Hebrews 12:1-2

“Looking Unto Jesus”

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:1-2

**Memory Verse:** “…and *let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus*…” Hebrews 12:1b-2a

**Objects needed for lesson:** Weight and a rope

**Lesson Focus:** To be a Christian we must follow Jesus.

**Craft for 1st & 2nd graders:** “Run for Jesus Shoe” Have the kids color their shoes and then make a necklace with both shoes tied to a string.

**Activity Pages**: Word Search

**Introduction: Hook:** How many of you have ever been in a race? Have you ever been in a competition such as a sporting event or scholastic event like a spelling bee?  How did you do?  *Give each child a chance to answer.  Ask them if they won anything or received an award. Ask them what they had to do to get prepared for the event?*

Did you know that when you are born you enter into a race or competition? We are in a competition between good and evil. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul compares us to runners. In these verses he’s telling us not to give up. Even though there are a lot of runners out there and only one can be the fastest, we still have to run as though we will be the winner. We can't compare ourselves to the other runners.  God has given us certain abilities and a purpose and we are to use the talents he has given us to the best of our abilities.

Paul compares us to runners because as Christians we should have a lot of the same qualities and attitudes as runners or athletes. Let's look at some of these attitudes:

**Book: Read Hebrews 12:1-2**

**√** The verse starts out with the fact that we are surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses…what does this mean and who are they? (Answer: the witnesses refer to the verses above in Chapter 11…the great men and women of faith that have gone before us and they are a “picture” of encouragement that if they could do it, we can too! It’s as if they are in a sporting arena clapping and encouraging us to run our best.)

When you run a race there are certain things that we must take care of, in other words you don’t run very well if you don’t prepare. So let’s take a look at some of the preparations that we need to make.

**Hebrews 12:1a**

**Preparation #1**: Don’t let things get in the way…”lay aside every weight or sin..”

 **Illustration**: bring out a weight. Ask the kids if they would like to run carrying this weight with them? **√** How would this weight, slow us down? Now when the Bible uses the word weight…it is using this word as a “word picture” to describe different thing in our lives that would slow us down in our Christian “run”.

**√** What things could be a weight that could slow us down in becoming like Jesus? Sin also gets in our way of running the race that we are meant to run.

 **√** What does this verse tell us that sin will do to our race? (it will ensnare us…trip us up.)

**Illustration:** Use the rope to show how sin is like the rope tied to the weight and will trip us up on our run. **Athletes trained very hard** for the day of the competition. They know that in order to do their very best they have to **go into strict training**.  That means eating the right foods, denying themselves foods that are not good for them.  It also means exercising and putting their bodies through a lot of pain in order to get stronger. They not only train their bodies but they train their minds. They learn how to think like a winner. They learn the techniques and tricks to help them win. **Runners take off anything that might slow them down**.  They don't wear anything that might hinder them from winning the race.

**√** Do you think that they would wear a winter coat, ski pants and snow boots to run their race? Why or why not?

**√** Do you think that they would wear a long formal dress and high heels to run? Why or why not?

 As Christian we should do the same.  Hebrews says, "Let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially those sins that wrap themselves around our feet and trip us up."  Sins will keep us from living or running the way God intended. This picture in the Bible is extreme. If we are to “finish” this race well we MUST strip off everything that weighs us down.

**√** What kind of sins trip us up in following Jesus?

1. Lying
2. Anger
3. Bad thoughts
4. Selfishness
5. Pride

We need to take the time in our daily lives to spend time with God and look at our life that day. Everyday we need to ask God to help us and forgive us of our sins. We also need to forgive ourselves when we don't live up to our expectations.

**√** Do you remember when Jesus taught the disciples how to pray the Lord ’s Prayer one of the verses is to “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” We need to get on with living the way God intended. If we lose one race, we need to train harder for the next one.  And to not let our past failures get in the way of winning.

Just like the runners, if we want to do the best we can, we have go into the strict training. We have to be **prepared for the race**.  How do we do that?  You are doing it right now.  You are learning about the race, what it takes to win. You are getting all the information you will need to run the race. You are preparing your hearts and **learning how God wants you to live** by reading the Bible, worship and prayer.  That means staying away from things that aren't good for you like watching television shows that show us stuff that “trip us up.”

 **Hebrews 12:1b**

**Preparation #2:** Run with endurance

 **√** What does the word endurance mean?

**√** Is endurance hard or easy?

 **√** How do we get the strength to endure?

This verse is saying that once we lay aside the things that will trip us up in our race we will need endurance….(the ability to work hard during the entire race.

**√** Do you remember the movie “Forest Gump”? Do you remember the scenes when he starts running? He is encouraged along the way to “run, Forest, run.” That is his motivation to run across the country. Now we are told to RUN Christian RUN!

Hhere is the place that we can get confused. The Bible never teaches us that we have to work for our salvation. In other words, I cannot be saved by doing a certain list of things. Salvation only comes through believing in Jesus. Also, once we accept Jesus as our Savior we must “work out our salvation” by depending on the Holy Spirit to grow us and direct us. The Bible is very clear that I cannot just sit around and expect to grow as a Christian….I must be diligent we need to take steps towards following Christ every day. Endurance is asking God’s help every day to walk with Him. Endurance is reading the Bible and asking God to teach me and change me so that I may know Jesus more and more. When we deliberately have endurance towards becoming more like Jesus, God’s Spirit will do the work in us.

