want to quit.

When I’m sweating and straining, I want the person next to me to be sweating and straining, too. I want to know that I’m *not* alone. And truly, as I run this Christian race, I’m not alone. I am part of a running group of followers who span the globe, and we all experience the same kinds of runners’ aches and struggles (1 Peter 5:9).

Yet if there’s one thing that compounds my weary faintheartedness, it’s trying to endure while the person in the next lane doesn’t seem to have as much to bear. Like when I look over and the church down the street is growing, while mine is dwindling. Or that leader over there is planning her daughter’s wedding, while I’m grieving the loss of my husband. As I gaze at this other person, my heart fills with envy, strife, pride, and grief.

This measuring and comparing is sideways energy, which distracts me from my race and saps my energy. If I want to run with endurance, I have to look “to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of [my] faith” (Heb. 12:2).

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to the disciples one morning after they had been fishing. They ate breakfast together, and then Jesus took a walk with Peter and gave him a glimpse into the race ahead—which would require great endurance and many trials, including death. As Jesus shared this, Peter turned and saw John trailing behind and asked, “What about him?”

Jesus replied, “What is that to you? You follow me!” (John 21:23).

Friend, are your eyes drifting to someone else’s lane today? Are you—like Peter—craning your neck and becoming distracted? Are you comparing your race with that of another disciple? If so, turn your eyes to Jesus and listen as He says, “What’s that to you? You follow me!”

Prayer:

God, Thank you for choosing me to be your disciple and marking out a course just for me. Help me to stop glancing sideways and keep my eyes on Jesus as I run my race to the finish.

Reflect and Respond:

- Read James 3:14–16 and describe any bitter jealousy or selfish ambition causing your eyes to drift from Jesus. How has this sideways focus been distracting you or sapping your energy?
- What is the Lord asking you to endure today? What is one way that you will “stay in your own lane” and keep following the Lord?

Running Further:

- Read 1 Peter 5:5–11 and make a list of Peter’s instructions and promises in these verses. Choose one that you will cling to, as you keep your eyes on Jesus and run with endurance.
- For practical help in overcoming the temptation to compare, check out this Ask an Older Woman post from the True Woman blog, “Ask an Older Woman #2: How Do I Overcome Comparison?”

Day 6

Eyes Fixed on Jesus

by Christel Humfrey

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Hebrews 12:2

Have you ever seen a picture with a double meaning? Depending on where you focus, the picture will look completely different. My son and I gazed at one of these optical illusions recently: he saw a woman’s face and I saw the word “liar” handwritten. Even though we were looking at the same thing, we saw two different pictures.

When the author of Hebrews tells us to “run the race set before us”, he gives us specific instructions about where our eyes should focus. If believers fixate on the discouragements and burdens of ministry, they will lose momentum quickly. Our perception of the race shifts when we look to Jesus.

Only in Him we find strength to lift our drooping hands and strengthen our weak knees. The burdens weighing us down become lighter, and we run with greater hope and expectancy. When we look to Jesus, the race is transformed and the finish line is in reach.

We can trust that our faith will endure because Jesus is the “founder” and “perfecter” of our faith. If this were a cross-country race, Jesus would be the one who mapped out the terrain and completed the race Himself. He knows each rock that would trip us and each bog we’d get stuck in. He has set our starting place and our finish line, and He strengthens us to complete the journey.

When we are bone-weary in our race, it helps to remember that Jesus knows what it feels like. He is able to sympathize with our weakness because He took on flesh. Jesus endured the hardest race that any person has had to endure. He obeyed the Father perfectly, even through the agony of the cross. And now “he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

When we look to ourselves and our own resources, we will fall short every time. But when we look to Jesus, we find every spiritual resource we need to finish this race (Eph. 1:3).

If ministry fatigue, distractions, or discouragements have slowed you down today, turn your gaze outward. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith. Here you will find the strength and spiritual resources you need to finish your race with joy.

Prayer:

Father, there is no God like You. Thank You for sending Your only Son into the world to save sinners. May Your Spirit open my eyes to see this unique Savior who is both the founder and perfecter of my

faith. Forgive me for trying to run in my own strength. May You be honored today as I seek to rely on Jesus as I run.

