

## Look to Jesus

Today we will Look to Jesus... I often do expositional teaching, but it is helpful to do a topical or systematic messages, which is what we will do with Hebrews 12:1-2. If you can stand out of respect for God's word, please do so as I read these verses.

**Read** Hebrews 12:1-2 - 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.

### A. The Text in Context

Hebrews is complex. The main theme is Jesus is better - better than angels, better than Moses, better than the Levitical sacrificial system, and more. The Jewish followers of Christ were still following the Law and tempted to stay under it, because of loyalty and persecution. The writer tells them to release the Law and embrace grace by faith. He emphasizes faith and the faithful, in chapter 11 and the "great cloud of witnesses."

That brings us to Hebrews 12:1-2. Because of the faithfulness of those who came before them, the writer, probably Paul or Luke, challenges them to set aside what is hindering them, and the sin clinging to them - unbelief. He uses the illustration of a runner, to run that race before them. But how?

He tells them - Look to Jesus! He is the founder and perfecter, or starter and finisher of our faith. He is the focus of our race. He is the prize. He is our Lord. He is God the Son. He died for our sins. He arose again on the 3rd day. He ascended to heaven, and He is coming back. The writer also reminds them of the joy set before Christ, though He endured the most painful death created by humans - crucifixion. He was nailed naked on a cross, publicly shamed for our sins. But He knew it happen. He was raised again and now sits at the right hand of the Father. They needed to run with endurance and the only way they could do that was to look to Jesus.

I want to focus on 3 words, particularly meaningful for the New Year. We must also look to Jesus. Look to Him for your needs, as individuals, as families, and as a Church. I'm still learning to incorporate these truths in my life, so this is a reminder for me as well. Questions: What do you need in this new year? What are changes you need?

## **B. The Text for Our Needs**

### **1. Need Endurance - Look to Jesus**

Perhaps you are tired... emotionally, mentally, spiritually or physically? Most, if not all of us, are in one or more of these categories. Example: One point last year I had 4 jobs – a full time job, pastoring, teaching online and preparing a Bachelor's level class for a Christian University. Daniel was 3 and I tried to take care of him. I was tired! I needed endurance. Maybe you do too. But to receive His strength, we need to admit our weakness. When we say, "I can't do it!" then His strength comes in.

**Read** 2 Corinthians 12:10 - Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, in behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong. - Look to Jesus...

### **2. Need Victory - Look to Jesus**

Are you trapped in fear, sin, emotions that are destroying your life, an addiction, or something where you need victory?

**Read** 1 John 5:4 - For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. - Faith in Jesus.

Read Romans 6. God has given us victory over sin. This doesn't mean we won't sin. It does mean sin has no authority over us, unless we let it. We grasp victory by faith. In Christ, we have the freedom to say NO. The old hymn - Victory in Jesus, is a good one to memorize. Look to Jesus...

### **3. Need Truth - Look to Jesus**

We live in a world of lies. Media lies. Governments lie. Family members lie. We lie. In some places lying is so common it is accepted. For some it's ok to lie, to save face or keep the harmony. If you need to lie to keep the peace, then it's not peace. God is a God of truth, and Christians should love truth. Where do we go for truth?

The Word of God - the inspired written word and the incarnated Living Word. The inspired written word tells us about the Word who became flesh and lived, died, arose and is returning.

John 14:6a - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life..."

We need truth. The truth sets us free. Look to Jesus and the only book that tells you about Jesus – the Bible.

### **4. Need Love - Look to Jesus**

**Read** 1 John 3:1a - See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God... -

The Bible declares that God loves us. This doesn't mean things will go easy or go our way. But it does mean that His faithful commitment to His children will not change! If you are a Christian, then His love will never leave you. If you are in a difficult marriage, a child who doesn't feel loved by his or her parents, a single person or single again, look to Jesus for His love and acceptance of you, by faith.

### **5. Need Hope - Look to Jesus**

**Read** 1 Peter 1:3 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... -

We also live in a world of hopelessness. This is particularly true in Japan. More people died of suicide in 2020 than the Coronavirus.

