



# SUNDAY SCHOOL **May 10, 2026**

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## New Testament: Hebrews 12:1-3

*Context: Following a powerful reflection on the heroes of faith, the writer of Hebrews now calls us to live out that same faith with endurance, fixing our eyes on Jesus as we navigate the challenges of life.*

### THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the **race** that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls or lose heart.

### OVERVIEW

Hebrews 12:1–3 shifts from **remembering faith** (chapter 11) to **living faith**. The imagery is vivid: life as a race, surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses,” urging perseverance. The passage emphasizes:

Letting go of what weighs us down

Enduring hardship with purpose

Keeping focus on Jesus as the model and goal

It is less about *belief* and more about *sustained commitment*.

### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

#### Immediately Before (Hebrews 11)

Often called the “Hall of Faith,” chapter 11 lists figures like Abraham, Moses, and others who trusted God despite uncertainty. It ends with a striking note: *they did not receive what was promised... apart from us they would not be made perfect*.

The implication: **their story continues through us**.

#### Immediately After (Hebrews 12:4–11)

The tone shifts toward **discipline and growth through hardship**. Suffering is reframed—not as punishment, but as formation.

#### Broader Narrative of Hebrews

The book argues that **Jesus is the fulfillment and surpassing of the Old Covenant**:

Greater than angels

Greater than Moses

Ultimate High Priest

Final sacrifice



Hebrews is written to encourage believers who are **tired, discouraged, and tempted to drift back into familiar systems.**

So, this passage is a *rallying cry*: **Don't quit now—you're part of something bigger.**

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Likely written to **Jewish Christians** in the late 1st century (around 60–90 AD)

These believers were under **social pressure, exclusion, and possibly persecution**

Returning to traditional Judaism may have seemed **safer socially and politically**

The Roman world valued:

**Honor/shame dynamics**

**Public endurance (think athletic competitions, military discipline)**

The “race” imagery would resonate deeply—it's not abstract, it's cultural.

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

Events described: Timeless exhortation, post-resurrection

Likely written: ~60–90 AD

Context: Early Church navigating identity after the destruction of the Temple (70 AD)

#### BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

##### Key Terms & Layers

**“Cloud of witnesses”**

Not passive observers—more like *those whose lives testify* to faith

**“Sin which clings so closely”**

Literally: *easily entangling*—like something that wraps around your legs while running

**“Run with endurance”**

Not sprinting—*steady, stubborn persistence*

**“Pioneer and perfecter”**

Jesus is both:

The **starter** of faith

The **one who brings it to completion**

**Translation nuance matters here: This isn't just “believe in Jesus”—it's *pattern your life after His way of enduring.***

#### SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

This passage is less about heaven someday and more about **how to live now under pressure.**

##### The Race as Life

Not a sprint. Not even a fair race.



Some start ahead  
Some carry heavier burdens  
Some run on rougher terrain  
Yet the call is the same: **keep going**

### **“Throw off what hinders” (Modern Lens)**

In Grant County terms, this might look like:

- Letting go of *constant outrage media consumption*
- Dropping grudges in small-town dynamics
- Releasing the need to “win” every conversation
- Stepping away from voices that inflame rather than guide

Not all weight is sin—some of it is just... unnecessary.

### **“Fix your eyes on Jesus”**

Not:

- Fix your eyes on politics
- Fix your eyes on cultural battles
- Fix your eyes on being right

But:

- On humility
- On sacrificial love
- On endurance without bitterness

### **The Cross as Model**

Jesus didn’t avoid suffering—He endured it **without letting it define His character.**

That’s the key metaphor: **Endurance without becoming hardened.**

HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

### **Identify what is weighing you down**

Is it fear? Anger? Media? Pride?

