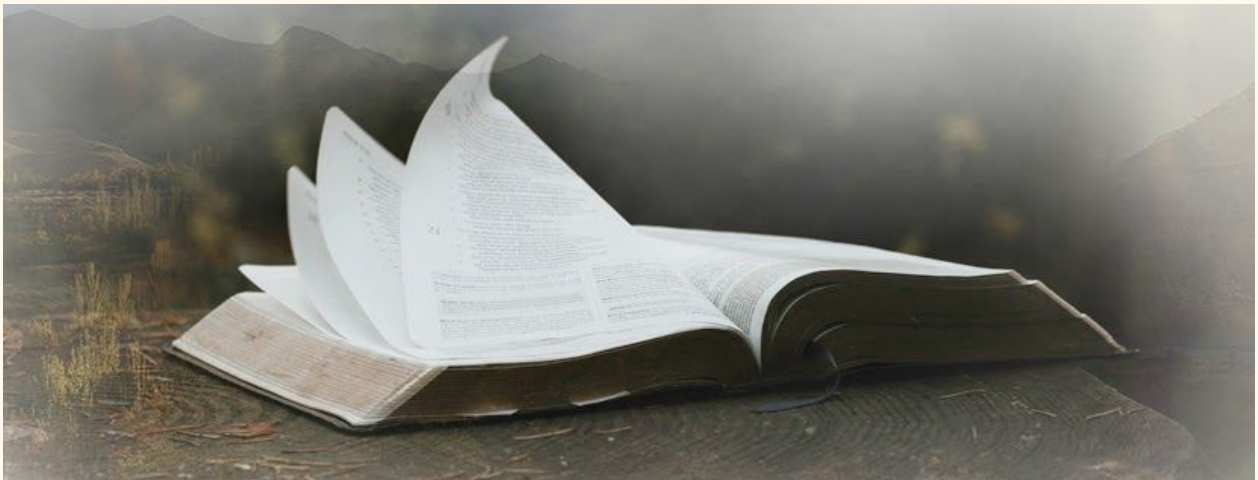

Ignite

“ Father in heaven, we bless Your Church today and also the communities and congregations we know locally. In a world that is so focused on outward appearances, and in the midst of online broadcasting and social media influence, purify our hearts so that we are focused solely on You as we run this race of faith. Amen.”





SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Running the Race Well in 2021 and Beyond

Pastor Dato Dr Daniel Ho

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Introduction

Scripture reminds us that in the race of life, perseverance is ultimately what is required. While it is important to RUN well, it is equally important to also FINISH well. This lesson was immortalized in what was arguably one of the landmark moments in 20th century sports history - the scene of Australia's John Landy looking left while England's Roger Bannister ran down the right to claim the Commonwealth run in Vancouver, 1954. Landy, being the quicker of the two, set a ferocious pace and at one point held a 13 meter lead but it was Bannister who persevered and consistently worked to close the gap. In the last moments, he gave every last ounce of energy to

power through to the finish line and won the race in under 4-minutes (3:58.8), 0.8seconds ahead of Landy.

Many of us have started 2021 strong despite the pandemic situation. How can we run the Race well in 2021 and beyond?

Big Idea: Running the Race well in 2021 and beyond.

1. Encouragement to receive (v. 1) from the

- saints of old [Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11 NIV](#)
- people of God today [Hebrews 3:13](#)

In this race of life, we are surrounded by a great crowd of witnesses e.g. saints of old the likes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and many more. We must go back to Scripture to **learn from these amazing people**. Romans 15:4 reminds us that everything about the saints were written to teach, remind, challenge and encourage us so that we might have hope. Scripture also reminds us **not to be distracted** as it warns us of how some started well but did not finish the race well. We can glean precious lessons from the life of Joseph who endured a life of struggle and pain before eventually becoming the Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. All in all, it was a 13-year long season transition from Pit to Prison to Prime Minister!

It is important we are **in constant fellowship** with the people of God and what better way than to belong to a Cell Group. In church and CG, we continue to cheer, inspire and challenge as we urge each other on our respective race God has set before us.

2. Entanglements to guard (v. 1b) from

We are well aware of misuse of money, inappropriate relationships and abuse of power but there are also other common entanglements to watch out for:

Resentment and Anger [Colossians 3:13](#) Pastor Daniel points out that “*Life is not what we eat but what eats us*”. Wallowing in bitterness and anger towards those who have hurt, exploited, abused or played us out can cripple us if we do not deal with it. As Christians, it is necessary for us to **learn to forgive**, however hard and painful, **because we have been forgiven** by God through Jesus Christ.

