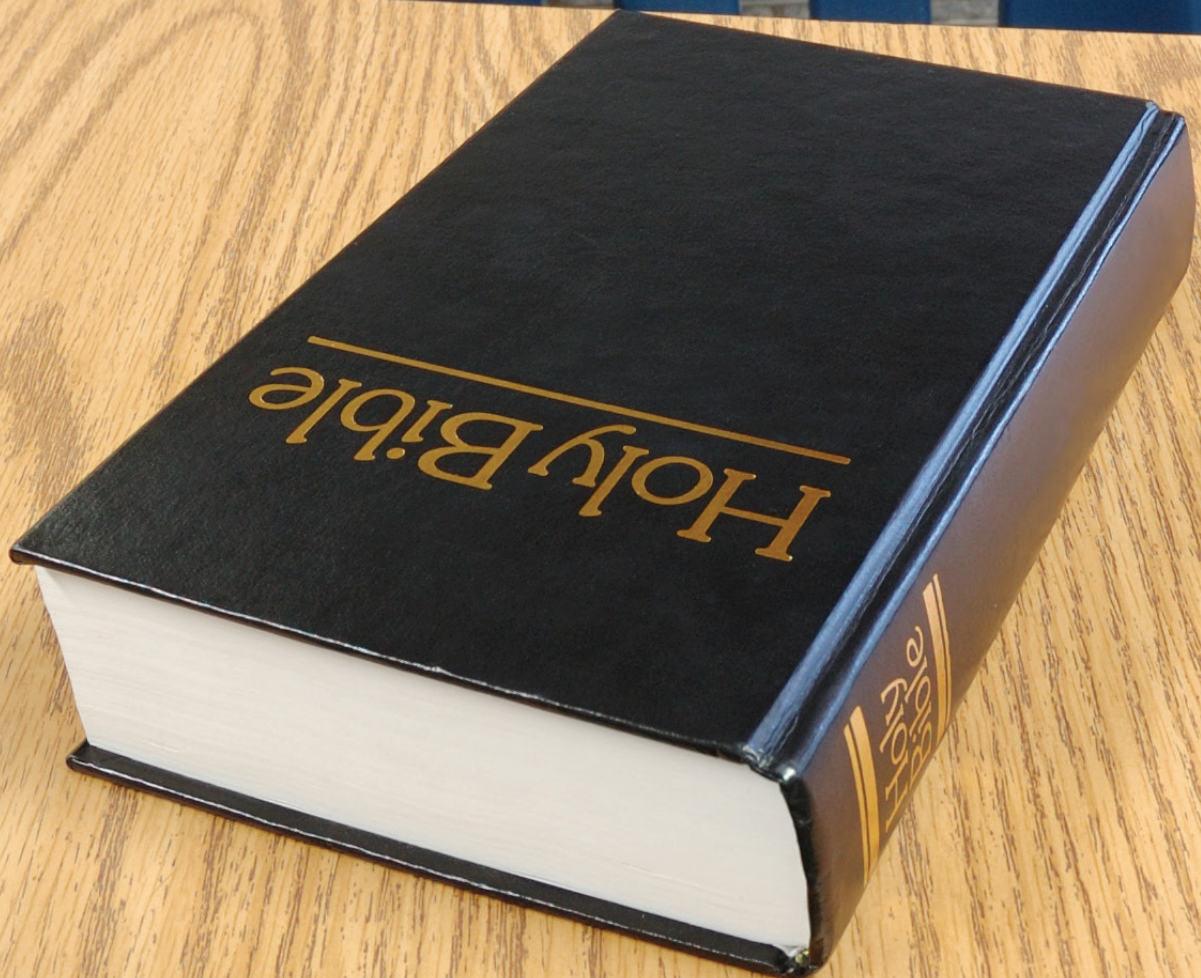


Lesson 3





Where We're Going

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to describe how to have enduring faith, learn how endurance strengthens faith, and develop a plan to use faith to determine and reach spiritual goals.



Help Wanted

James had been a mentor for three years through an after-school program at his former high school. James mentored Benny for three months before Benny asked if he could go to church with him. After attending worship once, Benny was hooked. He wanted to learn everything he could about Jesus and the Church. James taught what he could, and when he didn't know something, he referred his mentee to a pastor or church leader.

