



## NEW YEAR (Week 1/1) How to Run

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect** *In the coming year, how do you long to grow as a disciple of Jesus? What will help you to do that?*

#### Warm-Up

1. What do you think about running? Is it something you enjoy or not?

#### Read Hebrews 12:1-3

2. How does the writer to the Hebrews describe the Christian life?
3. Who marks out the race for us? Why does that matter?
4. What are we to throw off? What are the types of things that hinder you? (If you are not sure, ask a trusted Christian friend what they might notice.)
5. How does sin entangle?
6. How do you identify and throw off sin? What particular sins might need your attention?
7. Are we saved by throwing off sin? What is our motivation to throw off sin?
8. What type of things demand perseverance? Why does the Christian life demand perseverance?
9. What are the two possible “finish lines” for each Christian?

#### Read Hebrews 10:32-37

10. What type of things had the first recipients of the letter already endured?
11. Why were they still needing to persevere?
12. Why should we *expect* that we will still need to persevere this coming year?
13. What is the benefit of being surrounded by a cloud of witnesses?
14. Who are people who encourage you in their perseverance in faith?

#### Read Hebrews 12:1-3

15. What do you think most of your life is focused on? Who are we encouraged to run fixing our eyes on?
16. What does it mean that Jesus is *the pioneer* and *the perfecter* of faith?
17. Why does it help to consider or meditate that Jesus endured opposition? How does his endurance affect us today?
18. Why should we consider when Jesus will return?
19. How do we know that Jesus was victorious in his race? Why does fixing our eyes on the victorious Jesus help run today?
20. What do you find helpful to *continuing* to fix your eyes on Jesus?

**Apply** *How will you make it a priority this year to fix your eyes on Jesus?*

**Pray** *Heavenly Father, thank you for the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Help us to run the race of faith fixing our eyes on Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## **NEW YEAR** **(Week 1/1) How to Run** Small Group Discussion Questions

### **On Your Front Line this Week**

*Take some time this week to give thanks to God for 2025. Write down a few things you are thankful for, as reminders to yourself when it is harder to recall how God has been at work in your life.*

### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](https://stbartskids.org)

### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* “Trust that fixes eyes on Jesus” by Chris Wright:  
[https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show\\_media=54271&show\\_file=61346](https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=54271&show_file=61346)
- *Listen (sermon):* “To Christ Our Founder” by John Moule:  
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/to-christ-our-founder/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “The Runner” by Timothy Keller:  
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-runner/>
- *Listen (sermon series):* “Running the Race” by Adam Lowe:  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/running-the-race>

### **Series Resources**

- *Read:* “Deep Roots of Resilient Disciples” by Rick Hill. 📖
- *Watch:* “Hebrews” by Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/hebrews/>

## NEW YEAR

*Week 1/1 "How to Run"*  
*by Amy Norman (28/12/2025)*

新年:如何奔跑 | RUÖN JOT: Buk Cäth | 새해를 살아가는 법 |  
புதிய வருடம்:எப்படி ஓடுவது?

*Bible Passage: Hebrews 12:1-3*

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*Heavenly Father, thank you for the pioneer and perfecter of faith.  
Help us to run the race of faith fixing our eyes on Jesus.  
In his name we pray, Amen.*

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The last time I did a race - *things didn't quite go to plan*. I was up to the final leg of a triathlon - the run. I wasn't really happy with how fast I was going, so as I got closer to the end, I thought I'd just sprint the final bit. Turns out - that final bit was far longer than I thought, but when I realised - I kept sprinting anyway. I crossed the line totally exhausted, almost collapsed, ended up in the medical tent, needing to be rescued!

