

# To Give Us An Example Of Costly Love

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[ 0 : 00 ] We looked last at Hebrews 10 with that exhortation to encourage one another, to build one another up, to continue to gather together. Hebrews chapter 11 is that great chapter of the faithful, those who have gone before us by faith.

And that cadence repeated again and again, reminding us of the life of faith expressed at different times and in different experiences.

We now come to chapter 12. 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. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him 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 sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

[ 1 : 17 ] And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? And if you are not disciplined, and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the father of our spirits and live?

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while, as they thought best. But God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.

Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

[ 2 : 32 ] Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy.

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.

Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire to darkness, gloom, and storm, to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them because they could not bear what was commanded.

If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned. The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, I am trembling with fear. But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.

[ 3 : 50 ] You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?

At that time, his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, once more, I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens. The word once more indicate the removing of what can be shaken, that is created things, so that that which cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

As we turn back to that portion of Hebrews 12 that we're going to look at, namely those first three verses, I was reminded today that the church of Jesus Christ is not small, but large.

[ 5 : 19 ] The Joshua Project, which is one of the best statistical overviews of the world's population and of its people groups, tells us that there are over 17,000 people groups in this world that comprise 7.59 billion people, and at present they estimate that 2.375, or 2 billion, 375 million people, identify themselves as followers of Jesus.

So we should be encouraged, we should take heart, because sometimes we look at our situation, whether that's our congregation, our city, our country, the area of the world in which we are situated, and we might find ourselves disheartened.

We might find ourselves discouraged. But when we take a step back and we look globally, we realize that the church of Jesus is not receding, but rather advancing, and that the number of followers of Jesus Christ has never, ever been greater than it is today.

The author to the book of Hebrews wants to encourage the followers of Jesus, wants to encourage them, and wants to encourage us this evening. And having read that chapter, chapter 11, if you haven't read it recently, read it again tonight.

And having recounted these great stories of the faithful, has a message for the here and for the now, and for you and for me. 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.

[ 7 : 08 ] Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him 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 sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. There are many modern-day Proverbs, and one of them goes like this.

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. But what about the weak? What happens when the going gets tough and you're weak? What happens when the going gets tough and you're discouraged or disheartened?

It's not as snappy, is it? You know, when the going gets tough, the weak give up. Or when the going gets tough, the discouraged turn back. Or when the going gets tough, the disappointed give in. Doesn't make as nice of a proverb, does it? But many of us often realize that we are not in the category of the tough or the resilient, that we don't have the personal reserves or the personal strength to persevere in the face of challenge or opposition.

[ 8 : 27 ] So the going is tough for the audience here, and the going is tough for the audience here. Life is hard, unpredictable, unexpected.

And now, there's a spoiler alert here, because we're looking at the suffering of Jesus. We're trying to answer the question, why did Jesus suffer and die?

Now, the spoiler alert is that the suffering and death of Jesus is not the last part of the story. That as we are joining with the worldwide church in what is described as Holy Week, Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, proceeds through Holy Thursday, when Jesus celebrated his last supper with his disciples, and that night that he was betrayed and handed over and arrested, and that next day when he was tried and condemned and crucified, we're celebrating or remembering, reflecting upon Good Friday, this coming Friday.

But the spoiler alert is that Jesus does not remain dead and buried, that suffering and sorrow does not have the final word, because Jesus is alive, and that Jesus is risen, risen from the dead.

Jesus is ascended from earth to heaven, and Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, the Father in heaven. So the author to the book of Hebrews is telling his audience that Jesus Christ is better, and that Jesus Christ is best.

[ 10 : 01 ] And that's the message they need to hear again and again and again. And as you read through these 13 chapters of Hebrews, there's lots of illustrations from the Old Testament, lots of references to priests or sacrifices, but that lesson is constantly being refrained.

Jesus better, Jesus best. It's tough life. It's hard. It's difficult. And we're weak and weary. We don't have the reserves.