During one of their many conversations, the topic of faith came up. Benny expressed that he was worried about whether he'd be a strong Christian. James listened intently, like he always tried to do. After a while, he told Benny what he thought. "You need other people." Benny disagreed, shaking his head. "I've got all that I need." He looked away and began to hide behind a wall of silence. "No, you don't!" said James. Benny looked surprised. He hadn't expected James to be so direct.

"You heard me right. You don't have all that you need. No one alone has all they need. You don't even know all you need."

Benny sighed. His shoulders slumped and he seemed to sink into his chair.

"Look, Benny," James said. "As a babe in Christ, your faith is tiny right now, but faith doesn't have to be large to be bold. Tiny faith can get weak when life gets hard. You need the support, prayers, and guidance of other Christians to help you when you get bogged down by life."

A long pause stood between them. Benny tapped his fingers on the small table in the classroom where they were meeting, while James turned toward the window and watched several groups of the students leave the building.

Benny cleared his throat and said, "I see your point."

"Don't sound so sad," James replied. Benny shook his head again. James said that there were several nice people at church that he could talk to, and even a few people at the school. Benny said, "I've got at least one of those examples you're talkin' about."

"Oh yeah? Who?"

Benny pointed to James and grinned.

"Now you're trying to either tease me or make me cry."

"No, I'm not. I'm just telling the truth!"



Real Talk

1. If there is someone in your life that you look to for spiritual guidance, what is it about that person that makes them your choice for a mentor?
2. What is your understanding of what the Bible describes as endurance?
3. Can you think of a time when you have been disciplined by God? How did you feel?



The Players

Rome. As the capital city of Italy, it was the center of commerce, culture, and religion. A myriad of religions dotted the social landscape at the time this letter to the Hebrews was circulated. Although there were times when Jews and Christians were expelled from Rome, there were other times when they could worship freely.

Believers in Rome. Scholars are very unsure of the intended audience, but in Hebrews 13:24, the writer sends greetings from those of Italy. The *NIV Study Bible* notes that the writer is passing on greetings from some Italian believers. William Barclay in his *Daily Study Bible* on Hebrews suggests that it was written to a group of Jewish Christians who met in a "house-church" in Rome (Barclay, 6-7). They were a subgroup of the main Christian congregation that had been formed there years earlier. Living in a climate of other religions and cults, their faith was tested constantly. When times were hard—politically, culturally, socially, and economically—the chance was greater that they would be tempted to return to Judaism. It was not easy nor politically correct to be a Christian at this time. Christians in Rome had to deal with the threat of persecution by the Roman authorities; although, none of them had become martyrs like Stephen and others. This happened later under Nero, the emperor. Because they were still alive, the writer encouraged them to continue to run their race and not give up. He reminded them that Jesus never gave up and that they shouldn't either.



Backstage

Some Bible commentators believe Hebrews was written to a Jewish-Christian congregation in Rome around A.D. 67-70. Others believe it was written to Jews living in Egypt or Palestine. Traditionally, authorship was attributed



Make It Stick

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.” (Hebrews 12:1–2, NLT)



The Word (NLT)

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.

3 Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up.

4 After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline, and don’t give up when he corrects you.

6 For the LORD disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?

8 If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.

11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

to the apostle Paul, but modern scholars are unsure of the true identity of the author of this epistle. Some believe Barnabas wrote it, and still others suggest Apollos, a Jew born in Alexandria, which is located in northern Africa. The author wrote the letter in response to the threat that believers might renounce Christianity and revert to Judaism. The writer wanted to inform his vacillating readers that Jesus Christ, the object of God’s final revelation, is superior to the greatest of Judaism’s heroes. The writer also wanted to highlight, while reminding his audience of, the efficacy of Jesus’ power of salvation. He emphasizes that whereas the Jewish legal sacrificial system was powerless to remit sins, Jesus, the eternal High Priest, “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Furthermore, the writer explained the need for patient endurance amid the persecution and sufferings to which the heirs of eternal salvation are inevitably exposed.

The writer suggests that all Christians emulate Jesus’ suffering and patience in anticipation of an eternal reward. One cannot help but notice the metaphors of Greek athletic terms such as “run with perseverance the race” and “a great cloud of witnesses [spectators]” (Hebrews 12:1, NIV). These Christians were to think of themselves as athletes who possessed endurance in order to ensure victory over the forces of evil. The writer also made it clear that the Christians’ secret weapon, needed for victory in spite of trials and tribulations, was unwavering faith.