### **Distinguish between struggle and entanglement**

Struggle = part of the race

Entanglement = something tripping you up repeatedly

### **Redefine endurance**

Not loud, dramatic faith

Quiet, consistent faith



### **Shift focus from outcome to direction**

The goal isn't perfection

It's persistence

### **Resist cynicism**

The fastest way to quit the race isn't failure—it's discouragement

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*What does the "great cloud of witnesses" mean to you—are they watching, or are they testifying?*

*What are some modern "weights" that aren't necessarily sinful but still hold us back?*

*How do we know when something has become an "entanglement"?*

*What does endurance look like in everyday life—not just in crisis?*

*How do we "fix our eyes on Jesus" in a world full of distractions?*

*Can endurance become unhealthy? Where is the balance?*

*How does this passage challenge our ideas about success and failure?*



## Gospel: John 14:15-21

### **Context:**

#### THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.

“This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

“They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

#### OVERVIEW

John 14:15–21 centers on the connection between **love and obedience**, but not in a rigid, rule-based way. Instead, Jesus describes a **relationship-based obedience** that flows from love.

He promises the coming of the **Advocate (Holy Spirit)**—a continuing presence of God that will guide, comfort, and dwell within believers.

This passage reassures the disciples (and us) that even though Jesus will no longer be physically present, **they will not be abandoned**. God’s presence will shift from external (Jesus beside them) to internal (Spirit within them).

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

##### **Immediately Before (John 14:1–14)**

Jesus comforts the disciples:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled”

“I am the way, the truth, and the life”

The “many rooms” passage

**Key idea: Trust in Jesus despite uncertainty**

##### **This Passage (John 14:15–21)**

Love → expressed through keeping commandments

Promise of the **Advocate (Holy Spirit)**

“I will not leave you orphaned”

Mutual indwelling: *I am in my Father, you in me, I in you*

**Key idea: Presence replaces proximity**



## Immediately After (John 14:22–31)

Judas (not Iscariot) asks why Jesus reveals Himself to some and not the world

Jesus deepens the idea: God “makes a home” with those who love Him

Peace is given—not as the world gives

**Key idea: Peace and presence belong to those who live in that relationship**

## Broader Book Context (Gospel of Gospel of John)

John emphasizes:

Jesus as the **Word made flesh** (John 1)

Belief as relational, not just intellectual

Repeated themes of **abiding, indwelling, and love**

**This passage fits squarely into John’s larger message: Faith is not just believing *about* Jesus—it is living *in* Him.**

## HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Written around **90–100 AD**, likely to a community of Christians facing **expulsion from Jewish synagogues** and social pressure from Roman culture

These believers were dealing with **absence**—Jesus was gone, apostles were dying, and persecution was real

So, when Jesus says, “*I will not leave you orphaned,*” this is not poetic fluff—it’s addressing a community asking: “Have we been left on our own?”

**Politically, the Roman world valued visible power and authority. Jesus offers something radically different:**

**An invisible presence**

**A relational authority**

**A Spirit-led life instead of institution-led certainty**

## HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

Event: ~30 AD (night before crucifixion)

Gospel written: ~90–100 AD

Context: Late first-century Christian communities forming identity after:

Destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD)

Growing separation from Judaism

Increasing Roman pressure



## BIBLE TRANSLATION UNDERSTANDING

### Key Terms & Layers of Meaning

#### 1. “Love”

Not emotional affection

A **committed, self-giving love**

#### 2. “Keep my commandments”

More than “obey”

Means to **guard, hold onto, preserve**

Not legalism—it’s **treasuring what Jesus taught**

#### 3. “Advocate”

Helper, Comforter, Counselor

Each translation captures part of the meaning: One who comes alongside you

#### 4. “Orphaned”

Literally: without a father or protector

Emotionally: **abandoned, vulnerable**

### Translation Evolution

Early Greek manuscripts → Latin Vulgate → early English (Wycliffe, Tyndale) → **King James Version** → modern translations (NIV, NRSV, ESV)

Shift over time: From formal/legal tone → more relational/accessible language

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

This passage can be read metaphorically as a shift from **external authority to internal transformation.**

*Instead of: “Follow these rules because I said so”*

*It becomes: “Live in such a way that my life is alive within you”*

### Modern Parallel (Grant County lens)

We’ve talked before about people getting their voices from:

Cable news

Social media

Loud personalities

This passage quietly challenges that: *Are we being led by external voices... or an internal compass shaped by Christ?*



Think of it like this:

**External faith:** “Tell me what to believe, and I’ll repeat it.”

**Internalized faith (Spirit-led):** “I’ve lived with these teachings long enough that they shape how I think, act, and respond.”