Guilt and Shame [Romans 8:1,2](#) There are times that we are ashamed and condemn ourselves for things we should not have done, said or failed to do. However, we are

reminded by the Apostle Paul in Scripture that in Christ, **there is no condemnation and that we are set free from the law of sin**. We have been forgiven by the blood of Christ at the cross and in God's mercy and grace, we stand free.

Anxiety, Worry or Fear [Matthew 6:25, 28-30; Philippians 4:6,7](#) As a result of the global pandemic, we are fearful, concerned and anxious about our health, security and future. There is a foreboding sense of helplessness and hopelessness that grips our hearts. We want to be in charge when what we should do is to lay hold on the promise of God and in prayer and petition, to raise all these anxiety, worry and fear to God so that the peace of God can fill us. We do not know what the future holds but we know who holds the future.

Disappointment or Disillusionment [Psalms 42:5](#) Sometimes we feel God is not answering our prayers and we begin to doubt the goodness of God and whether He really is in control. We pray when facing failures, obstacles and difficulties but yet our prayers go seemingly unanswered. We feel disappointed and start to drift away from God. Even Jesus' prayer at the garden of Gethsemane did not lift the cup of suffering and the impending cross from Him (Thank God for the cross!). We do not see everything, but God sees everything. We are reminded that God will work out for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

3. Example to follow (v 2a)

We are not struggling on our own and Jesus Christ stands as the supreme example to learn from.

He sees beyond the cross to the joy [Hebrews 12:2](#) Jesus saw beyond the cross and beyond the pain to the joy in heaven we are going to share. We are challenged to do the same - not to look at the problem in front but what is beyond. We must ask: What is God teaching me about this situation? How is God using this to build trust, faith and value of relationships around me?

He is unashamed in what He goes through [Hebrews 12:2](#) He will not allow the shame and pain from crippling Him to finish what He came to do. Only the grace and mercy of God through Jesus can change lives and transform societies.

He endures the opposition [Hebrews 12:3, James 1:4](#) Jesus stood firm despite everything thrown against Him. Likewise, we are called to do the same - enduring and persevering till the end since perseverance brings about maturity, completeness and moves us closer towards being more Christ-like.

Conclusion

Life's discouragements, distractions and entanglements can stop us from pressing on towards the finish line. Amidst all that is happening, it is important that we look to Jesus and the saints of old as examples to teach, encourage and remind us to finish the race strong. We must remember we are not alone in this race. We have fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who will mutually encourage and spur us on. Let us lay hold on the promises of God and through prayer and petition allow the peace of God to fill us. Let us press on to run this race and finish well to the glory of God!

SERMON REFLECTION

What a challenging start to 2021! It has been a race down the wire (no pun intended) both at work as well as at home. After three weeks of clocking in 70 hour work weeks while effecting our house move in the uncertainties of the pandemic, I was stressed out, beaten up and wanted to just shut off for the weekend. It was with great trepidation that I assumed this week's sermon reflection, chronically fatigued and with the level enthusiasm of a toddler playing with his plate of vegetables.

As seemingly simple this week's sermon appeared, it penetrated to the depths of my soul. There was this gut punching realization that the mother of all entanglements was the preoccupation with oneself. We get distracted from the Race when we become fixated on ourselves instead of fixing our gaze on the perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ.

I used to scoff at the vanity of Snow White's stepmother who constantly checked her enchanted mirror to make sure she was still the fairest in the land. But I have failed to see that I have many mirrors of my own. The 'judgemental' mirror that views myself critically and how I am failing as a husband, a father, a Christian and an employee. The 'perception' mirror that I use to constantly worry about what others would think of me if I said or acted a certain way. I unconsciously want to project a

better image of myself than I really am. The 'self-righteous' mirror that focuses on how others have wrongfully hurt me and how I deserve better.

This constant focus on my needs, desires, wants and thoughts was hurting me and has so easily entangled me with feelings of fear and anxiousness.

I feel convicted to throw away all the mental mirrors in my life. I pray that the Holy Spirit will empower me to shatter and cast away all the mirrors that have laid hold of my life and like briars seek to choke out my love for God. May I never pick up these mirrors ever again save but the only one that truly matters - the 'Christ-like' mirror. Oh that I may look into that mirror asking "*How can I be more Christ-like today?*". Teach me, Jesus, to find ways to pray for others and to show acts of graciousness to others so that I may glorify Your name.