Reflect and Respond:

- What does it look like practically to focus on Jesus as you run your race of faith and ministry?
- Are there certain times or circumstances when you feel most tempted to run in your own strength? Are there guardrails you can put in place to help you keep your eyes on Christ?

Running Further:

- Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28–30. He promises to give rest to those who labor and are heavy laden. Have you been carrying your own burdens instead of bringing them to Jesus? What stops you from seeking His rest?
- What practical steps can you take this week to help you keep your eyes on Jesus?

Day 7

Following to the Cross

by Erin Davis

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame**, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Hebrews 12:2

The leaders who inspire me most are those who lead through suffering.

I think of my mom, who led our family with grace and dignity alone after my dad left.

I think of my pastor who has faithfully shepherded the flock of my home church for nearly four decades, even as he’s endured immense personal heartache.

I think of the Apostle Paul who championed the gospel from his prison cell, of the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was executed for opposing Hitler’s regime, of missionaries like Helen Roseveare and Jim Elliot who ministered to others at an unthinkable cost . . .

And of course, I think of Jesus, who suffered for our sake as He endured the cross.

Could it be that the call to leadership is a call to suffer well? If our hearts’ desire is to be like Jesus, and to showcase His mercies to a lost and hurting world, shouldn’t we embrace suffering as an opportunity to shine a white hot spotlight on the sufficiency and care of Christ?

Consider Christ’s words recorded in John 10:18, “No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily” (NLT). *This* is our mission!

To lead like Christ means to lay down our lives. We surrender our plans to the refining of the Holy Spirit. We surrender our needs for the good of the flock. We cast the crowns of self and entitlement at the feet of Jesus, over and over for the sake of the gospel, and we surrender our craving for comfort, embracing the suffering God allows so we can bear witness to the goodness of God.

- Do you want to lead like Jesus? (I know you do). *Lead in suffering well.*
- Do you want others to see Christ in you? (Of course!) *Embrace the hardships with hope and praise.*
- Do you want to follow in His footsteps? (We all do). Make no mistake. Jesus willingly chose the cross, perfectly modeling for us that Christian leadership goes beyond service to sacrifice. *Suffer well so that others may praise His name.*

Joy and suffering are never mutually exclusive. The joys of ministry are hard as we fight through every trial. Like the heroes of my faith, we keep serving, even as we suffer, because that is what Christ our Shepherd did.

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:24–25).

Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for suffering for my sake. Thank you for enduring the cross so that the women I love and serve could be set free from the bondage of sin and become heirs to your kingdom. The suffering in my own life has been filtered through your loving hands. Teach me to use it for your glory.

Reflect and Respond:

- Circle back to Hebrews 12:2. What reason does the writer of Hebrews give for Christ’s choice to suffer on the cross?
- Read James 1:2–4 and consider: Have the trials and challenges of ministry produced joy in you? Or something else (weariness, bitterness, callousness)?
- Who is a Christian leader you know who has suffered extraordinarily well? How can you follow their example?

Running Further:

- Download the PDF “[How to Endure Suffering](#),” and reflect on ten principles for enduring suffering well taken from 2 Timothy 1–2.

Day 8

Seated in Power

by Judy Dunagan

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is **seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**” —Hebrews 12:2

Imagine what it must have been like when Jesus ascended to heaven as His beloved disciples said goodbye to Him. Imagine the celebration of the angels when Jesus was finally back in their midst. What awe and wonder there must have been when Christ sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, signifying that His work on earth was finished and death had been defeated! Did shouts of praise and songs of adoration fill the heavenly realms as He took His seat? That position of authority, power, and honor was purchased through our Savior’s excruciating death and glorious resurrection, and He will reign there forever.

In the midst of the storms of this earthy life, it is easy to forget that our Lord Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. As waves of trials come, we can question if our God is in control or if He is even aware of our suffering. But, dear women, we are told in Romans 8:34 that “Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

He intercedes *for us* at the right hand of God!

Not only that, but we are told in God’s Word that we are seated with Him in the “heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6).

Let those truths wash over you as you navigate the often-stormy seas of this earthly life.

- If you are facing a health crisis right now, remember He intercedes *for* you.
- If you are grieving the death of a loved one, remember He intercedes *for* you.
- If you are praying for a prodigal child, remember He intercedes *with* you.
- If it seems like Jesus is distant, remember you are seated *with* Him.
- If it feels like the enemy is winning the day, remember that he is a defeated foe and we have full authority over him, because of our position in Christ.