Combing Through

1. Believers Must Run the Race (Hebrews 12:1–2)

The writer encourages the Christian readers to continue to “run their race” of discipleship no matter what tries to hinder them. He tells them not to get distracted by burdens or sins that are present in their lives.

Being a Christian was not an easy thing back then, and it still isn’t today. It is a lifelong commitment that involves peaks and valleys, good times and bad times, and sunshine and rain. Christian discipleship is not akin to a sprint; it is a marathon. That is why the author tells his audience to use “perseverance” (v. 1, NIV). Perseverance is an inner quality that allows one to continue in some course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition. To persevere is to be steadfast in a particular purpose.

Disciples of Jesus Christ must always look to Jesus as the ultimate model of perseverance. In His ministry, He suffered insults and attempts on His life. He persisted even though His hometown and relatives rejected Him. He overcame the obstinacy of His followers and betrayal by one of His own. He never faltered during the unjust criminal trial that accused Him of sedition and heresy or the beating by the Roman police force. Finally, He did not waver on the Cross at Calvary. He did all of that not only so future generations of believers would have access to a spiritual power potent enough to change the world but also to set an example of the perfect leader who was tempted but did not give in. And most importantly, He endured the Cross to carry our sins and provide the way of salvation for us.

We must also remember that we have an inspiration. We are surrounded by a “great ... cloud of witnesses,” credible leaders who have fought a good fight, finished their course, kept the faith, and earned their crowns of righteousness. They are our inspiration. Our heroes of faith should inspire us to keep our faith so we can pursue a life of complete holiness and participate in kingdom work that can change our world and be a witness of the world to come. Today, we look at heroes of faith such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Rosa Parks.

Therefore, as we continue to live as ambassadors of Christ, let us persevere on our jobs, in our homes, and in our communities. God demands our best in this life. No matter what hardships we go through, our history is peppered with credible leaders who have overcome greater hardships than we have ever had to imagine. We can learn from them. If they made it, surely we can make it. With God on our side and a “great . . . cloud of witnesses” cheering us on, we can get through any adverse situation we face.

2. Believers Must Develop Endurance (vv. 3–6)

When life becomes unbearable and we get discouraged by some temporal circumstances, we ought to have enough of a spiritual sense to look to Jesus as our source of strength. If we think of all that Jesus endured, giving His life so we might have life, we have to thank God for the character and integrity of His Son Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews encouraged the vacillating Jewish Christians, when they began to complain about the adversity they had to face, to consider Jesus’ suffering. He supported his argument by testifying that they had not faced persecution to the degree that they had shed their own blood. He also let them know that trials suffered for righteousness’ sake could be theologically viewed as the “chastening of the Lord,” God’s “disciplinary correction, instruction, and nurture.”

The Lord’s chastening is not arbitrary or without direction—it always has a purpose. The writer suggests that trials could be disciplinary correction and a part of God’s overall plan to edify His children. Corrective discipline is always a good thing that symbolizes love. When an earthly father exercises discipline on his child, in most cases it’s meant to be beneficial to the child so that the same wrong actions will not be repeated. Our Heavenly Father operates in the same way. Because God loves us, He

disciplines us so we will not commit the same sins or something worse.

Even when seemingly unprovoked trials and tribulations come into our lives, we can benefit from them. Romans 8:28 reads, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Truly, when we try to compare what we have to go through to what Jesus endured, we see there is no comparison. He suffered much for us. The question is: What will we suffer through for Him? It is hard for us to lose, to mourn the death of a loved one, to feel the pain of a broken relationship or the discomfort of owing insurmountable debt. Trials will come in this life. Pain will be a part of our pilgrimage. But the good news is that enduring the suffering brings us into new levels of God’s consciousness.

3. Believers Must Learn to Accept the Discipline of the Lord (vv. 7–11)

The writer of Hebrews presents yet another reason that believers should cheerfully bear affliction when it comes. Christians are encouraged to endure the discipline of the Lord because it is the mark of the sonship of Christ as well as the way to become more holy and righteous.

The Bible is clear that those who suffer for righteousness’ sake glorify God: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12–13, KJV). Second Timothy 2:12 says, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” The writers insist that we must look on all the hardships of life as the discipline of God sent to work, not for our harm, but for our ultimate and highest good.