We don't have the strength. And you don't keep going because of who you are. You don't summon some sort of internal source of strength or internal source of wisdom.

You carry on because of who he is. And you carry on because of what he has done. And you carry on because he in fact did suffer. And he in fact did die.

But that suffering and death did not have the final word, but rather life, resurrection, ascension, and glory. And that's the paradigm. And we're going to explore that more in a few moments, but that's the picture.

[ 11 : 08 ] That there is suffering and there is hardship and there is death. But just as death did not have the final victory over the Lord Jesus, nor does death and suffering have the final victory over the followers of our Lord Jesus.

That he is the center and it's all about him. Now here's the question, or here's the problem. There was a revolution in thinking that took place in astronomy.

There was the old model of how this universe or how this solar system worked. And the old model was that all the planets revolve around the earth.

We still kind of allude to that thinking when we talk about the sun rising and the sun setting. We don't believe that anymore. But even that illusion kind of gives us a sense that we are stationary and it's the sun that rises or the sun that sets.

But that old way of thinking gave way to a revolutionary new way of thinking. That Copernicus reminded us that actually, no, it's the sun is the center of the solar system and the planets, all the planets revolve around that solar system.

[ 12 : 17 ] Now this is not a lesson in cosmology, but it's a question that we need to answer because is this world revolving around us, me or you?

You know, are we at the center of this world and we expect everything to revolve around us?

Because if we do, I think we're going to be greatly disappointed because it doesn't revolve around us.

But if this world revolves around Jesus, if he's the center of this world, then we do have hope. If he's the center of this universe, then we do have help.

But if we are the center and then the going gets tough, well, that's where you take over or I take over. We need the resources or we need the strength or we actually need to carry this world and all of its problems along with all of our troubles and all of our sorrows.

So if we find ourselves honestly saying, I can't cope, I can't deal with life, my life, I can't deal with my problems, I can't deal with the problems of others, I can't fix what's broken in this world.

[ 13 : 25 ] Well, if you're at that particular point in your understanding that actually the world does not revolve around you, the writer to the Hebrews is telling us take heart and be encouraged because everything revolves around him.

We have hope tonight. We have help tonight. We have comfort tonight. And the Bible addresses us in real life settings with real life challenges, with real wisdom, with real comfort and real encouragement.

I feel sorry for anyone who has come to or has been introduced to the Christian message and has been told, believe in God and your problems disappear.

Follow Jesus and everything will be rosy because that's not a genuine or a fair presentation of the gospel. It's not true to life. It's not true to the word. And people who find themselves introduced to the gospel in that way will find themselves quickly disheartened on the journey.

So if you remember the power, if you remember the main message of Hebrews that Jesus is better because Jesus is best. He's better than us. He's better than anything else.

[ 14 : 35 ] He's the best. So anything other than Jesus is second best. If we settle for or if we turn to anything or anyone other than Jesus, we are turning to a source of power or a source of wisdom that by definition is inferior.

So I'd like to begin with two exhortations or two words of encouragement. But before we get to those let us words or phrases, I'd like to notice that we are not alone.

Beginning of verse 12 says, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. We're not alone in the Christian life.

That's why Hebrews chapter 10, we're reminded of the fellowship of believers. That's why in Hebrews chapter 11, we're reminded of those great generations of the faithful who have gone before us.

And the picture now here is almost of a picture of a stadium. It's of an athletic contest or a race. And there's a stadium. There's a crowd gathered.

[ 15 : 45 ] And this crowd is gathered to cheer us on, to encourage us along the way. And I find that's a helpful picture. Because if you think that life is a solitary journey that you walk alone, that you begin and walk and continue on your own with your own set of circumstances, it can become pretty disheartening.

And I think that's one of the great benefits and blessings that we have in fellowship, that worshiping together, serving together, studying the Bible together, that we realize that together we are stronger than we are apart.

We can encourage. We can be encouraged. We can carry one another's burdens. We can love one another, serve and help one another. And the writer here is telling us that there's a great cloud of witnesses.