**Illustration:** In 1981 there was a man named Bill Broadhurst. Bill had a surgery for a brain bleed that left his left side paralyzed. Bill had a goal to run in a race. He signed up for the “Pepsi Challenge 10,000 meter race in Omaha, Nebraska. On a July morning he stood with 1,200 other runners at the starting line. As the gun went off and the race began Bill started running by throwing his stiff left leg forward and then moving with his right leg. Through the entire race and runner after runner passes him and laps him he keeps going. He is in pain and he is hot but his eyes do not leave the finish line. The winners complete the race within 30 minutes. Bill finishes the race in 2 hours and 20 minutes. As Bill crosses the finish line another Bill approaches him. He is Bill Rodgers a famous marathon runner. Bill Rodgers comes up to Bill Broadhurst and drapes his new metal around his neck. Bill Broadhurst finished last and it was not glorious, but he overlooked his handicap and ran with endurance. He did his best! That is the kind of endurance that God wants us to have.

**Hebrews 12:1b**

**Preparation #3:** We all have our own race. Here in Hebrews 12:1, we are told to “run the race that is set before us.” That means that God has a race for me to run in this life and a race for you to run. No two people have the same race. God sets before us our race…and we need to follow the path He has set for us.

**Once we have prepared for our race we fix our attention on our Goals:**

**Hebrews 12:2a**

**Goal #1: Focus on Jesus: Runners have a goal.** Their goal is to win--to make it to the finish line as fast as they possibly can. Christians should also have a goal.

**√** What is our goal as Christians? **Our number one goal is to be like Jesus.** Hebrews 12:2, tells us to “Look unto Jesus.” Jesus is the “author” of our faith. Jesus showed us how to live this live in faith in God. Jesus was perfect and our aim is to be like Him. In everything we do, we should ask ourselves is this what Jesus would do?

 **√** How would Jesus handle this situation? We shouldn't walk around aimlessly from place to place, living like we will live forever. Instead we should be living like we are in a race. We should know what our goal is and see the finish line.  We should anticipate our reward and look forward to receiving it one day.

**√** So what is our #1 goal? (to be like Jesus). “Looking unto Jesus” is the verse that our church chose to put on the wall of our lobby. We chose that verse because we know that we must be always looking to Jesus to follow in everything we do. **Jesus is our Example and the Holy Spirit if our Coach:** All athletes need a coach. They need someone to encourage them and help them train in the right way. The Holy Spirit coaches us to follow Jesus. Jesus is our example and we can learn from His life the way we are to live. When we became a Christian we are given the Holy Spirit to help us and guide us. Your pastor, parents, teachers, and Christian friends can also be your coach.

**Hebrews 12:2b**

**Goal #2: Focus on the Right Equipment:** Athletes have to have the right equipment.In order to do their best in a race, they have to have the right equipment. Any old pair of running shoes would work, but if they want to win, they will go out and buy the best pair of running shoes they can find.

Hebrews 12:2, tells us that Jesus is the “author and finisher of our faith.” When we look to Jesus and realize that our faith begins in Him and ends in Him, then it is like we are putting on the best equipment to run our race when we look to Jesus. Just like the best equipment helps runners win, Christians also need the best equipment they can get.  The more you learn and know the more successful you will be. The more you study God's word and put it in to practice the more faith, knowledge, and perseverance you will have and the more likely you will be to succeed.

**Hebrews 12:2**

**Goal #3: Focus on your attitude:** Hebrews tells us that Jesus “for the joy set before Him endured the cross and the shame…” Jesus’ joy was to see us saved! The cross was painful – Jesus felt the physical pain just like we would. He became a man and the cross was agony. He also suffered spiritually by being separated by God for a while after His death and before His resurrection. Jesus’ race was not easy – but He focused on the joy of what the outcome would be. Our attitude needs to be the same. Our lives may not be easy but God is going to be there every second and the joy of heaven and eternity outweigh any thing this life can throw at us.

**Goal #3: Focus:**  **Runners don't look back--they keep their eyes looking ahead.**   They don't watch their feet or they'll fall on their face. They don't watch the other runners around them. They focus straight forward on the goal that is ahead.   Paul says that we should,  "forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead." The author of Hebrews tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus because he is the perfecter or finisher of our faith. Jesus went to the cross willingly because He knew that it would bring salvation to the world. He did not say, “Oh, this suffering is too hard”…”Oh, I don’t like being made fun of”…Jesus was always looking ahead to the cross and then He sat down at the right hand of God.

Jesus is our example.  He overcame the world by rising from the dead and He now sits at the right hand of God. Only Jesus is perfect. Don't keep your eyes on anyone but Jesus. No single person is perfect, if you are following a person instead of Jesus sooner or later they will disappoint you or let you down. Jesus is the only one who will never disappoint you.

**Running the race, keeping the faith, isn't easy.** It takes a lot of hard work and dedication.  There are many things out there that we can live for.  Some people live to be famous, to be rich, or have lots of friends. They get their rewards here on earth, but they don't last.  The only rewards that will last are the heavenly rewards we receive. Someday we will see Jesus and we will be rewarded for the things we have done.  "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

**Hebrews 12:3:**

We are asked to “consider” Jesus. If Jesus suffered and endured the cross – how can we complain when hard things come into our lives? The phrase “grow wear and loose heart” was sports lingo in Jesus’ day for collapsing during a race. So in order for us not to collapse during the race of our life that God gives us – we need to think about Jesus. We need to think about how He lived and how He endured.

**√** Are you running in the right race?

**√** Are you living for Jesus, striving to be like him or are you running in a different race?  Are you more concerned about your rewards here on earth what other people will think.

**√** Are you concerned about pleasing God?



**I run the race**

**Focused on Jesus**