It is never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but His discipline is a sign of His deep love for us. When God corrects you, see it as proof of His love and His ability to lead you in the right direction. Then pray and ask Him what He is working to teach you. We may respond to the Lord’s discipline in several ways. First, we can accept it with resignation. Second, we can accept it with self-pity, thinking we really don’t deserve it. Third, we can be angry and resentful toward God. Or, fourth, we can accept it gratefully, which is the appropriate response we owe a loving Father who cares enough about us to point us in the right direction.



Diving Deeper Quiz

1. Whether it is positively or negatively, how has God’s discipline affected your faith?
2. Who are the people you think of when you read about the cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12:1?
3. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 119:71 that it was good for him that he was afflicted. Can you think of a “life lesson” that you know you learned only because God allowed you to learn it the “hard way?”



Next Steps

1. Reflect on who you are connected to as a believer that pushes you to follow God. How does that person encourage you?

2. Take time to thank God and thank any mentors you may have had or mentees you have for being part of your journey.



Say Word?

Chasten. CHEY-suhn.
Exhortation. Eg-zawr-TEY-shuhn.

SWAG

(Spiritual Wisdom and Guidance)

One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination.—John C. Maxwell



Lesson 4





Where We're Going

We will learn what it means to fear God, understand what it means when we say that God's Kingdom is unshakable, and examine our level of gratitude when coming to the realization of how much Christ has done for us.



He Didn't Have To Do It

Sasha walked into the lobby of the new office building. It was beautiful. The chandelier and the vaulted ceiling took her breath away! She was nervous and could feel the butterflies fluttering in her stomach. It was the first day in this new position. Her promotion came with this relocation to the main building, which had just been built. As she stood in the lobby, almost in a trance, her friend Debbie came up behind her and hugged her, jarring her into reality.

"Hey girl!" Debbie said excitedly. Sasha turned in delight and answered,

"It's so good to see a familiar face! The beauty of this building took my breath away and I didn't see you coming. I'm super-excited, but I'm also feeling really nervous about all my new responsibilities and all that will be required of me as Dr. Lawrence's personal assistant."

"How much time do you have?" Debbie asked as she looked around for the closest ladies' room.

Sasha looked down at her watch and said, "I'm early. I have about 20 minutes before I have to be upstairs."

"Okay, great!" Debbie said. "Let's run into this bathroom for a minute and pray. I know God will give you the grace to do this job, just as He has given you the favor to get the job. What you have to remember is that to whom much is given, much is required. This new job is better in every way than your old one."

God gave you a new building to work in, a kind new boss, a promotion, and a pay raise. Always remember how faithfully and diligently you worked in your old position to honor God, and allow your grateful heart to cause you to continue to give 100% to this new job to bring glory and honor to God's name."

"Amen," Sasha replied.

With that said, Debbie grabbed Sasha's hands. They bowed their heads and Debbie began to pray.



Real Talk

1. What was the most important thing Debbie wanted Sasha to remember in her new job?
2. We now have the new and better covenant through the blood of Jesus. Jesus is our Mediator now rather than Moses, who was the mediator through which God gave the Old Covenant. Do you believe Christians have more reverence and fear of God now, in contrast to the days of Moses? If so, why do you think this is? If not, why not?



The Players

Mosaic Covenant. The Pentateuch (first five books of Old Testament) record the conditions and requirements of the Mosaic Covenant, which was given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai for God's people, the Israelites. Moses was the liaison between God and the Israelites. Moses communicated God's requirements for the covenant and pled Israel's case before God. After God revealed His power and rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Mosaic Covenant was conditional based on Israel fulfilling its part of the covenant.

New Covenant. The New Covenant is based on Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who died for the sins of all humanity. Jesus established the New Covenant through His own death and commissioned His disciples and believers to share the Good News about the kingdom of God. Believers will dwell with God in the heavenly city of God, Mount Zion (Sion).

Mount Zion. This is a reference to the heavenly city of God and believers who will dwell with Him. The mountain is available through the blood of Jesus. It is a celebration of the Holy One where angels, believers, and righteous people dwell.



Backstage

The majority of the earliest believers in Christ were Jews. When Paul went to Jerusalem, he was told, "Many thousands of Jews there are which believe" (Acts 21:20). The number of Jewish Christians grew, but the church communities endured physical and social persecution from the Jews and Romans. Many people were arrested and ostracized because of their faith, and some suffered physically and experienced loss of their



Make It Stick

“Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.” (Hebrews 12:28, NLT)



The Word (NLT)

Hebrews 12:18 You have not come to a physical mountain, to a place of flaming fire, darkness, gloom, and whirlwind, as the Israelites did at Mount Sinai.