That this great cloud of witness surrounds us, encourages us, cheers us on, encourages us along the way. That if life is a race, and we'll see that image in a moment, if life is a race, and we realize that many, many people have run this race, have gone through these hardships, have dealt with these problems, and have made it through, we realize that we too can make it.

Not with our own strength, but with the strength of God, with the help of Jesus, but knowing that there is this cloud of witnesses, the fellowship of believers, and those who have gone before us in the journey.

[ 17 : 20 ] So there's two exhortations, let us. The first is negative, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

So in this race, or in this journey, there is a lot that will hold us back. So if the going is tough, and if the race is long, and if it feels like the burdens are many, sin, placing yourself at the center of the story, only adds to the problem, only makes the journey harder, only makes the trials tougher.

So if the picture here is of a race and of a runner, you want every advantage for that runner, and you want to eliminate every disadvantage.

And sin is described as that which entangles and that which hinders. Now sin is described as many different ways in the Bible. It's described as rebellion, doing things your own way.

It's described as missing the mark or crossing the line. But if life is a race or a journey, then sin is everything that distracts you or diverts you or makes the journey even harder.

[ 18 : 34 ] So we are being exhorted here to throw off everything, everything that runs contrary to what God is like.

That we are to live with holiness rather than selfishness, rather than self-centeredness, rather than sin that clouds our minds and sin that distracts our heart and sin that diverts our path.

So there's the negative and then there's the positive. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. That there is a race and it is marked.

We don't need to mark the race out ourselves. We don't need to determine the path. The path is already marked out. So the negative, let us throw off.

And the positive, let us run. So those are the exhortation that we are journeying with this great crowd that's cheering us on.

[ 19 : 33 ] So we have the people of God and above all, we have the Son of God. So life is a race. It is a journey.

And it's not a sprint. It doesn't happen like that. But at 52, you realize that there's many years that are behind you and you hope and pray that there might yet be a few years ahead of you.

But you realize that the Christian life is not simple or straightforward or quick or carefree. And there's something that I can do to make this journey easier, i.e. that I focus my mind and focus my heart upon God and his truth.

So we need each other. But above all, we need Jesus. So if there are two exhortations, we now are told that we are to pay close attention.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Not a quick glance, not a temporary, you know, not just a look here or a look there, but let us focus our attention on him.

[ 20 : 40 ] Because if this journey is long and if this journey is tough and if we need every comfort and every encouragement, he is the source.

He's the author. He's the perfecter. So if Jesus is better because Jesus is best and if the letter to the Hebrews is a reminder that it's all about him, the Christian life is all about him.

Yes, it's a life that we run. It's a race that we run, but we run looking to him. It's a race that's begun with Jesus and it's a race that's continued with Jesus and it's a race that is ultimately concluded with Jesus.

So he is the one that we look to. He is the one that we focus upon and he is the one that we need to start, to continue, and to finish.

Who is this Jesus? What has this Jesus done? And this is the key. This is the key that unlocks the message of the Bible, the person of Jesus, that he's the son of God.

[ 21 : 48 ] He's the savior of the world. What has this Jesus done? Well, he's come into this world. He's come down to our level. He's lived the life that we have not lived. He's died the death that we ought to have died.

He's given us this paradigm or this picture of suffering, of death. But yet that picture of suffering and death that does not end with death, but rather there is a next step.

There is a motivation and there is a destination. So if we are fixing our eyes, if we are paying attention to Jesus, that he begins and he continues.

He is the source of our life. He's the source of our strength. And he is the key to this journey.

Yes, the faithful that have gone before us point us time and time again to God, point us time and time again to Jesus. The crowd of witnesses, the cloud of witnesses that are surrounding us and cheering us on, they've run the race, they've reached the destination.

[ 22 : 53 ] Destination. But here we still are. And the sorrows, the trials, the troubles, the discouragements, the times where we feel like it's time to give in and the times that we feel that it's time to give up or the times that we think, actually, it's time to turn back.

