

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV



## Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.  
Jacksonville, FL 32220

### Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Study / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

[www.mariettacoc.com](http://www.mariettacoc.com)

### Endurance

In the past, I have likened the Christian life to a marathon as opposed to a sprint. When you are sprinting, the goal is simply to be as fast as possible to complete the course first. This means a sprinter needs to spend all their energy quickly to ensure they can cross the finish line first. A marathon is different in that it's a prolonged course that requires equal parts speed as well as endurance. An athlete competing in a marathon cannot exert all their energy in a single burst of speed, as this will rapidly exhaust them, leaving them unable to complete the whole marathon. Rather, the athlete must budget their energy while still maintaining speed so as not to fall behind; you cannot simply walk an entire marathon either, or you will still lose.

This is an apt comparison to the Christian life. It is most definitely not a sprint, because being a Christian is a lifelong commitment. It's not something you only do for a short while and then you're done. From the moment you rise out of the baptismal waters to your final breath or Jesus' return, you are on the track of the Christian life, and much like an athlete in a marathon, if you exert all your energy in one go you'll exhaust yourself. And to make matters worse, Satan will be actively interfering with your efforts to successfully complete the course. In a sports marathon, the track is generally closed off, leaving the athletes to focus on the effort of completing the course, but in the Christian marathon, Satan has a vested interest in hindering our progress. And he won't give up.

So how does one build the endurance required to run this course? Hebrews 12:1-2 directly addresses this question. Firstly we must lay aside every weight, that is, everything which might serve to distract us or slow us down. Both in training and when performing, athletes are focused on the task at hand to improve their skill and then to perform to the best of their ability. I haven't seen a football player, a Nascar racer or a marathon runner who was concerned about dinner while in the middle of a competition. The same must be true of a Christian as well: you cannot be as effective at running your Christian marathon if you are dividing your attention between being a Christian or excelling at your secular job. Of course this doesn't mean that the secular job is meaningless, or that you should neglect it. What it means is that being a Christian needs to take top priority above all else, and if you had to make a choice between being a Christian or having a certain job, or a certain hobby, or a certain interest, you must choose Christianity and let the weight go.

Next Hebrews says to set aside the sin which ensnares us. This one is even more important than the previous part, because sin by its very definition is incompatible with a godly lifestyle. If your job can become a "weight" on the Christian journey, then sin is an impassible roadblock. There is no way to proceed on the Christian marathon without dismantling and removing the sin. Sin is compared to many things in the Bible, and in this verse it is compared to a snare, which is an object that entangles or entraps one. This is why there is no choice but to remove the sin entirely: it's not a case of "you run less efficiently when snared", it's "you don't run at all when snared".

So now we know what not to do, but how about what to do? Verse 2 says that you then look forward unto Jesus. Reaching eternal life with God is the ultimate goal, and thusly that is where our eyes should be. Jesus had His own marathon to run when He was on Earth, and He completed it by keeping His eyes on the prize and enduring His own course, which as this verse mentions, included the cross and shame. And He was rightly rewarded for completing His course. The same can be true for all of us as well. But while avoiding sin is important, it is even more important to actively reach toward God. Recall Matthew 14:22-33. ...

This is when Jesus walked to the disciples on the water, and Peter wanted to walk on the water toward Jesus. Peter, bastion of faith that he was, could only walk on the water while he was focused on Jesus, but when he looked away at the storm, at the danger, he began to sink and Jesus saved him. Of course, Peter was correct in that he knew Who to call on for saving, but if he had focused solely on Jesus the entire time, he wouldn't have needed saving.

I've heard a preacher before say "Instead of focusing on not committing sin, focus on Jesus instead", which I think is a fine way to put it. Yes, sin is a danger to be avoided, and yes some attention should go toward actively avoiding it. But if your main focus is on Jesus, you'll naturally move closer to God and further away from sin. Another way to consider it is this: if you focus on not committing sin, you're still focusing on sin. Perhaps a change of perspective is in order.

So that is how one runs with endurance: you prepare yourself by setting aside weights and dismantling sin, and then you keep your eyes on Jesus waiting for you at the end of path. He doesn't ask anything of us that He wasn't willing to do Himself, and He did it.

Written by: Daniel Young