

9.18 Endurance Run

the big idea: Faith Is Endurance



Donald took the flyer handed to him. He elbowed Mike in the ribs. “We should do this.”

Mike grabbed the flyer and gave his friend a skeptical look. “The 5K Turkey Trot? You feeling okay?”

“We’re on the track team. It’s just running,” Donald encouraged.

“Dude, a 5K is like three miles,” Mike said laughing.

Donald rolled his eyes. “So what’s your point?”

Mike sighed. “I’m a distance runner. This would be easy for me. You’re a sprinter. Running one lap around the track has you in tears.”

Donald snatched the flyer and walked away. “I’m running it. I don’t care what you say.”

“I didn’t say you can’t do it,” Mike called after his friend. “I’ll train you.”

“No thanks,” muttered Donald. “I’ll figure it out on my own.”

Donald only had two months to train for the race, but he figured since he wasn’t competing in a regular meet, it wasn’t necessary for him to stick to a strict training regimen. He ran half a mile every weekday and one mile every Saturday and Sunday.

On the morning of the run, Donald felt super-prepared and only slightly nervous.

Donald picked up his registration packet and approached the starting line, confident he would do well. He started the race strong, but he hit a wall after the first mile. He wished he’d run more than a mile in his training and that he’d taken Mike’s offer to be his trainer.

from your Bible

Hebrews 12:1–11, NIV—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,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.³ Consider him who endured such oppo-

sition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.⁵ And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?⁸ If you are not disciplined—

and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!¹⁰ They disciplined us for a

little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Scripture discussion

In many ways, life is like a race. Whether you are a Christian or an atheist, life has challenges, victories and yet, it will all end one day. The question remains, why are we in the race at all, and for what purpose? Today's passage answers these questions. Chapter 12 in the book of Hebrews offers a stimulating illustration of how to live life and reach the greatest outcome possible—eternity with Christ. The challenge is that there are all sorts of obstacles that stand in our way and prevent us from reaching our

goals. The writer encourages us to use the examples of those who've gone before as motivation for endurance. Jesus Himself endured cruelty and pain while remaining without sin. When we renew our focus and persevere—no matter how hard it seems—we can rest our hope in Jesus. Donald knew how to achieve success, but failed to apply those principles for every race. He also learned the importance of accepting assistance from those who are able to help him reach his goals. We are called to run a race, trust in the wisdom of our elders, and believe that the finish line is worth resisting every snare we may encounter on the way.

make it real



check it

1. Why was Mike surprised that Donald wanted to run the 5K Turkey Trot?
2. List several reasons you believe Donald opted to train alone. What was Donald's sin?
3. How could things have changed if Donald had accepted Mike's help?



think it

1. How can a "cloud of witnesses" be an encouragement? (Hebrews 11:1)
2. What does it mean to "run with perseverance"? (v. 2)
3. What will encourage us not to "grow weary and lose heart"? (v. 3)
4. How should we respond to correction from God? (Vv. 7–10)



do it

"Snares" exist all around us. How can you resist the temptation to sin? Why is this important to establish before you encounter temptation? What else can keep you from becoming the person God has destined you to become?



keep it

"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, 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" (Hebrews 12:1–2, NIV).

9.25 A Lesson in Forgiveness

the big idea: Faith Inspires Gratitude



Sonia didn't believe in the phrase "forgive and forget." Whenever someone had wronged her, she said, "I'll forgive, but I'll never forget."

And she didn't. Every time she thought of those who betrayed her, Sonia remembered the pain and anguish she felt. For some reason, it was easier for her to remember the pain than to forget it and move on. She didn't realize that by holding on to the hurt, she hadn't really, truly forgiven.

At church one Sunday, Sonia learned about the passage of Scripture that says God forgives our sins and remembers them no more. Sonia knew that she needed to forgive completely, but

she didn't agree with that passage. She didn't feel that the people who hurt her should be let off the hook. They were wrong, and they had to be held accountable for their actions.

The day finally came when Sonia said something that hurt her best friend's feelings. Sonia realized that she needed to ask her friend for forgiveness, but she didn't want to.

When she finally mustered the courage to apologize, her best friend hugged her and said, "I forgave you the second you said it."

