

Endurance - Part 1 - Him

Reflection and Discussion Questions

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, 2 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.

(Hebrews 12:1-2)

1. “**Therefore**”- If we come to a “*therefore*” in the scriptures, we should ask, “*What is the “therefore” there for?*” In this passage, the writer of Hebrews has been writing paragraph upon paragraph about believers who have gone before current day believers “**by faith**”. He encourages us in recounting our family history that we can continue in the race set before us.
 - a. What do you think of when you hear the word race? What emotions does it conjure up in you?

2. Many of us would not have signed up for this quest to cross Antarctica with Shackleton on his ship *The Endurance*. Yet, scripture speaks of “missions” and even this “race” that we are in as followers of Jesus that comes with great risks and suffering.
 - a. Do you think the men who signed up for the expedition to Antarctica knew they could have unexpected challenges? That suffering may await them?

 - b. Have you accepted the reality of the journey you are on? The suffering and risks that come with it as a follower of Jesus?

3. On page 9 & 10, one crewman remarked, “*I do not think I have ever had such a horrible sickening sensation of fear as I had whilst in the hold of that breaking ship... Shackleton though he certainly was aware that their situation was desperate, he could not possibly have imagined then the physical and*

emotional demands that ultimately would be placed upon them, the rigors they would have to endure, the sufferings to which they would be subjected”.

- a. We are kept from knowing the future and as such, we do not know what beauty and suffering awaits us. How does the reality of not knowing make you feel?
4. Jesus, in speaking to His disciples, declared ***“In the world you will have tribulation.”*** One commentator writes, *“Though they (the disciples) were sent to proclaim peace on earth, and good-will towards men, they must expect trouble on earth, and ill-will from men.”*
- a. It would seem that there is no “if” in Jesus’ statement. Jesus is clear that we **will** have troubles. Does hearing it from Jesus so starkly discourage you? Why or why not?
 - b. Have you experienced trouble recently? Ill will from men? What “tribulation” are you facing?
5. On page 53, Lansing writes, *“During the first half of June, the average reading was -17 degrees. But the scene from the deck of the Endurance was often fantastically beautiful. In clear weather, if the moon was out it swept in bold, high circles through the starlit skies for days on end, casting a soft, pale light over the floes. At other times, there were breathtaking displays of the aurora australis, the antarctic equivalent of the northern lights. Incredible sunbursts of green and blue and silver shot up from the horizon into the blue-black sky shimmering, iridescent colors that glinted off the rock-hard ice below.”*
- a. Just as there were unexpected troubles there were unexpected beauties that graced the crew of the Endurance in their journey. How do you think this affected the crew’s endurance?
 - b. What unexpected beauties or gifts have you been graced with recently?

- c. If it is hard to name or see, pray that you may have eyes to see the beauties and glory of our God around you. The Lord would delight to reveal His kindness to you!
6. On page 68, Lansing writes, “*the deck seemed to slide away from beneath their feet as the ship rolled suddenly over to port*”.
 - a. Have you had a season in your life where the very ground seemed to be unstable beneath you? Your foundation seemed to shake?
 - b. What did the crew eventually do when the ship’s “ground” began to move?
7. Eventually the men were forced to leave the shaky and crumbling ship. They found refuge and continued their journey on the ice floes - floating stacks of ice! One definition of endurance is “holding up under pressure”. Literally the pressure of the ice was crushing their ship, and they continued on.
 - a. Read Hebrews 12:1-2 again. What are we to run this race with as followers of Jesus?
 - b. Who are we to look to as we run with endurance our mission?
 - c. Does the definition for endurance above resonate with you?
8. Read Hebrews 12:1-2 once more.
 - a. What was Jesus’ suffering?
 - b. How was He able to **endure** His suffering?
 - c. To what and whom was Jesus’ joy connected?

9. Our endurance is linked to Jesus. Who does the writer of Hebrews say Jesus is to us?
10. Jesus gave the hard news that in this world there would be troubles. He went on to say, ***“So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you... Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”***
- What does the word “joy” make you think of? Is this helpful motivation to endure? Why or why not?
 - When does it seem the disciples’ hearts would be able to fully “rejoice”?
 - Knowing our joy is linked to communion with our Lord, take a moment to pray, and talk to the Lord to ***“ask...that your joy may be full”***.
11. Paul encourages the believers in Rome, that ***“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope...”***(Romans 5:3-4)
- How does this understanding of what suffering produces affect your view of suffering? Does it change it? Why or why not?
 - Does this encourage you toward cultivating endurance? Do you resonate with the “softening” that Justin Early described?
 - So far, has this year hardened your heart or made you more loving?
 - Take heart that God - Father, Spirit and Son - Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of your faith. We begin our journey with Endurance hemmed in before and behind by Him.