

Sermon Follow-up | September 13, 2020

Annual Focus Kick-Off – “Our Eyes Fixed”

Focus Passage: Hebrews 12:1–3

Additional Context: Hebrews 1–11

Other Passages Referenced: Hebrews 1:1–3; 2:1; 10:25, 32–35; 13:17;

Sermon Recap: From advertising online to headlines in newspapers, it seems that everyone wants us to fix our eyes on something. In the midst of all that vies for our eyes, what do you fix your eyes on most? In the book of Hebrews, we read about a church that had its attention gobbled up by their circumstances. The Christians addressed in Hebrews had experienced a “hard struggle with sufferings,” public criticism, and loss of property (Heb 10:3–34). This experience led to people drifting away from the faith (Heb 2:1), and frustration with their leaders (Heb 13:17). At the beginning of the book, the author begins addressing how the struggling believers were to endure faithfully through their trials (Heb 1:1–3).

The author goes on to deepen the church’s picture of Jesus by telling them that Jesus is better than angels, better than Moses, better than the ancient priest Melchizedek, better than the temple. These comparisons and contrasts continue through the end of chapter 11. Chapter 12 begins with one of the bible’s most powerful words, “therefore.” This word signifies an opportunity for the church to apply everything he has said up to that point. Therefore, we are to throw off every encumbrance and sin that entangles us so that we might run the race with endurance by “fix[ing] our eyes on Jesus.”

To fix our eyes on Jesus, we need a focused look and a long look at Jesus. Our annual focus for 2020–21 will take a long look at Jesus. (Find the “Fix Our Eyes” booklet here: <https://wcchapel.org/watch-listen/current-mssage-series/>). As members of the body of Christ, we also need to look at Jesus together. We need to have others in our life who help us see Jesus better and we need to come alongside others to help them see Jesus better.

Interpretive Helps:

- In the first century AD, runners ran in the stadium virtually naked. They would enter wearing long flowing, colorful robes. At the start of the race, these would be discarded. In like manner, the author is exhorting believers to discard anything that would encumber them and hinder them from running the race¹. The foot race was a short sprint but a race of some distance that required endurance as much as speed.
- The literal phrase of Hebrews 12:2 is “fixing on Jesus.” The word speaks of a focused attention that looks away from everything else to home in on one specific thing.
- The surrounding context of Hebrews 12:1–3 follows Hebrews 11 which is a chapter about great heroes and heroines of the faith, many of whom suffered for their faithfulness. The verses after Hebrews 12:1–3 teach of enduring through suffering and viewing it as a discipline that comes from the loving father—in this case God the Father. For the Christian, suffering does not indicate that the sufferer is rejected by God but rather that he/she is experiencing loving discipline/teaching by God. Jesus was presented as an example of this earlier in Hebrews 5:8: “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.”
- The author intended for His Jewish readers to see that Jesus “is seated at the right hand of the throne of God as a fulfillment of Psalm 110:1 which reads, “The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” Psalm 110 is also alluded to in Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; and 10:12.
- Note that the author does not exhort believers to endure based on the example of the faithful believers mentioned in Hebrews 11. Rather, he calls us to “fix our eyes on Jesus” who gives faith and perfects faith. He

¹ David L. Allen, [Hebrews](#), The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 573.

was our model as He endured the shame of being crucified naked on the cross. As the LORD seated on His throne, focusing on Jesus and His endurance helps us endure when we are weary and fainthearted.

Individual Study and Group Gathering Prep

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Gather everyone together for a one-minute testimony about how God is growing you or about where you're struggling (Sometimes the two are one and the same 😊)

Allow the Word Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. What root word is repeated in verses 1, 2, and 3?
2. Who "sets the race before us"?
3. How are we to run the race?
4. What does "therefore" in Hebrews 12:1 relate to?
5. Heb 12 calls the heroes of chapter 11 "witnesses" rather than examples. Who does Heb 12:1-3 point to as an example of endurance?

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Can you identify any "encumbrances" and "entanglements" that might not be sin, but nonetheless hinder you from running the race of faith with endurance? If yes, name the tops ones: _____ (A clue to some of these might be what you fix your eyes on most frequently when you are not consciously trying to fix your eyes on Jesus.)
2. Can you identify and name any sinful attitudes or behaviors that repeatedly hinder you from running well?
3. What do you need to do to throw off these encumbrances and sins?
4. Will you confess what you've identified to one trusted friend who will pray for you, encourage you, and help you stay accountable?
5. Do you have someone who helps you look at Jesus?
6. Are you helping someone else look at Jesus?
7. Do you practice daily disciplines of Bible reading and prayer to help you fix your eyes on Jesus? If not, are you willing to give it a try? Your group leader can help.

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group.

What we hope members glean from the passage:

1. Endure
2. The LORD sets the course for each of our individual races.
3. With endurance, throwing off every encumbrance and sin that entangles us and prevents us from running well.
4. Particularly the heroes of chapter 11 but generally all that came before in chapters 1–11.
5. Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Further Resources

- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org