

"Consider Jesus"

For the next few months we'll use this space to get an overview of the New Testament book of Hebrews. We'll use as our theme the idea of "Consider Jesus" (3:1), of "fixing our eyes on Jesus" (12:2).

We'll never "run the race set before us" (12:1) - at least not very well - without a clear focus. With Him in mind, two (often contradictory) ideas are brought into view:

- 1) "endurance" - three times mentioned in 12:1-3! We'll never learn to endure until we feel like quitting.
- 2) "joy" - the holy gladness of God that is wholly rooted in the unseen and eternal purposes of God! (12:2)

We consider Jesus first and foremost for neither of these is to be genuinely had apart from Christ.

Throughout this "race" set before us, Jesus Christ Himself is to be our point of reference. This is not the same as trying to be like Jesus - to attempt that is mostly to focus on ourselves. Since in this race we are to present Jesus and His character, His active love to the world, and, since only Jesus can be Jesus, we are moment by moment trusting Him to be Himself in and through us. He knows how to run this race with endurance and with joy. He is not just the model for godly living, He is the MEANS. As the Message translates it in 12:1, "He is the beginner and the finisher of the race we're in."

To run this race well is to "put off", "lay aside" whatever does not originate in Christ. It may be the "entanglement" of a self-centered, self-preserving, self-referencing mindset. Attempting to run the race with an intent to glorify God, all the while with eyes on ourselves, would be contrary to the Life within us and put us in danger of constantly tripping up ourselves. "Encumbrances", while nor necessarily sinful in and of themselves, are often erroneous beliefs that contribute to much of our joylessness and loss of heart. Things like, "life is supposed to be fair", "if God were in this it shouldn't be so difficult, unpleasant, etc.", or simply the demand for immediate results in trusting God! Just as the athlete "lays aside" junk food, entangling garments, or ankle weights... we "lay aside" all that hinders the full expression of Christ.

When we pick up or put on a radical fascination with Jesus Christ - who He is, what He's done, where He is - the enduring joy of Christ Himself becomes our strength. We see through and press on through the temporary "hostility", "shame", and "weariness" (12:2-3) that will challenge us along the way. We learn to get our "well done" from our forever Father and be an eternal blessing to others along the way.

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Greetings

I am convinced more strongly than ever how critical it is for us to have God Himself as our Teacher - "for You Yourself have taught me." (Ps 119:102) If man does not live by "bread" alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then our very life depends on that truth. Our liveliness comes from Divine intake!

We've each been given a "response-ability" to God at our new birth - we do have "ears to hear" (Jo 10:4-7; 18:37). We are most likely to hear when we make an intentional choice to listen - "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" - to present ourselves to God with loving attentiveness in the "all things" of our live. We are quick to do so as we cling to our "first love" - God's love for us (I Jo 4:19). We readily listen to those we believe have our best interest in mind. As we listen with a single heart, a single mind - with a non-selective readiness to trust and obey what we have not yet heard - we fine tune our receptivity to His intent (Jo 2:5). His objective truth requires a subjective response - "I believe You, I obey You" - in order to be confirmed, tweaked, or even corrected. (Jo 7:17)

How do we know it is God? We don't for sure - that's why we call it "faith". And apart from faith, "it is impossible to please God". (Heb 11:6) Let's activate our ears to hear this month, make our choice to believe Him (even when we're not certain!), trust Him with the consequences, and see what comes to life in us!

FEBRUARY

4,11,18,25 CCF
 13 Alachua Bible Study
 16-18 Florida Retreat (***see below, 386-418-0913**)

MARCH 4-7

Anderson, SC (864-226-1789)

APRIL 20-21

Grace Bible, Sebring, FL (staff retreat)

MAY 4-6

Waymont, PA (607-239-5006)

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February 16 - 18, 2018
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(for guaranteed room &/or meals)

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