

WEEK THREE
YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL
JESUS CONNECTION: KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS
LEADER GUIDE

WATCH RUNNING FALLS VIDEO: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCfIOkczpY0

DISCUSS:

- Why do we find it fun to watch other people fall?
- How does seeing these athletes fall make you feel?
- How would you feel if you fell during a race?

SAY: One of the metaphors used in the Bible for Christian life is a race. These races were not to be quick sprints, but long endurance runs, like marathons. A person does not get up one day and decides to run a marathon, they train and prepare.

ASK:

- What advice would you give a person who was going to run a marathon?
- The Author of Hebrews gives advice to people who are running the life of faith, what advice do you think they give?

READ HEBREWS 12: 1-3 (NLT)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. 3 Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

VERSE 1a: *let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up*

SAY: In this verse we are told to strip off (take off, get rid of, throw away) things that slow us down and things that trip us up.

DISCUS:

- What might be things that slow a runner down? What might trip up a runner? What is the difference?
- For the Christian, what might be things that slow us down and things that trip us up?
- The author suggests that sin trips us up, so then what are the things that weigh us down? What are things that keep us from slowing down and following Jesus?

VERSE 1b-2a: *run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus*

SAY: In these verses we are given advice on how to run the Christians race; *endurance* and *focus*. We are told to keep going and keep at it, perseverance, "run with endurance the race God has set before." We will face obstacles, things that want to slow us down and things that want to trip us up. But we keep running. How can we keep running, while "keeping our eyes on Jesus?" He is our leader and our example.

KEEP OUR EYES ON JESUS:

SAY: An excellent example of the importance of keeping our eyes on Jesus is the story of Jesus and Peter walking in the water.

READ MATTHEW 14: 25-33: Peter Walks on Water.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

DISCUSS:

- Why were the disciples afraid when they saw Jesus? Would you be?
- What do you think of Peter inviting himself on the water? Why don't the other disciples join him? What would you have done?
- How was Peter able to walk on the water?
- Why did he take his eyes off Jesus? What happened when he did?

SAY: During chaos, Jesus comes walking. Peter follows suit as he keeps his eyes on Jesus he can walk on water. But becomes easily distracted and begins to drown. The waves of the world will try and distract and drown us. It is easy to feel alone and afraid. It is then that we often take our eyes off Jesus and start to sink.

DISCUSS:

- What are some things that distract us from keeping our eyes on Jesus?
- How does keeping our eyes on Jesus during storms of life keep us afloat?
- How does taking our eyes off Jesus cause us to sink? (we lose focus, let sin pull us down, etc.)
- What should we do when we start to sink? (look back to Jesus and call out for help)
- What happens when we call out to Jesus? (He catches us)

SAY: Are you floating or sinking? Are you keeping your eyes on Jesus, or are you letting things in your life weigh you down or trip you up? If you are floating, **keep** your eyes on Jesus. If you feel like you are drowning, reach out. Jesus is there ready to grab your hand.

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

Perseverance does not mean perfection. It means keep going. Perseverance is not resignation, putting up with things the way they are. Endurance is not a desperate hanging on but traveling from strength to strength. Perseverance is not the result of our determination; it is the result of God's faithfulness.²³

DISCUSS:

- How can we be encouraged to know that perseverance does not mean doing it perfect, but keep going?
- How does God's faithfulness give us strength to keep going?

CALM. QUIET. HOPE. TRUST.

Say: This week, as we continue our journey with Psalm 131, we are talking about having a calm heart and a quiet soul, instead of pride, ambition, and arrogance.

Psalm 131 1-2a (NLT)

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don't concern myself with matters too great or too awesome for me to grasp. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself...

²³ Peterson, Eugene. A Long Obedience in the Same Direction, pg. 125-127

DISCUSS:

- How does having a proud heart and haughty eyes cause us to drown? How is that like things that weigh us down and tripping us up?
- How does keeping our eyes on Jesus lead to a calm heart and quiet soul?

PRAYER: Psalm 131 (NLT)

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don't concern myself with matters too great or too awesome for me to grasp. Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me. Put your hope in the Lord— now and always. Amen.