

East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide:

Running Your Race

Speaker: Pastor Keith Jenkins

Date: April 21, 2024

Introduction:

In this sermon, Pastor Keith Jenkins drew upon the Apostle Paul's use of athletic metaphors to illustrate key principles of the Christian life. Using the passage from Hebrews 12:1-2, he encouraged the congregation to run the unique race God has marked out for them with perseverance, focus, and faith. Pastor Keith emphasized the importance of surrendering to God's purposes, throwing off encumbrances and sin, and fixing our eyes on Jesus as we run.

1. We are all running unique individual races:

Pastor Keith pointed out that by surrendering our lives to Jesus, we are automatically registered in the race. He encouraged the congregation to discover and accomplish God's purposes for their lives, rather than comparing themselves to others.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to you to run the unique race God has marked out for you?
2. How can comparing ourselves to others hinder us from running our own race effectively?

Supporting Verses:

1 Corinthians 9:24 - "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Paul drew upon the imagery of the Isthmian Games, a well-known athletic event in Corinth, to illustrate spiritual principles.
- Theological Significance: This verse emphasizes the importance of running our Christian race with purpose, discipline, and focus on the eternal prize.
- Application: We should strive to live our lives in a manner that honors God and seeks to fulfill His purposes for us.

2. Throw off everything that hinders and the sin that entangles:

Pastor Keith identified two types of excess baggage that can weigh us down in our race: encumbrances (things that are not necessarily sinful but are unhelpful or unprofitable) and sin. He encouraged the congregation to ask the Holy Spirit to search their lives for these hindrances and to repent of sin.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some examples of encumbrances that might hinder someone from running their race effectively?
2. Why is it important to confess our sins and seek forgiveness as we run our race?

Supporting Verses:

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."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: The author of Hebrews drew upon the imagery of a runner stripping down to compete effectively in a race.
- Theological Significance: This verse emphasizes the need to remove anything that would hinder our spiritual progress or entangle us in sin.
- Application: We should regularly examine our lives for encumbrances and sin, seeking God's help to lay them aside and run with greater freedom and effectiveness.

3. Run with perseverance the race marked out for us:

Pastor Keith stressed that the Christian life is not a sprint but a marathon that requires endurance, perseverance, and grit. He encouraged the congregation to run with partners who can encourage and spur them on.

Discussion Questions:

1. What challenges or obstacles have you faced in running your race that have required perseverance?
2. How can running with partners or being part of a community help us persevere in our race?

Supporting Verses:

Hebrews 10:24 - "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: The early church faced persecution and hardship that required mutual encouragement and support.
 - Theological Significance: This verse highlights the importance of Christian community in helping believers persevere in their faith and grow in love and good works.
 - Application: We should actively seek out relationships and community that will encourage us in our faith and help us persevere in running our race.
-

4. Fix your eyes on Jesus:

Pastor Keith emphasized the importance of fixing our spiritual eyes on Jesus and practicing His presence throughout our days. He identified four categories of distractions that can hinder us: life circumstances, emotions, cultural voices, and the lies of the enemy.

Discussion Questions:

1. What practical steps can we take to fix our eyes on Jesus and practice His presence in our daily lives?
2. How can focusing on Jesus help us overcome the distractions and challenges we face in running our race?

Supporting Verses:

Hebrews 12:2 - "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: The early Jewish Christians faced persecution and the temptation to abandon their faith in Christ.
- Theological Significance: This verse presents Jesus as the ultimate example of perseverance and faith, enduring the cross for the joy set before Him.

- Application: We should look to Jesus as our model and motivation for running our race with faith and perseverance, knowing that He has gone before us and secured our victory.
-

Conclusion:

Pastor Keith's message on running the race marked out for us serves as a powerful reminder that the Christian life requires perseverance, focus, and faith. By throwing off encumbrances and sin, fixing our eyes on Jesus, and running with partners who encourage us, we can effectively run the unique race God has called us to. As we surrender to His purposes and rely on His strength, we will find the endurance and joy we need to finish well and receive the prize He has promised.

Reflection Questions:

1. What encumbrances or sins do you need to lay aside in order to run your race more effectively?
 2. How can you cultivate the habit of fixing your eyes on Jesus and practicing His presence in your daily life?
 3. Who are the partners or community members who can encourage and support you in running your race with perseverance?
-

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer, asking God to reveal any encumbrances or sins that are hindering you in running your race. Confess and repent of any sins, and ask for His strength to lay aside anything that is weighing you down. Ask Him to help you fix your eyes on Jesus and practice His presence moment by moment. Pray for the partners and community He has placed in your life to encourage and support you, and ask for opportunities to spur others on in their faith as well.

References:

Primary Sources:

"Running Your Race," East Hill Church, 04/21/2024. Delivered by Pastor Keith Jenkins.

Sermon Discussion Guide, East Hill Church.

The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV). Biblica, Inc.™, 2011.

Secondary Sources:

Contextual and Theological Insights: Derived from general biblical scholarship and commentaries relevant to Hebrews 12:1-2 and related passages.

General Sources on Biblical Studies:

Guthrie, George H. "Hebrews." The NIV Application Commentary. Zondervan, 1998.

Schreiner, Thomas R. "Commentary on Hebrews." Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation. B&H Publishing Group, 2015.

Bruce, F. F. "The Epistle to the Hebrews." The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.

Collaborative Contributions:

LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided sermon notes and biblical passages.

LLM Training Data:

LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to September 2023.