Following Jesus is hard. Being faithful is hard, is difficult. But if we focus our eyes upon him, we see a pattern or a paradigm.

Because we see that, yes, of course, there is suffering and there is shame. But there is a reward and there is a motivation.

Now, in the East, you know, we're in the West. In the East, I saw this when I was living in Japan.

You see this when you are in the Middle East, that there's a culture of shame, shame and honor.

That if you are caught doing wrong, that is incredibly shameful for you. It's shameful for your family because this public dishonor sticks to you.

[ 24 : 01 ] And in the East, that's why that first miracle of Jesus in Cana of Galilee was so remarkable. Because that young couple, remember the wine ran out? That was going to be the wedding that everybody remembered for the wrong reason.

That family, those two families, would be remembered for putting on a wedding banquet where they ran out of one of the key elements of the celebration. But Jesus comes and transforms the shame into honor.

Because that was a wedding that was remembered. Not because the wine ran out, but because they saved the best wine to last. So we see here in a culture that understands what shame looks like.

That Jesus endured shame. He endured the cross. He scorned its shame. So you see this pattern is set by Jesus. But you see there's a motivation here.

There's joy that lies ahead. For the joy set before him. And there's a place that lies ahead, namely that he is at the right hand of the throne of God.

[ 25 : 10 ] So Jesus did endure the cross. He suffered. Jesus scorned the shame. And Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

So we too, as we fix our eyes on Jesus, we see what he has done. And we see what he has achieved. And we see that, yes, there was suffering on the cross.

There was death. There was shame. And that shame was public. He was publicly ridiculed. He was publicly mocked. He was publicly spat upon and scorned and mocked and abused physically and verbally.

And he there died publicly. A place of shame. A place of punishment. Why? So that ultimately that is no longer our place.

Yes, there's trial. There's trouble. There's hardship. But what he experienced was absolutely unique. He who deserved no, nothing but praise endured the shame and the suffering.  
[ 26 : 17 ] The ridicule, the abuse, the mocking. He had every right to expect and deserve and demand worship and praise and glory and honor.

But he deliberately placed himself in that place of suffering, in that place of scorn, and in that place of shame. So that we never will ultimately experience that ourselves.

Yes, it's a long race. And yes, there may be many challenges and many difficulties along the way. But if our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we know that he has gone before us.

And that he has overcome all those obstacles that would otherwise overwhelm and destroy us. That there is joy set before Jesus. And that right now, Jesus is at that place of ultimate power and ultimate authority.

Repro James■■■. So we have the unique experience of Jesus, but the unique experience of Jesus is set down before us as a pattern for the followers of Jesus.

[ 27 : 24 ] Jesus experienced trouble and hardship. The followers of Jesus, not surprisingly, experienced trouble and hardship. Jesus experienced opposition and persecution. The followers of Jesus, not surprisingly, experienced trouble, persecution, and opposition.

But notice that Jesus overcomes all enemies. Jesus defeats all foes. Jesus deals with the shame. Jesus deals with the suffering. And now Jesus is in that place of ultimate power and ultimate authority.

So not only do we have the cloud of witnesses, not only do we have the fellowship of believers, not only do we have that great honor role of the faithful, but we have him at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

That we have Jesus. We have a friend in a high, high place. Remember when Jesus was speaking to his disciples in John 15. He said, I no longer call you servants.

A servant doesn't know his master's business. I call you friends. So this evening, if the going is tough and if the trials are many, and if it's discouraging and disheartening, and if you feel tempted to despair and tempted to give up, think of him.

[ 28 : 42 ] Think of Jesus. Think of the cross. Think of the shame. But think of his victory. Because he now is at that place of power.

What's he doing? Because the image of sitting down means that work is done. He's done the work. He's paid the price. He's satisfied the debt.

But what we're told in the book of Romans is that he's constantly interceding for us. He's praying for us. He's praying that we persevere.