In a local context—whether it’s conversations at church, coffee shops, or community meetings—the difference shows up in:

Reactivity vs. discernment

Certainty vs. humility

Volume vs. presence

*The Spirit is not a loud voice telling us what to think—it’s a quiet presence shaping who we become.*

HOW SHOULD WE ACT AND REACT TO THIS SCRIPTURE TODAY?

**Shift from rule-following to relationship-living**

Ask: *Am I following Jesus, or just following habits?*

**Discern voices carefully**

Not every loud or confident voice reflects Christ

**Practice “keeping” rather than “checking off”**

Hold onto Jesus’ teachings—let them sit with you

**Lean into presence, not fear**

“I will not leave you orphaned” applies today

**Live your beliefs visibly but gently**

Let actions reflect inward transformation

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*When Jesus says, “If you love me, keep my commandments,” what does that look like beyond just “following rules”?*

*What do you think Jesus meant by not leaving us “orphaned”?*

*How do you personally experience the “Advocate” or Spirit today?*

*What are some “voices” in our world that compete with the Spirit?*

*How can we tell the difference between a voice that reflects Christ and one that doesn’t?*

*What does it mean to have Christ “live in us” in a practical, everyday way?*



## Addendum

Here are four **closing contextual thoughts** to quietly reinforce *endurance over flash*.

### The Farmer (Steady, Seasonal Faith)

You might close with something like:

“Out here, we understand something about endurance that the rest of the world sometimes forgets. A farmer doesn’t plant in the spring and expect a harvest the next day. There are long stretches where nothing seems to be happening—just dirt, waiting, and faith that what was planted is still at work beneath the surface.

No farmer goes out every morning digging up seeds to check their progress. They trust the process. They show up. They tend. They wait.

That’s the kind of faith Hebrews is talking about—not flashy, not instant—but steady, patient, and rooted in trust.

We’re not called to sprint. We’re called to stay in the field.”

### The Factory Line (Faithfulness in Repetition)

This one might resonate with folks who’ve worked years in the same role:

“Some of us have spent years—decades even—doing the same job, day after day. You show up. You do the work. Not every day feels meaningful. Not every day feels important. But over time, that consistency builds something real.

Faith can feel like that.

Not every prayer feels powerful. Not every Sunday feels life-changing. But Hebrews reminds us—it’s not about the moment. It’s about the movement.

Endurance is built in repetition.

And sometimes, the most faithful thing you can do... is just show up again tomorrow.”

### The County Fair Track (Race Imagery, Local Feel)

This ties directly into the scripture imagery:

“If you’ve ever watched a race at the county fair—whether it’s kids running or even those old relay events—you’ll notice something. The ones who win aren’t always the fastest out of the gate.

It’s the ones who don’t burn out.

Some start strong and fade. Some stumble early. But the ones who keep their pace, who don’t get distracted by the crowd, who don’t panic when others pass them—that’s who finishes.

Hebrews tells us life is that kind of race.

Not about who looks good at the start... but who stays the course.”



## The Gravel Road (Quiet, Personal Reflection)

This one leans a little more reflective:

“Most of us aren’t running our race on a smooth track. It’s more like a gravel road—uneven, sometimes muddy, sometimes hard, sometimes full of turns you didn’t expect.

And if you’ve ever walked a gravel road for a while, you know—it’s not about speed. It’s about footing. It’s about balance. It’s about staying upright and moving forward.

That’s what this passage calls us to.

Not perfection. Not speed.

Just... keep going.”