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.10.06.20207530v4>

Japan's National Police Agency recorded 2,153 deaths by suicide in October 2020, whereas Japan's Health Ministry documented 2,087 deaths due to COVID-19... Depression and isolation were the leading cause of suicide in 2020.

<https://hdogar.medium.com/the-truth-behind-japans-rising-suicide-rate-b36fd2e43321>

While there are a variety of underlying factors, there is loss of hope. People need hope! Look to Jesus, for He is our Living Hope! If you put your ultimate hope and security in anything or anyone in this world, you WILL be disappointed. We find hope in our families, friends, and more, but is Jesus your true hope today?

### **6. Need Wisdom - Look to Jesus**

**Read** 1 Corinthians 1:30 - And because of him (God the Father) you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption –

Are you in the middle of a hard decision? As a church you are! Maybe you are thinking about what college to attend or career to explore. Maybe you are considering a career change or stepping into ministry. Maybe you are thinking about marriage, or having children. Whatever it is, you need wisdom. You need to look to Jesus and His word to discern how to make decisions that will honor God the most.

### **7. Need Healing - Look to Jesus**

Question: When we think of healing, we automatically think of what? Physical healing.

**Read** Mark 1:34a - And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons... –

I do not believe healing is guaranteed for every Christian, but God can heal if He chooses. He is the Great Physician. It may be physical, emotional, mental or spiritual healing you need. Pray to Him. Ask Him in faith and submit to His will. He uses doctors, medicine and may directly intervenes. Example: I've heard many stories of God healing people on the mission field. I don't believe there are healers today. I don't believe false teachers on television, in person, or online who have "healing crusades" and say things that cannot be verified. But, God can heal. All healing comes from Him, regardless of how it is accomplished, medically or miraculously. Ask God for healing in faith and look to Jesus.

Application: I know that admitting weakness is not acceptable within Asian cultures. But things will not change until you admit you can't do it. Regardless of what you need: emotional, spiritual, physical, or mental healing. God can work, and good, Biblical Christian counseling can be life changing. If you are carrying around bitterness, anger, guilt, shame, a feeling of uselessness and more, God can help you with those too. But you have to admit the problem, before it can be fixed! Look to Jesus!

### **8. Need Courage - Look to Jesus**

**Read** Joshua 1:6-7a – Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous... -

This was said to Joshua, but there is a principle for us. We have the Holy Spirit within us as believers. He indwells us at conversion. We receive His power at conversion as well.

Question: Are you a coward? Are you fearful? Are you afraid of life, death, of what others think of you, of a virus, of standing up for yourself, or of sharing Christ with others?

We all have fears! We all have insecurities. Jesus can help us. When we give Him our fears, and lean on Him, admit our weakness, then we can tap into His power. Example: For a long time, I allowed fear to control my life! There are still times I am fearful, but by God's grace and good doctrine, I know I don't have to fear! Don't fear! A constant command in the Bible. We hold on to His promises, step out in faith and ask Him for courage, because we look to Jesus for our needs, He promises to provide.

### **9. Need Salvation - Look to Jesus**

This is our greatest need. We are sinners, who have offended a holy and just God. We have broken His Law and willingly rebelled against Him. Yet in His grace, He provided 1 way of salvation - through His one and only Son - Jesus. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, God the Son, took on human flesh and was born of the virgin Mary. He lived the perfect life we cannot live. He did miracles, proclaimed, and explained God's truth and claimed to be God. He was put to death. But His death was no ordinary death...

**Read** 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 - For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Jesus died the death we deserved, the just for the unjust, the righteous for the unrighteous, the sinless for the sinner. Turn from your sin and put your personal faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. He took our sin and our guilt. When we trust in Him, He brings us into His forever family! He is the only way. It is only through the completed work of Jesus you can be right with God and have a right relationship with God. Give your life to Him...

**Conclusion:** Thank you for giving me the time to help you get to know me a little bit and to share God's word with you. I am humbled and honored to do so. In this new year, we need to look to Jesus for all we need, as individuals, families and as a church. I ask again: What do you need? Whatever it is, Jesus can meet that need. He is the God of the universe, to be feared, and the One who is closer than a brother, to be loved. May the Lord work in our hearts, comfort us and confront us, as His Spirit moves.

Pray