He's praying that we keep to the path. He's praying that we continue the race. And he's at that place where all resource, all power, all honor, and all glory belongs to him.

So you see, it's not all about us, is it? It's not about you, how strong you are. It's not about you, how wise you are. It's not about you, about how you persevere in the face of disappointment.

[ 29 : 43 ] It's not about the going, getting tough, and the tough getting going. But it's all about him. It's all about the cross. It's all about the shame that he bore. And it's all about the victory that he achieved.

And in verse 3, it says, consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that. So now the unique experience of Jesus becomes an encouragement to the followers of Jesus.

He endured, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. This is what he did. This is what you do. This is what he experienced. This is what you, in a very small measure, experience.

But you experience that, not in isolation. You're with the people of God. You're with the cloud of witnesses. But the Son of God has gone ahead of you. There's joy that accompanied Jesus on the cross.

That for the joy set before him, what was the joy? Joy in heaven. Remember the parables that Jesus told in Luke chapter 15? That there's celebration.

[ 30 : 49 ] There's rejoicing in heaven. Why? When one sinner repents. You see, there was joy that was set before Jesus. He had work to do. He had a price to pay.

But what did he see? He saw us, the people of God. He saw us without hope and without help. He saw us in despair and in defeat. And he did all this for us.

So that we can persevere to the end. So, and this is the challenge of the Christian life. That it is all about him. And yet this is a race that we run.

It's all about what he did. And yet, the life that you and I live is filled with hardship and disappointment. And yet we continue. We carry on. We don't give up. And we don't turn back. And we don't throw in the towel. And we don't put up our hands in despair. But rather we fix our eyes on him. He starts the journey with us.

[ 31 : 48 ] He continues the journey with us. And he will ultimately bring us to his intended conclusion. So by all means, let's throw off anything that will hinder us.

Let's not make the journey more difficult than it needs to be. Let's not try to make this journey on our own, with our own strength, because we simply cannot do it. But let's not try to accompany this journey with our own agenda, our own desires, our own interests.

Let's throw off anything that entangles us. And let's continue to run with perseverance as we focus on him. Why did he suffer? He suffered so that we will ultimately be received into his kingdom. He experienced and he scorned the shame of the cross. Why? So that we will never experience that shame for ourselves. Where is he now? He's at that place of honor and that place of glory. Where will we be? We too will be in that place of honor. Not at the right hand. That's his unique position. But we will be with him in glory. We will be with him celebrating his victory and enjoying the fruits of his labor, enjoying the benefits of his victory for this time forever.

[ 33 : 01 ] We'll join with that great cloud of witnesses. We'll join with that great honor role of the faithful. All because of him. The beginner, the middle, and the ending of our journey.

I'm going to close by just reading a few verses that were written about 700 years before the time of the letter to the Hebrews was written. And this was written to a group of people that were far from home.

A group of people that were in exile. They were discouraged. They were disheartened. They were wondering maybe God has ignored us or maybe God has left us. Maybe our sin has been too great and maybe God's patience has been tried one too many times.

At the end of Isaiah chapter 40, we have this image that again captures this idea that life is a race, that there's running to be done or walking to be done, but that there's weariness along the way. Isaiah 40, this is page 725. Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel? My way is hidden from the Lord.

[ 34 : 07 ] My cause is disregarded by my God. You can almost hear the heaviness and the weariness of the questions that are being answered. Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall. But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.

They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint. Those who hope in the Lord. That's the people of God in every generation.

That's you this evening. If your hope is in Jesus Christ, you'll run, you'll walk. You'll come to his intended destination with his strength and with his encouragement because he promises to do so.

[ 35 : 09 ] And the one thing that we find in God's word consistently true is that whatever he promises, he always delivers. So the going gets tough. We don't summon resources from within ourselves.

We fix our eyes on Jesus. He's the author. He's the perfecter. He's the first one.

You know, he's the JIG■■■, so the little thing comes to this event because of the power of charging that it is the Incorporated