Sonia was so grateful her friend had forgiven her before she even had a chance to make things right. Needless to say, the next time she was wronged, Sonia was quick to forgive.

from your Bible

Hebrews 12:18–29, NIV—You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm;¹⁹ to a trumpet blast

or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them,²⁰ because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death."²¹ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I

am trembling with fear.”²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned

them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.”²⁷ The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.²⁸ **Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,**²⁹ for our “God is a consuming fire.”

Scripture discussion

This passage compares two groups of people: the Israelites on Mount Sinai and those who came to know Christ under the New Covenant. The Israelites had a relationship with God that was characterized by fear; those under the New Covenant have a relationship with God that is characterized by gratitude. The writer of Hebrews says that God, through

Jesus, brought forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Jesus removed the boundary and was a mediator between God and mankind. The angels stand as witnesses to this event. His testimony both on earth and in heaven is a sign for believers. We are called to accept the gift of salvation, as well as, God’s forgiveness. God’s forgiveness and His promise of eternal life inspire us to express our gratitude because they give us the freedom to approach God with confidence.

make it real



check it

1. Why did Sonia have such a hard time forgiving people?
2. How would you describe the event that caused Sonia to re-evaluate her stance on forgiveness?
3. What caused Sonia to completely change her perspective?



think it

1. Why did Moses tremble with fear? (Hebrews 12:18–20)
2. What was the consequence of rejecting God’s Word? (v. 25)
3. Explain why we should be thankful and worship God? (v. 28)



do it

Faith, forgiveness, and gratitude go hand-in-hand. Our best response to God’s forgiveness is to show gratitude, and we can do that by pleasing God. Come up with a list that identifies the top ten ways to please God and display in your home.



keep it

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,” (Hebrews 12:28, NIV).



On

By: Jordan D. Stewart

The Christian viewpoint on Halloween is strongly divided. Some Christians feel free to recognize the holiday; others boycott it. Still, there are others who inject hints of Christianity into some rituals and create holy alternatives to the demonic ones.

Do you know the history of Halloween? Review the facts and come to your own conclusion.

HISTORY

Around 2,000 years ago, the Celts, who lived in what we know today as the United Kingdom, Ireland, and northern France, had a festival celebrating the end of the year. Since their New Year began on November 1st, the festival, known as Oidche Shamhna (Night of Samhain), was celebrated on October 31st. Samhain marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the brutal winter, which in many ways represented death. Because death was so close, the Celts believed that the night before the New Year was a time when the living and the dead could interact with each other.



The background of the page is a dark grey/black color with a white spider web pattern. Several black bat silhouettes are scattered across the web. The word "Halloween" is written in a large, yellow, distressed, and slightly irregular font across the center. A yellow crescent moon is positioned above the letter 'o' in "Halloween".

