

CHILL OUT:

I - Ignore the Competition and the Opposition

Hebrews 12:1-3

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

So we discussed our need to change the way we think and to hit the brakes. Those are two things that we must do day by day, decision by decision, thought by thought. Our next point in our journey is related to both of the first two because it means that we are intentional about our thoughts. It means that we “take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

We cannot do this passively. We must be active and purposeful in our thinking. Many of our thoughts are a result of what we expose ourselves to, what we listen to, watch, read, participate in. It matters. When we saturate our minds with bad news, unfaithfulness, immorality, and hatred, we introduce our thoughts lacking the fruits of the Spirit. Our imaginations are no longer consumed with the things of God, serving Him, worshiping Him and enjoying Him forever. But rather we find our thoughts drifting to scenarios unbecoming of our calling, our blessed redemption.

The competition can look good, even godly, but when it becomes an issue of jealousy or feelings of resentment or judgment or anger, we have been led astray. When we see someone doing something well, we should be thrilled to see them use their God-given talents to glorify Him. Their actions might inspire us to service or ministry, but it need not become a point of contention. Instead of comparing we should share with each other, sharing what God is teaching us, sharing about His faithfulness, and sharing our need for Him.

Similarly, we must practice identifying the whispers of the enemy and ignoring his whispers. He is the father of lies. Jesus said that the devil, Satan, speaks because he can only speak in lies because lies are his native language. Any whisper of condemnation is not from God, but of the enemy. He seeks to kill, steal and destroy. He is not a friend but an enemy. The Bible tells us clearly that he is a loser. But he wants each of us to be losers too. He is constantly trying to plant seeds of doubt and discouragement, resentment and rebellion, slothfulness and sin. He is to be ignored.

For further consideration and study:

Read the whole book of Hebrews. What are some things that stood out to you? According to this book, what is the definition of faith? Who are some of your heroes of the faith? Why?

In your life, what is decision you faced which required faith? How did God prove faithful? What did your learn?

What situation are you currently facing which requires faith?

What does our key passage say we are surrounded by? Do you have some family members in heaven? Who are they? How does their faithfulness encourage you?

In Hebrews 12:1-3 there are three admonitions, they are written as 'let us.' List them:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The first admonition has two parts. What are they? What is something that hinders you? What sin has or is entangling you?

If you are a runner, what do you know about training? How do you prepare? Why is it important? Is training passive or active? Why?

Here are some other verses including the word race: 1 Corinthians 9:24 and 2 Timothy 4:7

What is the unifying theme? How do these verses encourage or inspire you?

How would you describe your 'race'/life/ calling? How has God confirmed this? Have you embraced your race or do you resent it? Why?

Jesus is described as the Author of our faith. How is this true? List verse to back up your answer. How is He our Perfecter? List verse to back up your answer.

What was the joy set before Jesus? Is it the same joy set before us? How so? How could a clear focus on that immanent joy effect how we live? How we speak? Who we tell about Him? How we worship? How we study His word?

Philippians 2 discusses Christ's nature and sacrifice. The Gospels recount His death. What did He endure? What shame was associated with death on the cross? How is it that Christ's sacrificial death was a glory to God? How is possible that our most difficult times, our losses, our betrayals, our tragedies, our challenges, can be a glory to God? What is the key?

The last verse holds the key. Who are we to consider, think about, meditate on, contemplate, when we are in a difficult time? What can thinking on Him do for us when we are hurting? This verse implies that He knows we would be in danger of being wearied, of wanting to give up, to run away, to scream. What is His antidote?