19 For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking.

20 They staggered back under God’s command: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.”

21 Moses himself was so frightened at the sight that he said, “I am terrified and trembling.”

22 No, you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering.

23 You have come to the assembly of God’s firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge over all things. You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven who have now been made perfect.

24 You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks of forgiveness instead of crying out for vengeance like the blood of Abel.

25 Be careful that you do not refuse to listen to the One who is speaking. For if the people of Israel did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, the earthly messenger, we will certainly not escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven!

26 When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: “Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also.”

27 This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain.

28 Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.

29 For our God is a devouring fire.

property because of their belief. The writer of Hebrews expressed the superiority of Christianity and urged believers to keep their eyes on Jesus. The early believers may have considered returning to Judaism to hold on to the biblical truths. The people needed to remember that Jesus was the Messiah and that He would return. The writer of Hebrews wanted the believers to hold onto their faith and look forward to Jesus’ return.

As the believers at the newborn church struggled, disciples who had victoriously run the race gazed at the struggling believers. The writer urged them not to be discouraged by struggles that perfect believers. He also urged them to be very careful and guard against defiling themselves and selling their birthrights, which would result in losing the promises of God. We must remember our actions have lasting consequences. Although we repent and seek God’s forgiveness, we cannot eliminate the consequences of sin.



Combing Through

1. The Two Mountains: Sinai and Zion (The Heavenly City) (Hebrews 12:18–21)

The writer of Hebrews compares the Mosaic Covenant with the New Covenant by examining two mountains: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. God gave the Law to the Israelites at Mount Sinai with a majestic display of “thunderings, and the lightnings ... they (the people) removed (themselves) and stood afar off” (Exodus 20:18). The people came before God with fear and trembling at Mount Sinai. They feared that speaking directly to God would lead to death.

In contrast, through a New Covenant, Christian believers joyfully approached God through the blood of Jesus on Mount Zion (Sion), which is the Heavenly City of God. While God seemed distant and threatening at Mount Sinai, at Mount Zion, Jesus has made the believer’s faith personal. Through Christ, we have the promise of eternal life through forgiveness of our sins. We can accept God’s invitation through Christ, receive forgiveness and experience the presence of God.

2. The Heavenly City Zion (or Sion) (vv. 22–23)

Ancient custom approved special treatment for the firstborn son, who received a father’s blessings, which was a double portion. In the Old Testament, Joseph received a double inheritance among the sons of Jacob instead of Reuben, who had unacceptable behavior. The firstborn son received special blessings from his earthly father. The heirs in heaven are believers, who are justified and made perfect because they are in heaven, they are “just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23). Through Christ, believers will inherit the Kingdom: “Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:24). We have the promise of eternal life, our inheritance.

By faith, believers’ names are recorded in heaven; they are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Believers can come to God by faith through Christ, make a supplication, and receive absolution for their sins and justification. We have an eternal home with God in heaven and the blessings of the firstborn. Thus, every believer is an heir with rights and privileges of the firstborn.

3. The Heavenly City and Jesus, the Mediator (v. 24)

Jesus Christ is the mediator or “go-between” uniting two parties: God and sinful humanity. Moses was the mediator of the Mosaic Covenant; he was the liaison between God and the Israelites. Moses gave the Israelites God’s Law, instruction, and the obligations for the covenant between God and the Israelites.

In the same vein, Jesus is the mediator for the New Covenant that was established through His sacrificial death on the Cross. He helps believers to remain in a covenant relationship with God. Therefore, through Jesus, humanity prays to God and receives His favor. Jesus pleads our cause before God. The New Covenant of Jesus Christ speaks forgiveness for the believer and new life through Christ, our mediator.

4. Criteria for Entering the Heavenly City (vv. 25–26)

Jesus Christ speaks to humanity and He offers forgiveness through God’s grace and mercy. Because we have more knowledge of Christ and the promise of eternal life, “If we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” we will be judged for our unbelief (Hebrews 12:25). Therefore, our faith in God should inspire our gratitude for all that He’s done for us.

When Korah, a Levite who was the tabernacle assistant, instigated a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, God destroyed him. Korah and the other leaders directly challenged Moses and God. As a result, God judged and punished their unbelief. Today, God still judges unbelief. If we do not believe and accept Christ, we refuse Him.