Halloween

SYMBOLS

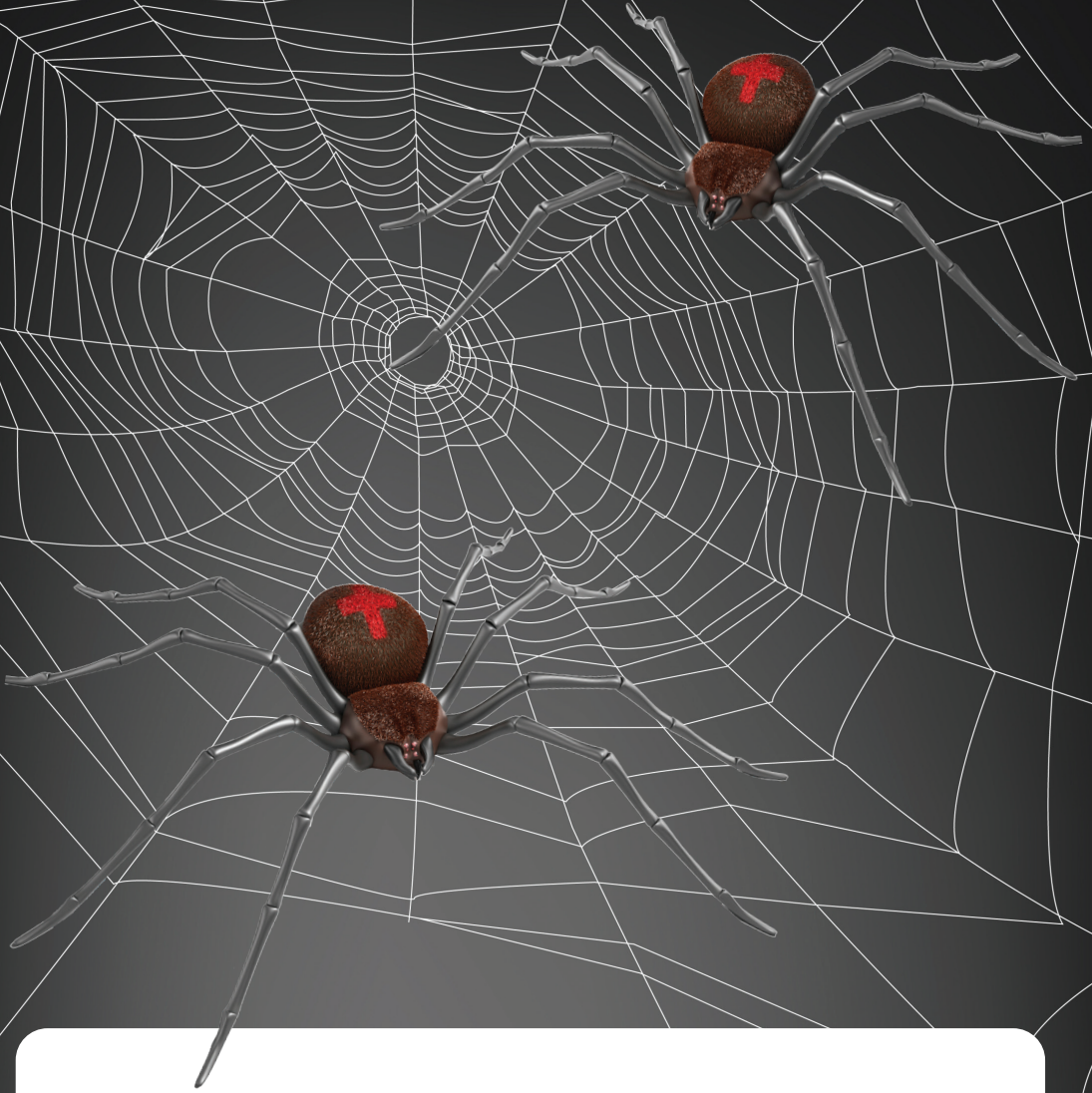
Bats

The bat became a symbol of Halloween from the bonfires that the Celts used to ward off bad energy. If you have ever been around a campfire, you know that fires attract insects. Bats eat insects and would come around the Celtic fires to look for food. Eventually, the bat became a symbol of magic and transitioned from one life form to another.

Jack-O-Lanterns

The jack-o'-lantern was originally made out of hollowed turnips. People would illuminate them with candles at night when beggars would go to houses asking for food. The Irish began replacing their turnips with pumpkins and carved scary faces onto them to scare evil spirits and keep them away. The jack-o'-lantern received its name from legends about a personality named Jack who tricked the devil twice from taking his soul, and it symbolizes a welcoming of winter as it illuminates the night.





Spiders

The spider is connected to witches and abandoned (haunted) houses. Spiders are thought to have supernatural qualities and to be holders of mystical energy. Many cultures recognize the spider because of its ability to weave webs. They are called “crafty” and even represent wisdom in some cultures. Spiders are associated with magic and some practices believe there is power in their webs. Witches have spiders as pets because spiders are said to help the witches understand magic and energy patterns. They also use spiders in their potions.



Black Cats

Although the black cat has become a symbol of bad luck, black cats have been considered very spiritual animals throughout history. Some cultures have worshipped black cats with the belief that they have the ability to see spirits. Others understood the cats to be facilitators to opening portals into other worlds. Some people believed that witches could turn themselves into black cats. For this reason, some black cats were hunted



and burned alive. Cats, however, were first domesticated in Egypt because they were considered closer to the gods and were believed to have the ability to ward off evil.

Whether or not you decide to celebrate Halloween is a decision between you and your family. But it is important to be informed of its history. As a believer, everything that we do should bring honor and glory to God.