May we and the women we serve join the great cloud of witnesses and turn our eyes upon Jesus, our risen King of kings, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, now and forevermore.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I worship You as the One who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. I cry out from Revelation 5: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (v. 12). Jesus, You are worthy! You are seated! It is finished! Amen.

Reflect and Respond:

- Are you in the midst of sorrow or storms right now that seem to be the result of God hiding His face from you? Cry out to Him through prayer, knowing that Jesus intercedes for you and is ever aware of what you are going through.
- Read Stephen's story in Acts 7, paying close attention to exactly what Jesus is doing in Stephen's darkest hour. "Read Stephen's story in Acts 7, paying close attention to exactly what Jesus is doing in Stephen's darkest hour (vv. 54–56)."

Running Further:

- Dwell in these Scriptures where we see Jesus at the right hand of the throne of God: Mark 16:19, Acts 2:33, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20–21, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, and Hebrews 10:12–13.
- Join the heavenly choir in worship, reading these songs aloud or write them in your journal: Revelation 4:9–11; 5:11–14.
- Memorize Revelation 5:13: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

Day 9

Consider Jesus

by Leslie Bennett

“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”—Hebrews 12:3

Stored away in the corner of my attic is a keepsake box for each of my grown children. Tucked inside are treasures my mama’s heart can’t bear to let go. Treasures like a scrap from a favorite blankie, a loved-to-pieces stuffed animal, and (joy of joys!) their handmade cards and letters. I’ve kept them all. The scribbles with backward letters in Crayola colors still bring tears to my eyes. Only a hard-hearted mother would point out the misspellings and abhorrent grammar. It’s unthinkable to compare a child’s penmanship with an adult’s.

Another unthinkable comparison is found in Hebrews 12:3. The writer provokes us to, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” The plea is an urgent command to stop the press and carefully analyze the suffering of Jesus because in the shadow of the cross, our own ministry challenges diminish.

The cup of Christ’s suffering is no match to our droplet of pain:

- **When you’re facing opposition**, remember Jesus faced off with religious rulers and was misunderstood by his own family (Matt. 12).
- **When you need wisdom and don’t know where to turn**, remember Jesus prayed late into the night to hear from His Father (Mark 14:32–42).
- **When you’re tempted to sin**, remember Jesus overcame Satan in the wilderness with the Word of God (Matt. 4:1–11).
- **When you’re persecuted**, remember Jesus endured the cross for the joy of bringing sinners to salvation (Heb. 12:2).

Scottish preacher Robert Murray M’Cheyne wrote, “For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ”¹ and “Live near to God, and so all things will appear to you little in comparison with eternal realities.”²

Friends, our triumph at the finish line is certain if we not only look to Jesus but if we emulate His race of faith. Run the same way Jesus did—in humility, obedience, and fortitude with love.

¹ Robert Murray M’Cheyne and Andrew Alexander Bonar, *Memoir and Remains of the Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne* (United Kingdom: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier, 1892), 279.

² *Ibid*, 283.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we lift our eyes to You. May we be so captivated by Your beauty and grace that nothing—absolutely nothing—will steer us off course. Help us run in the shadow of the cross with joy overflowing from our hearts.

Reflect and Respond:

- Make a list of your ministry struggles, and write a prayer to Jesus laying each one at the foot of the cross. Pin this prayer to a cross in your home or carry it in your Bible as a reminder of Hebrews 12:3.
- Ask a friend or running partner to memorize 1 Peter 2:21 with you. Take a walk together and discuss the implications of suffering in your lives and ministries.
- Fix your eyes on Jesus in worship by singing your favorite artist's rendition of, "The Wonderful Cross" or "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus."

Running Further:

- Schedule an extended time when you can "consider Him." Meditate on the person and work of Jesus in Isaiah 53 and list His lovely attributes.

Day 10

Not for the Fainthearted

by Leslie Bennett

“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that **you may not grow weary or fainthearted.**”—Hebrews 12:3

Missionary William Borden wrote this guiding principle in the back of his Bible: “No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.”

Read it *slowly* once more.

Let’s claim Borden’s motto as our own! I’m convinced that if we serve Christ with the unshakeable resolve of William Borden, there will be fewer of us exiting the race of faith.