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- I totally overestimated my ability, of how much I could do in my own strength.
- Perhaps you've felt something similar at times?  
Maybe even this year, you've over relied on yourself.  
Or maybe, you've felt like you've only *just* made it over the finish line, with nothing left.
- The author of the letter to the Hebrews says that following Jesus is like running a race. But it has nothing to do with earning medals and achievements, and everything to do about the race *God* has marked out for us, and who has raced before us.
- When you sign up for a race (normally!) you know the destination. That is important, but what is *also* important (where all your time and effort in training actually goes to) is *how* you are going to run the race.
- And that is the focus here in Hebrews chapter 12.  
The writer to these Christian communities seeks to encourage them to persevere in faith. The ultimate destination is known and certain, and so the focus is on *how* to run.

- Maybe you don't really like the analogy of running.  
Why can't following Jesus be more like floating down a river?!  
I think the point is that running does *sound like a lot of effort*,  
but it is not meant to be impossible.
- Often I think we would *really rather* our lives to require little effort,  
to have no challenges or surprises,  
with every decision to be mapped out in detail,  
and every challenge completely within our own ability to handle.
- But the Christian life, running the race, is not like that.  
*It is* challenging, *it is* full of surprises, *it requires* more than what we can do on our own.
- The encouragement in Hebrews is super practical,  
for the focus is not on curating the perfect, hassle-free life,  
but it is realistic about challenges and gives us the tools of *how to run now*.
- How should we run the race as Christians this coming year? We are told to:  
**throw off sin,**  
**run with perseverance,**  
**run with eyes fixed on Jesus.**

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## THROW OFF SIN | VERSE 1

摆脱罪恶 | Rěc ēē cuāt wēi | 죄를 벗어 던지고 | பாவத்தை எறிந்து விட்டு.

First, how should we run: **throw off sin**. *Hebrews chapter 12, from verse 1 ...*

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us ...

*Hebrews 12:1*

- The first step in how to run, is an action *throw off* everything that hinders,  
and *throw off* the sin that so easily entangles.
- Two types of things we are encouraged to get rid of:  
*everything* that hinders, and *the sin that so easily entangles*.
- The first might not necessarily be sin, but things that can work against us from continuing in faith. On one hand, this is pretty obvious advice. If you are about to race, it would be ridiculous to wear a long ball gown or wear a weighted vest.
- And yet we regularly hold onto things *that do hinder* us in following Jesus.  
Some of them might easily come to mind:  
it might be a particular habit, an ambition that is directing your life,  
a friendship that drags you away from Jesus, or something or some ideal you are overly attached to.

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- The second category of things we are to throw off - *is sin*.  
It is guaranteed to entangle us, to wrap around our legs, and trip us up.  
We shouldn't be mistaken: sin entangles us, and it does so *easily*.  
And it is really no surprise, for the nature of sin is that it is in opposition and rebellion against God. So if we nurture sin or let it continue unchecked, it will entangle us.//
- We are to *throw off everything* that makes it difficult to follow Jesus.
- Maybe you've had the experience of watching someone you know make a decision that *only* makes their life *more difficult* and *more complicated*.  
Don't do that with Jesus.  
Don't choose things or hold onto things that make persevering in faith *even harder*.
- Throwing off things is a deliberate action.  
It is not turning a blind eye to something that is a distraction,  
or just hoping sin will go away on its own.  
It is *knowing* what is entangling you,  
and *taking action* to throw it off. //
- If we are to run by *throwing off sin*, how can we start?  
We can start by looking at our lives honestly for what is hindering us.  
Throwing off begins with an *awareness* of what is preventing you from fully following Jesus.
- It is important we are able to *identify* sin or everything else that hinders. If we *expect* to find things that need to be thrown off, we will have a better chance at seeing them. >

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If you are really not sure, you can ask God to reveal the things that you need to change.  
The pattern of confession that we do corporately, is also a helpful rhythm,  
as we consider *how* we have sinned against God and each other.  
Other people in your life might also be able to see more clearly what sin, ideas, or relationships are preventing you from running the race.