The “whole mountain trembled violently” when God gave the Law at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18, NIV). When Christ returns, God will “shake not the earth only, but also heaven” (Hebrews 12:26). The entire universe will shake when the Son of God returns, but the kingdom of God will not be shaken. It will endure through eternity. The power of God will be evident, and everyone will recognize Him.

5. Preparing for the Heavenly City (vv. 27–29)

The writer of Hebrews explains that temporary things will be shaken and removed when Christ returns, while the eternal things will not be moved. The “things which cannot be shaken may remain”; they are eternal (Hebrews 12:27). Only God’s kingdom will last.

Believers will endure the shaking and endure through the grace of God. We will receive the kingdom of God that will endure; it is unchanging and cannot be moved. No power on earth or hell can destroy God’s kingdom.

The writer encourages believers to “have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28). Grace is the unmerited favor of God that offers the gift of salvation to humanity. We can hold to the grace we have received and trust the assurance that we have an eternal home with God. By grace, we serve God with love and respect. If you have rejected God’s grace, repent and receive God’s love and mercy today. Then accept the gift of His Son with gratitude.



Diving Deeper Quiz

1. According to today’s text, what caused the Israelites to experience fear and trembling when receiving the first covenant?
2. What does it mean to worship God with holy fear and awe?
3. We learned today that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken. What does that mean to you? What are some earthly things that can be “shaken?”



Next Steps

1. Journal a response to the question why should we fear God?
2. What does it change to understand when scripture says to fear God it means to respect or take God very seriously?



Say Word?

Zion. ZI-uhn.

SWAG
(Spiritual Wisdom and Guidance)

Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens.—J. R. R. Tolkien



BATTLE CRY:

An Interview with Jason Wilson

By Allen Reynolds



Jason Wilson has been training and mentoring men and speaking about emotional, mental, and spiritual health for decades. His new book *Battle Cry* shares his insights and principles for becoming the man he is and helping others become the holistically healthy people God has called them to be. UrbanFaith sat down with him to discuss his new book and his journey. The interview has been edited for length and clarity, the full interview is available on UrbanFaith.com.

Allen

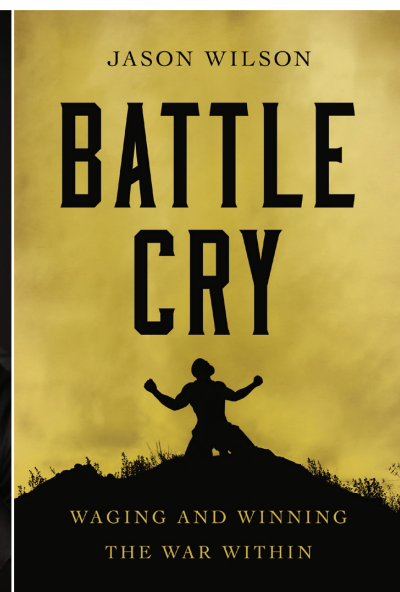
One of the things that really stuck out to me about you just sharing throughout the book is you weaved in Scripture, but you did it in this really practical way. Can you talk a little bit about why that's important to pull our faith in, in this practical way?

Jason

Well, you know, I'm a fisher of men for one. And so, a lot of times, I was guilty of just casting a line with a hook and no bait. "You're gonna go to hell if you don't do this, this, and that," pushes people away. You know, if we're really honest with ourselves, we didn't come to Christ because of the wrath. We came to Christ because of his love. And that's what we have to remember when we're fishing. And then also, Jeremiah 16:16, the Most High said He will send fishers to go after these men, and then after the fishers, there will be hunters. So the fish could have been disciples. And are we hunting? No.

Purposefully I love. I center my life around the word of God, I centered [it] around His principles and precepts. I want all the men who say, man, what works for you? I'm gonna show you what works for me. [and I] couldn't show you what worked for me without showing you who's working in me. So it's very imperative that I have the scriptures throughout. And it's important that they understand the context of Scripture as well. I have a saying, some of the most judgmental people I know don't read Bibles, they read Bible verses.

