



Growth Group Curriculum  
Week 8 – April 11, 2021 – Hebrews 12:1-3, 12-15, 28

**Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at [connect@ljpres.org](mailto:connect@ljpres.org). Thank you for loving and caring for each other.**

The preacher begins with an encouraging word to consider the “great cloud of witnesses” that has gone before us. The preacher knows that this race of faith that we run is not an easy one. Therefore, the preacher says, consider those who have not only run the race, but also those, who in a sense, are in the stands cheering you on as you run. They know what you have gone through and, therefore, you need to remember that you are not alone.

This life of faith is not always easy and the preacher says the race that we run is not a short sprint. Instead, it is more like a marathon. The word used here for race is “agon” which is where we get our English word “agony” from. The preacher knows it is not always going to be easy and that there will be obstacles that get in our way. Thus, we must keep our eyes on Jesus who is the pioneer (the one who shows us the way) and the perfecter (the one who keeps us on the path and who has finished the race) of our faith. To lose sight of Jesus is dangerous.

The preacher reminds us of what Jesus endured for our sake. We cannot lose sight of the burden and suffering that Jesus endured. He completed the task that was given to him, but it was costly. He endured the cross and took on our sin and separation from God, thus enabling us to commune and be with God. The suffering of Jesus serves as an inspiration to us when we find ourselves in dark and difficult places. We need to remember that Jesus made his way through all of that and now waits for us.

In verse 12, the preacher quotes from Isaiah 35:3. Isaiah 35 begins with words of hope for people who have grown weary and who feel broken. The preacher of Hebrews feels that many people of the church are feeling the same way. And so, he returns to Isaiah 35 to say there is hope that is coming. In the midst of the uncertainty and darkness God is at work. One of the ways we strengthen our bodies is by being in motion and the preacher says keep moving and keep trusting.



As believers we are called to lives that are marked by holiness. We are to avoid the “bitter roots” that grow up and cause trouble. This image comes from Deuteronomy 29:18 and serves as a warning to not turn away from God in difficult times. Rather, believers are to seek out ways in which they can live at peace with one another.

The final point in the lesson is to be thankful in knowing that the kingdom of God cannot be shaken. As the apostle Paul reminds his readers in Romans 8, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Our faith is built on solid ground and our response to that is to reverently worship God in awe and wonder.

## Exploring the Text

### Hebrews 12:1-3, 12-15, 28

**12** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. <sup>12</sup> Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. <sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

## Questions

*If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.*

- 1) Share about a time in your life when you had to persevere in order to finish something (a project, race, paper, etc...) Or maybe a time when you didn't persevere. What did you learn about yourself?
- 2) In Hebrews chapter 11, we see the preacher looking back at faithful and inspirational people from the Hebrew scriptures. In chapter 12, the preacher refers to them as the “great cloud of witnesses.” Who would you include in your own “personal” great cloud of witnesses? Who has gone before you and shown you the ways of Jesus?
- 3) What does it mean for Jesus to be the pioneer and perfecter of our faith? How do the terms “pioneer” and “perfecter” apply to Jesus? What implications does this have for us?
- 4) The sermon of Hebrews has alluded to the idea of perseverance numerous times. The preacher often encourages us to look to Jesus, or to consider the suffering and opposition (verse 3) that Jesus endured. How does “looking to the life of Jesus” help us from growing weary and losing heart?
- 5) Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843), was an influential Scottish pastor who wrote, “My people's greatest need is my personal holiness.” Why is our holiness so important for the people around us? What does a holy life look like?
- 6) What are some of the bitter roots that you see in our society and churches that cause trouble? What can we do about that?



- 7) What does it mean to worship God acceptably with “reverence and awe?” Is the preacher talking about Sunday morning or something more?
- 8) Share about what is weighing you down or entangling you when it comes to living out your faith right now, and pray for each other.