- Throwing off also means *acting to change*.  
It might be *changing* certain habits, or *reviewing* your ambitions against God's desires.  
Throwing off sin might not happen overnight, and may be a life long process.  
No matter how effective we are, none of us will be sinless.
- Remember: Jesus has paid the price of our sin.  
We are not saved by our efforts in trying to clean up our lives.  
But throwing off sin is cooperating with the Spirit who is at work transforming us in the very likeness of Jesus.
- Living and acting perfectly is not a precondition to start following Jesus.  
But the more we love Jesus, and the more we will want our lives to align with his plans.  
So we should actively look at throwing off things in our lives that get in the way.
- And the irony is, the more we throw off,  
the more we can see *just how much Jesus has already forgiven us*.

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## WITH PERSEVERANCE | VERSE 1

持之以恆 | Kenë Guṣṣm | 인내로 달려가며 | விடாமுயற்சியுடன்

*Second* - we are to run the race of faith **with perseverance**. *verse 1 again ...*

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And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. *Verses 1b-2a*

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- We are to run *with perseverance*.  
Perseverance is *how* we are to tackle the race marked out for us.
- You don't need perseverance if something is easy or short, or you can do it on auto-pilot.
- The instruction to *run with perseverance* shows us what type of race the Christian life is like.  
You need perseverance if there are going to be unforeseen challenges,  
if the race is long, or it has lots of different stages.  
We don't know how long it is until Jesus returns,  
or how many days and years we have been given by the Lord.
- Perseverance often demands wisdom, patience, and continuous, deliberate effort.  
We can become really unstuck in following Jesus if *we expect* to put on auto-pilot,  
when a life of faith demands perseverance. //
- The call to run with perseverance also shows us the *context* of following Jesus.  
Put simply, perseverance implies there *will be* opposition and challenges.

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- The first people to receive this letter had experienced that.  
We can see their context earlier in chapter 10. If you have a Bible, look back with me in chapter 10, *from verse 32*:

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Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For,

“In just a little while,  
he who is coming will come  
and will not delay.” *Hebrews 10:32-37*

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- The call here *to keep* persevering.  
In light of how these Christians had persevered and what lay ahead,  
the writer *encourages* them to keep running with perseverance,  
for they do not know *when* Jesus will return,  
but that they can have faith he will be returning.
- The same encouragement is for us. Even if we have faced significant trials this year,  
we are to *continue* persevering.  
We hold onto the same assurance, that Jesus will be returning soon. //

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- Even if 2025 was relatively easy, we should *expect* that following Jesus at some point will demand perseverance.
- Depending on how you are going right now, the call *to persevere* may seem a bit crushing. Like me after that race, you might be feeling like you have nothing left to give. But the good news is that we don't follow Jesus solely in our own strength.
- We are surrounded by examples of people living faithfully, the great cloud of witnesses. The call to persevere comes as the conclusion, following examples of many other imperfect people listed in chapter 11, who are commended for their faith in God.
- Being part of the body of Christ, means that now you too are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, who can show us what it looks like to run the race *with perseverance*.
- I am *personally* so spurred on and encouraged by the faithful saints amongst us. In others I can see what it looks like to have *hope in Christ*, even when in constant pain; how to *lean into community*, even when family life is immensely challenging; how to *find joy in following Jesus*, even when life is very different to expectations.
- There are so many stories here at St Bart's of perseverance in faith. For that alone, it is worth making the effort to get to know people beyond a brief hello. //
- We can also run *with perseverance*, for our ultimate motivation is not from ourselves, but is outside of us.  
*There is one* who has already gone ahead of us,  
who gives us what we need, and is the *ultimate reason* to persevere. >

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## WITH EYES FIXED ON JESUS | VERSES 2-3

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Finally, we are to run ***with eyes fixed on Jesus***. From verse 1 again ...

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. *verses 1b-3*.