So, that's why I did it. And this is my story. This is what I'm giving men, the mental and spiritual weapons that have helped me, well, that help me to this day wage and win my own internal battles daily. And that's why it's imperative that I give them the opportunity to really [flourish]. You know, so many people are preached at, but when people can actually see it live... So I [would] rather be a living epistle like the Bible talks about, than constantly keep reading scriptures [to people]. I want to be a scripture. I want



people to see what it looks like to walk by faith and not by sight. I want people to see what it feels like when the scripture says the righteous shall never be shaken. And so that's [when] people say, "oh, this is real, this isn't just some talk." And that's why I did that. You know, it's very important to me [that] men understand there's a difference between what people say are Christians and someone who was following Christ.

Allen

I love just how that focus on dealing with our emotions is something I saw throughout your book. [As a martial artist people would assume you deal with the body more, but] I really noticed a pattern as I move through it, of starting in the heart and then dealing with the mind and then dealing with the body. Can you talk about why you did that?

Jason

If you train them, under a good teacher, you will learn real fast that even mind people say I'd rather be mentally strong, but the mind is nothing but a muscle is a part of the body. So when the body breaks down, the mind follows. I'm thankful I had the greatest Sensei, which is the Holy Spirit, who taught me that once I walked by His Spirit, the spirit of the Most High, nothing could stop me. And that's when I realized the real war and the work was inward. I talk about my mother with dementia and how just caring for her helped me break free from what I call misconstrued masculinity or the masculine mandate. [It] is the culture's order for men to only live under masculine attributes or exude masculine attributes like strength, boldness, and aggression, [and free from that I could] become a comprehensive man. You know, someone who is courageous and compassionate, strong and sensitive, bold, but also gracious. I [came to a place] where I could freely live from the good in my heart. I emphasize good because we know we have bad in our hearts as well.

Yeshua says Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God but what do we harp on mostly as believers? Jeremiah prophesies the heart is deceitfully wicked above all, you know, but it doesn't mean that it can't be purified. And so that's why it's imperative that we deal with the heart even in the Cave of [Adullum]. You know, one of my favorite evaluations is that almost 80% of our recruits improve their grade point average by one letter grade without tutoring. That's because we deal with the heart. And then from the heart the issues flow. Out of the heart, the mouth speaks.

So guard the heart for it is the wellspring of life. So when we help boys to deal with the issues of the heart, it frees the mind from holding on to all the trauma, the emotional pain, and mind can let go. We think it's the mind, but really the mind is a slave to the heart. Because if someone hurts your feelings, your heart, your mind goes in protection mode. And now you make pronouncements. Like, I'll never love this person. I'll never trust a girl again, I'll never do this, I'll never do that. Yeah, that's why it's important that we deal with the heart. And so that's why we take that approach. And that's what we've learned that really works to help not only boys heal, but men [heal].

Allen

I love it. So last question, just as we're speaking to our audience, and you cover so much in *Battle Cry*, what is the message that you want to leave for the young men out here or for any of our young people?

Jason

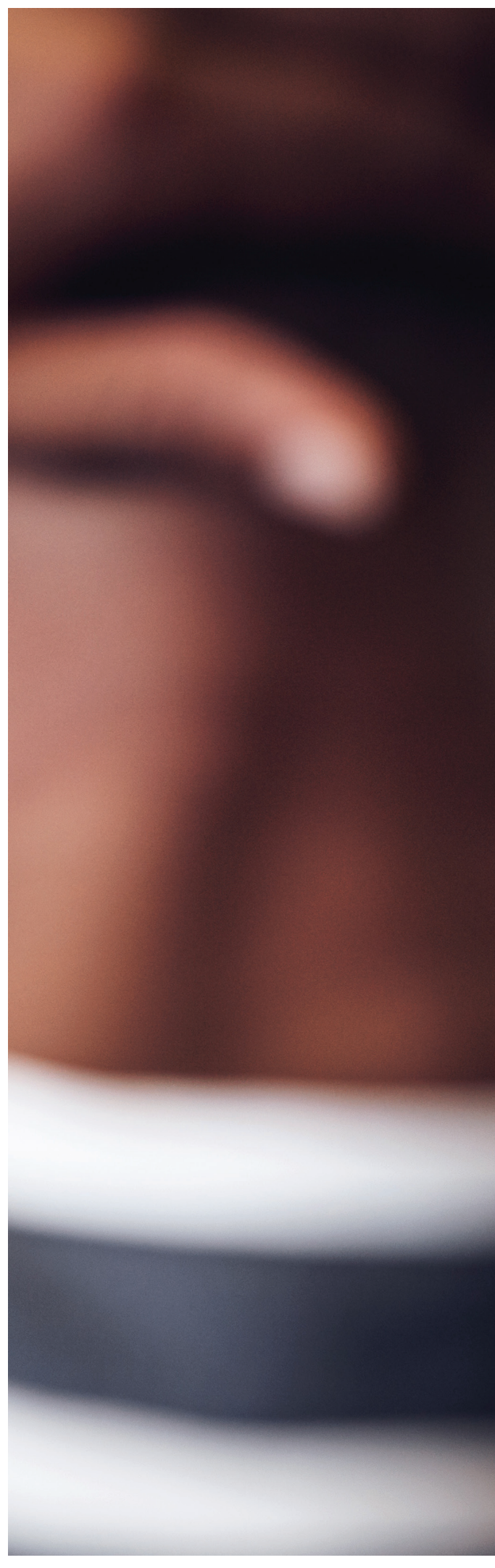
If I could talk to myself [at a younger age], the first thing I would tell younger Jason, is that you're good enough. So often, I caught myself in places and doing things just solely out of just trying to be accepted. Trying to be this great DJ or when I became a believer that the one who knew the



