

Be Encouraged!

Scripture used: [Hebrews 12:1-2 \(NKJV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This week we were blessed by a sermon from Pastor Hurmon's spiritual father, Bishop Donald Green of the [San Francisco Christian Center](#). He preached on the importance of staying in the race that God has set for each of us. Bishop Green shared his incredible story of conversion, starting in 1959 when he reluctantly went to church with his wife. After attending that first service he knelt down and accepted Jesus as his personal savior. Bishop Green has now been running the race for the last 62 years! His specific prayer today was "Lord, help us and teach us how to function as Christians during these challenging times" and he chose the book of Hebrews as the perfect source of encouragement. Bishop Green asked us to visualize ourselves as runners in a packed stadium. We are athletes competing to win, and we must not give up. The race we are running is a special one. God actually laid out the race that each of us must run. Our race is a part of our purpose, so we must give it our absolute best despite the setbacks, obstacles, anxieties, and fears. Bishop Green's sermon showed exactly how we can do that by modeling Jesus, the one who ran the race first and triumphed over sin and death!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Look back.** God is faithful. If we take the time to look back across our lives, we see Him at work. This long-term perspective helps us stay grateful for what God has done, and also look forward to what He will do. We can build momentum by remembering how God has always been there with us in every situation, no matter what. That's God's grace -- His enabling power -- at work. This is the same grace that Noah enjoyed in [Genesis 6:8 \(NKJV\)](#), which helped him avoid the temptations of the world around him.
- 2) **Look within.** We possess gifts and strengths that are admirable. Each one by itself can be a good thing, but they can also add up to overconfidence and pride. Even good things can end up weighing us down, and that makes it harder to stay in the race. This is a very personal issue; no one else can tell us what these things might be. We must ask ourselves "what are the weights I need to lay aside?" and pray to God for the strength and humility to follow through.
- 3) **Look upward.** Jesus Christ is the greatest example of a triumphant runner. He endured His own race so He could justify us as described in [Isaiah 53 \(NKJV\)](#). Jesus knows what it takes for us to stay in the race, moment by moment, day by day. And He is cheering each of us on as we run.
- 4) **Stay in the race!** Each Christian is running his or her own race. It is a race laid out by God; a definite path that leads to His kingdom. Whenever we feel tired, or feel like giving up, or feel like the world is just too much to take, we can go back to [Philippians 4:13 \(NKJV\)](#) and shout "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"
- 5) **Consider the last two messages together: prioritize mental health in order to find a sustaining endurance.** The call to endure is not heedless of our well-being. Rather, when we fix our eyes on Jesus and ask for the grace we need, we are able to be honest about what it will take for us to keep fulfilling God's purpose in our lives in a sustainable and healthy way.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Bishop Green quoted an old saying: "Faith makes a Christian. Life proves a Christian. Trial confirms a Christian. Death crowns a Christian." No matter how hard the race we are running, we can be encouraged because our Lord Jesus also ran this race. We can do it because He did it, and He now strengthens us as we run. When you feel worn out or overwhelmed, what gives you the strength to keep going? How have you seen God show up in your life in difficult seasons?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Trusting God can be difficult, especially in challenging times like these. We are all tempted to doubt in different ways, and this robs us of the strength to run the race that God has laid out for us. Trusting God is therefore the key to staying in the race. The question for this week is "What is one thing that makes it difficult for me to keep trusting God?" As you consider this, also consider Bishop Green's encouragement to "look back" on God's faithfulness in your life to strengthen your trust!
- 3) **DO** - This week's affirmation is "Regardless of life's pressures, I will keep trusting God!" Think ahead to the week. Try to predict at least 3 pressures you will face, and strengthen yourself now by picking a Bible verse that will encourage you. Join us next Sunday as Pastor Hurmon begins a new series, "Detox!"