- We are told to run - *fixing our eyes on Jesus*.
- When you are running, it really matters what you're looking at. One of the reasons I got into so much trouble in the triathlon is that I couldn't set my eyes on the finish line because it was out of sight.
- It can feel like that for us as Christians, too. Our finish line can be out of sight and we don't know how much longer we have, for it is all in the Lord's timing. Either God is taking us home or Jesus is returning to earth - whatever happens first.
- We don't know when that'll be. But the Lord has given us something, actually *someone*, to fix our eyes on.
- We are to run fixing our eyes on *the person* who has raced before us and guaranteed our

victory. We are to run fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

- Fixing our eyes on Jesus has at least three parts:  
Looking *back* at what Jesus has achieved for us.  
Looking *forward* to that day when he will return.  
Looking *right* now to him, who is enthroned and with us in the very power of the Spirit.
- We are to run *fixing our eyes on what Jesus has done*, as the pioneer and perfecter of faith.
- As the pioneer - Jesus went first.  
He knows what it is like to run the race marked out by God.  
When we cry out to him,  
he understands the challenges and pressures we face in living for God.
- As the perfecter of faith - Jesus doesn't just run the race perfectly,  
but he has gone ahead of us, finishing the race *for us*.  
We don't need to doubt we will ever get to the end of the race,  
but we can set our gaze on Jesus who has finished,  
who endured the cross *for us* and will share his victory *with us*.
- This is like the opposite of the Olympics, where everyone who runs after the winner,  
also gets the prize.

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- Part of fixing our eyes on what Jesus has done, is considering his suffering. *Verse 3:*

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"Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, that you will not grow weary and lose heart." *verse 3*

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- If Jesus faced opposition, we shouldn't be surprised when we will too.
- But even more significant, is that Jesus *has endured* - he has finished facing opposition.  
The results of his *past endurance* remain for us.  
Because Jesus *has already faced judgement for our sin*,  
there is no remaining opposition left that should cause us to lose heart.

- We are to run *fixing our eyes on the day Jesus will return*.  
Earlier in chapter 10, that is the reason these Christians are given to *continue to persevere*.  
*Verse 37:*

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"In just a little while,  
he who is coming will come  
and will not delay." *Hebrews 10:37*

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- We can have confidence that Jesus will return.  
We don't when - that's why we persevere - but our future with Christ is secure. >

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- Finally, we are to run *fixing our eyes on Jesus, who is enthroned right now*, and with us in the power of the Spirit. Verse 2:

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“For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” *verse 2b*

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- This image of Jesus sitting down at the right of the throne of God, tells us Jesus *has* been victorious!  
*How we* run the race, can not change his victory.  
 Jesus’ victory over our sin is complete - it has been done.  
 And so our future with God is not dependent on how we run the race.
- Because Jesus is *already enthroned*, he gives us security and confidence in running the race now.  
 Even if we mess up, go slower than we’d like, or get distracted along the way - that won’t change how Jesus views us, what he has already done for us, or how we will share his victory with us. >

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## CONCLUSION

- So his coming year make it a priority to do *whatever* is helpful in continuing to fix your eyes, heart, mind, and life on Jesus.
- That will include throwing off sin and persevering in the power of the Spirit.
- But it will also look like *actively* doing things that keep in front of you what Jesus has done, what he will do, and how he is currently with you
- This year: make it a priority to pray each day,  
 make it a priority to read his Word,  
 make it a priority to gather with his people and to share his good news.  
 This will strengthen and nourish you in running the race,  
 for it will point you to who has gone before you and who is sustaining you now.
- As we run the race of faith God has set before us,  
 what will bring you joy in this year to come,  
 is fixing your eyes on the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

14

*Gracious Father, thank you that it is never too late to begin running the race,  
and setting our eyes on our Saviour Jesus.*

*Lord, we are sorry for this year that has been and the ways we've failed to throw off sin,  
persevere, and fix our eyes on you. By your Spirit, please help us to see what would be most helpful in  
fixing our eyes on you, each and every day, to faithfully run the race you've set for us.*

*In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*