Contributed by Darren Lim



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Questions / Activities

(You may choose to have CG members type in their answers in the Zoom chatbox)

- In an activity (e.g. a race, hike, work, workout, etc.), what are some of the things that can distract you?
- What helps you get through the day when things go off plan?
- What goals did you set for 2021? How has it been going so far?

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- What do you see at the end of your “race”? How far do you think you are from the finish line?
- Share within the group: “I spend most of my time and effort in the day on....”
Note to facilitator: This can be a great time to gently encourage CG members to spend more time reading God’s word. Starting the DUMC “God at work” bible reading plan is one good way.

Suggested Questions linked to ‘Encouragement to Receive’:

- Share an encouragement received from Scripture or from someone in your cell group you have received. How has that inspired you in running this race of life well?

Suggested Questions linked to ‘Entanglements to Guard’:

- Was there a particular entanglement you have wrestled with in your life and how did you overcome that? What would you advise people today?
- What other entanglements can distract us from finishing well? How can we overcome them? (*E.g. procrastination, complacency, laziness..*)

Suggested Questions linked to ‘Example to Follow’:

- We are called by Jesus to “Love our enemies”. How can we find it in our hearts to forgive someone who has hurt us deeply?
- How has Jesus’ life example moved your heart towards a certain individual/event/situation/area of your life? What practical baby steps can you do to act upon it now?

Question Bank (*Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit*):

1. If life was a marathon race, what are you currently doing? *E.g. walking, jogging, running, extended pit-stop, cruising, detour, etc.?*
2. Share an instance where your fervent prayers went seemingly unanswered. What was your response? How can you respond rightly with God in spite of how bad things turn out?

3. How has Jesus' example spurred you on in this journey and race of life in 2021 and beyond? Share one aspect you will always hold onto throughout your life.
-



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



Story of the week...

This week, we bring you the story of Evelyn from our Bahasa Congregation, produced as a short film by Komuniti Digital. For years, Evelyn struggled with hatred and bitterness against her father. But after she was introduced to DUMC, she encountered God while being assimilated into a Jesus-loving community. And through the power of God, she mustered all courage to utter the word "sorry" and be reconciled to her father. Watch Evelyn's powerful story [HERE](#).

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

- Maya Angelou

If you or your CG member(s) has a story to share related to today's Word or any other story that speaks of His goodness or of IMPACTNow, **share their/your story** [\[HERE\]](#)



PRAYER

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Lord, strengthen me with endurance to withstand this fiery trial, and the passion to dwell in joy without frustration and tears.

I'm determined to run my race with endurance and passion.

Sin entangles me. I slip and fall into Satan's manipulative ways. It isn't obvious-everyone-can-see kind of sin, but it is sin, nevertheless — sin that hurts Your heart and distracts me from You.

Using food for comfort.

Escaping into the abyss of television where I don't have to think.

Focusing on my problems rather than You.

Turn my eyes on You, Lord. You are the Author and Finisher of my faith, the Keeper of my heart. You are the One who calls me by name and bathes me in grace so undeserved.

It is You who deserves all praise! You deserve all of my heart, and all of my choices. I desire to please You in all things.

Help me run this race with endurance and passion, and help me run it well. Help me name those sins that entangle me, tripping me up and causing me to fall.

In Your great mercy, You are always there to lift me up from the miry clay of my own doing, to cheer me on, to wash me clean.

I'm grateful for that, Lord.

So grateful.

With You by my side, lighting my path, anointing me with endurance I will continue to run strong with great passion for Your glory.

That is my heart's desire, Lord — to glorify You, to draw others to Your love and Your salvation.

With Endurance and Passion I Will Finish Strong.

You are an awesome God, mighty in power, doing wonders. Your tender love never fails to astound me.

Thank You, Lord.

In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.



OTHER RESOURCES

*Below are some links to resources for you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!*

FEATURED

In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



The impossible task for a single grain of salt

saltandlight.sg

One grain of salt can hardly make a difference in the stew...

Lee Soo Tian

Society Work Vocation

Article



Life before the Pandemic

christianitytoday.com

Let's not return to our old way of life

Kelly Edmiston

Suffering Society Christian Living

Article



Why is Prayer So Hard?

christianitytoday.com

Amy Julia Becker

Prayer & Spirituality

Article



Practicing the Presence of God

39 pages

ccel.org

Lawrence is known for his devotion and ability to bring G...

Brother Lawrence

Prayer & Spirituality

E-Book (Free)

OTHER RESOURCES

Discover a host of other resources curated for you here!



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

