



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

1, 2 Peter, Jude Sermon Series

Supports Session 2: Our Mandate

Sermon Title: "Pursuing Holiness" (Hebrews 12:1-2)

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### Connection to Session 2

As believers, we are called to pursue holiness. If we desire to be obedient, our lives will reflect this calling. The message will reflect upon examples of others who have pursued holiness and how we can live out this calling today.

### Introduction/Opening

The Ironman Race is one of, if not the, most grueling races. For those who compete and finish, they must swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, and then run 26.2 miles. The estimated time to complete the race is typically 13-14 hours. As followers of Jesus, we are called to run a race of pursuing holiness. This race is grueling in that we have to battle against our own desires and that this race lasts a lifetime. But we need not be discouraged because we have examples of others in Scripture who have gone before us, our ultimate example being Christ Himself. Today's message will show us how to run the race before us.

### Outline

#### 1. We have examples to follow (v. 1)

- a. When we were growing up, many of us enjoyed playing follower the leader. If we were lucky, the teacher would pick us to be the line leader. If the leader went left, we followed. If the leader sped up, we would keep pace because we did not want to be last.
- b. As we pursue holiness, we can be encouraged that we have examples or leaders that have gone before us. We know this to be true because the author of Hebrews referenced a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Chapter twelve begins this passage with "therefore" (v. 1). It is important to understand that "therefore" always points back to what was previously communicated. In this case, it is pointing back to Hebrews 11, which has been called the "Hall of Faith." The author references Abel who "offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did" (11:4), and he spoke of Abraham who was willing to offer up Isaac (11:17). He referenced Moses who "chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin" (11:25).
- c. Each person referenced in Hebrews 11, while far from perfect, serves as an example of how to pursue holiness. If we were to study the lives of those who are a cloud of witnesses, we would find that they did not give up or relent in their ongoing pursuit of holiness.

#### 2. We must lay aside every hinderance (v. 1)

- a. If we were to stop and reflect upon our human nature, we would be able to determine that we tend to ask "How?" questions. For example, how do we pass an

algebra test? Or, how do I get from Point A to Point B in the shortest amount of time? We are wired to ask how. If we are to make holiness a lifelong pursuit, we may want to ask how this is accomplished. This passage provides an answer for this question.

- b. We can begin to better understand our “how” when we look at several specific words in the original language.
  - i. First, we are to “*lay aside every hindrance.*” The phrase “lay aside” is written as a command and it is to be lived out in an ongoing manner. It is not merely a one-time act, but rather a daily endeavor.
  - ii. Next, we see that we are to “lay aside *every* hindrance.” The word “every” means just that, *every*. If we are being honest, we may have a favorite sin that we do not think is too harmful. But the passage clearly articulates that we are to, moment by moment, lay aside every hindrance.
  - iii. Finally, we are to “lay aside every *hindrance and sin.*” The word “hindrance” means anything that can stop our forward progress. “Sin” means to miss the mark. If we truly desire to pursue holiness, we must set aside the things that slow or stop our pursuit of God.

### 3. We must run with endurance (v. 1)

- a. Our next act of obedience is to “run with endurance.” We will not be surprised to learn that this is a verb, which implies action. It is also written in the present tense, which means obedience is had in the now. If we delay fulfilling this action, then we are not being obedient to the command. Finally, we may be encouraged that the word can also mean to rush towards something. Some of us may not be the best runners, but we can find ourselves rushing towards something we desire. If we see a loved one moving towards something dangerous, we will rush over to help them. In the same way, we need to rush towards holiness.
- b. Furthermore, we are to “run with *endurance.*” The word “endurance” means to stand up under a heavy load. In the opening of the sermon today, we talked about those who compete in the Ironman Race. To finish, they must endure swimming, biking, and running. For those of us who know Jesus as Lord and Savior, we must endure the trials and tribulations of this world. Those who complete the Ironman receive a medal and the honor of knowing they finished. Those who follow Jesus and endure through this life will receive a reward of glory.

### 4. We must focus on Christ (v. 2)

- a. The final action outlined in this message is a call to keep our eyes on Jesus. This action is once again to be lived out in the now and is a lifestyle action as opposed to a one-time event. In studying the original language, we learn that “keeping” one’s eyes (v. 2) means to have intense focus upon something. When this type of focus is had, distraction from secondary items or issues are less likely. We need to note that the author points out that our intense focus needs to be on Jesus. If we are being honest, it can be easy to focus on other things and sometimes even other people. Yet, the passage could not be clearer. Our focus is to be Jesus.

## Conclusion

Many of us would probably say that running the Ironman Race is not easy. Likewise, pursuing holiness is not easy. Those who finish the Ironman would probably say that it is worth it. Those

who finish the race of pursuing holiness can be assured that it is worth it because we will get to spend eternity with the One who endured the cross for us. If you know Jesus today, don't give up the race. If you don't know Him, don't leave here today without getting in the race and pursuing Him.

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