

**Special Note: In advance of the meeting, facilitator should prime an opposite-gender helper on the final application question(s).

Discussion Guide: Hall of Fame of Faith, Part 16

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. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” Hebrews 12:1-3 (ESV)

November 16, 2003: Pastor Kimber Kauffman. The life of faith lived by saints before us, as well as the potential for joy and glory we ourselves have if we do well, should motivate us to put in extreme effort in following Christ. We are not here on Earth for the sake of earthly living. Complacency and discouragement are instruments of Satan and have no place in the meaningful Christian life.

After imploring the Lord for His presence and power, invite someone to read Hebrews 12:1.

Question 1: What is the difference between a “weight” and a “sin”?

Note to Facilitator: Kimber explained that weights are bulky things that are not wrong or sinful in-and-of themselves, but they slow you down, hindering your ability to “run the race.”

Question 2: What are some examples of weights we might carry?

Note to Facilitator: Some examples you might throw in after other have named some: lots of TV, excessive sports watching, watching certain border-line acceptable shows, certain personal expenses, mild dependence on caffeine, unwillingness to be “over-committed,” desire for comfort,
*After a discussion of some general things, if the Holy Spirit leads you, share some “weight” from your own life and a Scripture they can pray for you.

Question 3: How can the call to Christian discipleship be compared to a marathon?

Note to Facilitator: Perhaps seed the discussion with some of what Joel Shaw said about marathon running: “diet is critical... pain is temporary... you only take with you what is necessary... tough points along the route are made easier by encouraging fans...excellence is rewarded.”

Also, it may be good to note how following Christ is not like a marathon: our big final competition is right now, and we don’t get practice runs... we do not compete against each other... our competition is the world, the flesh, and the Devil... we compete *by faith* and by what we *choose* to fix our mind upon...

Invite someone else to read Hebrews 12:2-3 (and Heb. 2:17 thru 3:1)

Kimber explained that the Greek term “looking” here means a willful choice to turn the eyes away from rival attractions, and focus on another thing” and has the tense of “continually looking” during the course of the race.

Also, he noted that the “cloud of witnesses” can be an encouragement, but it is to Jesus that we must look for both encouragement *and* strength! He was a real man, and the temptation He felt was the same as ours is today, yet without giving in to it. Now, through the HS, God lives inside us and has given us the power to cast of dead weight, resist sin, and win the race. Alleluia!

Question 4: What are some ways you choose to “look to” or “fix your eyes on” Jesus?
Note to Facilitator: May be helpful to qualify with “...when your workload is more than you think you can handle” or “...when the kids are pushing all your buttons” or whatever situations fit your members.

Question 5: How could Jesus have joy with the Cross staring Him in the face?
Note to Facilitator: even if Christ did not know the future glory that waited him after the Cross, He still would have done it because He knew it to be the Father’s will for Him. Wow!

**Before considering the final questions of application, split up into same-gender groups.

Invite someone in each break-out group to read Heb. 4:14 -16, and then ask either the first two or the last of the following three following questions.

Final Questions: Kimber challenged us to put off whatever weights are holding us back. What “weight” are you needlessly? (Something that is not really that bad, but that you know is not helping you to pray more, to read the Bible more, or to be godlier spouse/co-worker/parent/friend)

“How about laying them aside to run the race better? Not that you have to, but it will help you!” ~ exact quote from Kimber

Alternate: Kimber said “Everybody around you who is a Christian is in the race.”
Is there someone in the Family of God you could encourage this week?
What “difficult point along the route” will you go and stand and encourage them? (No, taking off your coat and waving it in circles is not necessary.)

Tools for Application:

- Meditate on and memorize Heb 2:18 or 4:15 or 4:16
- Buddy-up with one other person in your break-out group *who shared a “weight”* & commit to ask him/her at least once b/w tonight & next meeting if they have put it off.
- Buddy-up with one other person *who felt they should encourage* a fellow Believer and help them set a time/day/occasion where they will make sure to encourage them.
- Everyone takes a 3 X 5 card and writes a commitment they intend to make (i.e. casting off a weight, memorizing a verse, or encouraging a specific Christian acquaintance). Cards are kept by person and displayed somewhere where they will see it: car dashboard, bathroom mirror, etc.

Possible Conclusion:

Bring your group back together for a song of celebration. Pick a song that focuses on Jesus.

Some suggestions:

- The Hymn “AUTHOR OF FAITH, ETERNAL WORD” available at:www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/u/authorof.htm
- “Jesus, Lover of my soul
Jesus, I will never let you go
You’ve taken me, from the miry clay
And set my feet upon the Rock, and now I know
I love You, I need You
Though my world my fall, I’ll never let You go...”