“I want people to see what it looks like to walk by faith and not by sight. I want people to see what it feels like when the scripture says the righteous shall never be shaken. . . .You know, it’s very important to me [that] men understand there’s a difference between what people say are Christians and someone who [is] following Christ.”







“When Christ called people hypocrites who would talk about someone who has a speck in their eye, but a plank in their own. He didn’t say, like live in the mirror [examining yourself]. Sometimes, we live in a mirror, constantly trying to fix things in us. Once we got that plank out . . . [We need to help someone else].”

most about the Bible. You know, [feeling like] when I pray, I gotta recite where the Scriptures come from, I could go on and on. So, the first thing is to understand that you’re good enough right now where you are. Yes, we always need to improve. But [there is] self-condemnation, especially amongst millennials [and Gen Z], because you guys, especially men, don’t have mentors. And, that’s a tragedy, so you have to figure out a lot on your own. So, you deserve a lot of grace. You have a lot of trial and error or young sources. There’s not [enough] women, ministering to and mentoring young women at your age. It’s a big gap.

And so the first thing I tell young people, don’t condemn yourselves, love yourself for who you are and where you are. Stay in a mirror, of course. But this is the key; when Christ called people hypocrites who would talk about someone who has a speck in their eye, but a plank in their own. He didn’t say, like live in the mirror [examining yourself]. Sometimes, we live in a mirror, constantly trying to fix things in us. Once we got that plank out [we need to go] to the other person and say “hey, that was wrong. You’re doing this wrong.” [We need to help someone else]. So self-condemnation is the biggest hindrance to your call. Because you’re never good enough. So that’s why I say, be thankful for who you are. Count your blessings. Stay in Philippians 4:8 every morning and recite it every morning. And think on those things that are good and praiseworthy.

Secondly, don’t live from what you lack. Live from what you long for. My son asked me one day and I never forget this. I tell this a lot. We were training in a basement, and he looked at me and he says, Dad, how did you become a great dad when your dad wasn’t [a great dad]? I said, Son, I simply gave you what I longed for. I wasn’t taught how to be a father [or] a husband. But I knew what I felt. I knew what I wanted as a child. You understand what I mean? So I gave my son a father who was intentional. I gave my son a father who was patient. I gave my son a father who understands that it’s okay for boys to cry and get back up again. You guys, are in a great position. You know, you can do way more than what my generation could. But what’s stopping you is a self-condemnation and social media plays a major role in that. So I would just say you’re good enough, no self-condemnation. Love yourselves, get in a mirror, but don’t live in the mirror. And help others out. Once you get the plank out your eye, help others so that they can see.

And then lastly, live from what you longed for, and not what you lacked. And then, you know, you can really be used by the Most High to do some great things. But as long as our hearts are weighed down, or we’re soul-ish and nearby our fleshly desires, and it’s hard for Him to use us. You know, I tell people all the time, if you’re just a masculine male, when God needs you to be sensitive, you can’t because it’s not a masculine attribute, when He needs you to be a nurturer, you can’t when He needs you to be weak, so that the power of His Son is perfected? You can’t. What I would tell all of [your generation] is always seek to improve. But please be very careful not to condemn yourself.