The original group of “weary and fainthearted” Christians knew that this phrase referred to a runner’s physical collapse at the end of a race. Hebrews 12:3 shouts for trudging runners to get to the life-giving water station—Jesus. By looking to His life and ministry instead of looking to ourselves, we’re replenished with His joy and cross-bearing faith to endure to the finish line.

Times of exhaustion are part of the training rigor as we run hard for God’s kingdom. But when our field of vision is fully captivated by Jesus, His selfless love and sacrifice compel us to put one foot in front of the other. What if when:

- We are weak and have so little left to give, we look to Jesus for His strength to persevere. **He is “the true vine” (John 15:1).**
- We doubt our calling and effectiveness, we look to Jesus for His assurance to press on. **He is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).**
- We are discouraged and confused, we look to Jesus to penetrate the darkness with His light. **He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12).**

As Jesus’ earthly ministry was drawing to the end, He set His face resolutely toward Jerusalem, fully aware of the suffering He would endure (Luke 9:51).

Before we run another lap, let’s set our face like flint on the goal (Isa. 50:7). Let’s renew our commitment to prove that Jesus is Lord and worthy of our worship by the way we lead. In the end, we will finish strong—not because of our faithfulness—but because of *His* (1 Cor. 1:8–9).

May we be able to say when we take our final victory lap:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for

me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:7-8)

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the victory that is mine through our Lord Jesus Christ. Help me rely on Him to remain “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord [my] labor is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:57-58)..

Reflect and Respond:

- Express William Borden’s motto in your own words and turn it into a prayer of commitment and surrender.
- What lessons about self-control, focus and discipline do you learn from 1 Corinthians 9:24-27?

Running Further:

- Think about the legacy of people who finished strong to the end. What stepping stones will you leave for the next generation of leaders to follow?
- Read through Hebrews 12:1-3 one last time. What fresh truths about Jesus will you never forget?

Writer Bios

Leslie Bennett

Leslie Bennett has been running hard for Jesus ever since she came to faith in a women's Bible study. She loves building up the Bride of Christ and cheering for women's leaders all over the world as the director of women's ministry initiatives for *Revive Our Hearts*. You can connect with Leslie in the [Women's Ministry Leader Facebook group](#). She and her husband, Mac, live in the South Carolina Lowcountry, where she loves drinking sweet tea and encouraging women to treasure Christ above all.

Erin Davis

Erin Davis is a writer and teacher passionately committed to getting women of all ages to the deep well of God's Word. She is the author of more than a dozen books and Bible studies. Erin serves as content manager for *Revive Our Hearts* and hosts the [Women of the Bible](#) podcast and the [Grounded](#) videocast.

Judy Dunagan

Judy Dunagan served as a women's ministry leader for twenty years before joining Moody Publishers in 2014 as an acquiring editor for the women's line of books and discipleship resources. Judy is passionate about discipling women and making God's Word come alive in everyday life. Connect with Judy at [JudyDunagan.com](#).

Christina Fox

Christina Fox serves on the Presbyterian Church in America's national women's ministry team and is the editor of their blog, enCourage. She is a speaker, a writer, and the author of several books, including: *Closer Than a Sister*, *Idols of a Mother's Heart*, and *Sufficient Hope*.

Heidi Jo Fulk

Heidi Jo Fulk desires to know and live God's Word—and then teach and challenge other women to do the same. Heidi and her husband, Dan, live in Michigan with their four children, and she leads women's ministries at her church.

Christel Humfrey

Christel is a follower of Jesus, wife to Clint and mom to three boys. In 2013, she was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition that caused her life to become a little more messy. She is thankful that no trial can steal her spiritual inheritance and that God's grace is better than the greatest earthly joy.

Shannon Popkin

Shannon is a writer and speaker who loves to blend her gifts for storytelling and humor with her passion for God's Word. She is the author of *Comparison Girl*, *Control Girl*, and *Influence*. Shannon is from western Michigan and is happy to be sharing life with Ken, who makes her laugh every single day.

Jean Wilund

Jean Wilund is an imperfect person who loves helping women study the perfect Word of God. She and her husband live in South Carolina. Join Jean on her blog and on her YouTube Channel. And follow her on Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, and Facebook.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. —Hebrews 12:1–3



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