

# Live For The Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 12. Hebrews 12. So thinking about that hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness, and being reminded of the faithfulness of God and His walking through us and being by us in times of hardships and trials day after day.

And as we come to Hebrews 12, we're reminded at the end of chapter 10, the author recognized that the people, his audience, had been experiencing some hardship of their own, which is why the focus has been on faith and faithful living.

In chapter 10, verse 32, it says, But recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

So these people that he's writing to, they understand hardship.

They understand what it is to suffer for the sake of the gospel. And that's why Hebrews 11 is one example after another of people who believe the promises of God and live faithfully.

[ 1 : 42 ] And it was to be an encouragement to these readers and to us. Then at the beginning of Hebrews 12, Jesus as the ultimate model and example of living in faithfulness and enduring persecution and hardship to the end.

Now we come to verses 12 through 17. And this is following the passage, the section where the author is saying, do not become discouraged through the discipline of the Lord.

And we talked a little bit last week about the difference between discipline and punishment and how discipline is its training, God training us to be like his son.

And the way we learn and are trained that way is through hardships and trials and to be brought through and to endure it. So let's go ahead and read Hebrews 12, verses 12 through 17 to get the context of what we're going to look at here this morning.

And the topic of living for the gospel. Therefore, that is, since you're going to be enduring hardships and trials and it is the discipline of the Lord, and it's painful now, but it yields peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who've been trained by it.

[ 3 : 05 ] Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Strive for peace with everyone and for holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

That no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

This passage here, again, as I said, coming off right off the heels of, you know, enduring the discipline and not regretting it, not being upset by the discipline of the Lord and overwhelmed by it, but to be trained by it.

We realize that in Romans 8.29, that God has ordained or has predestined that those who are in Christ would be conformed to his image, and that's why they go through trials and hardships, and that's why in verse 12, they're drooping hands and weak knees, because they're exhausted.

[ 4 : 35 ] They're going through hardship. They're going through a hard time. This section of this letter is chock full of terms of exhortation by the author. He says things like, lift and strengthen and make straight and to strive and to see to it for the sake of living for the gospel, despite what they're going through, despite what you and I endure on a day-to-day basis, despite whatever persecution or rejection or whatever it is we endure, we're to live for the gospel.

And so here in verses 12 and 13, we see the exhortation by the author to not give up. Don't give up. Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.

These things appear in people who are utterly exhausted. To lift up the hands and the strength and the knees demands a renewal of hope. When you're sitting in a trial and a hardship, and you're going through whatever it is you go through, whether it's a health crisis and problem, people who, it seems like over and over and over again, we hear about this person has cancer and this person has cancer.

It seems like cancer is just everywhere. And it almost seems like it can't be escaped. And people who go through that hard time, that hardship of their body deteriorating and being broken down and becoming weak because of this disease.

And when the body grows weak and deteriorates, it can also deteriorate the soul and our confidence. But we need to look to Jesus.

[ 6 : 07 ] We need to understand God's purpose in discipline. We need to understand that God is training us as we go through these trials in life to be like his son, to be conformed to the image of his son.

God's purpose in discipline should help people who are spiritually exhausted.

We recognize that, yes, we're being worn out. Yes, we're in a body that's breaking down. But we're becoming more like Jesus as we endure the trial and hardship and we look to him.

And one of the best ways to keep going is to encourage others to keep going as well. You know, misery enjoys company or something like that.

You know, it's like people who are down and out. It's like, hey, let's all be miserable and complain and mope together, right? And it seems like that's what our society does very well. We complain together very well.

[ 7 : 08 ] We mob together and like, oh, you know, fuss and complain and whatnot. But what if we actually encourage people? You know, we live in a world without hope. People are looking for hope.

They're looking for encouragement. So why don't we start giving it to them? Now, even as they're fighting against us and they're railing against us and they're bringing us down, why don't we, like Jesus did, like when he was being nailed to the cross, Father forgives them because they don't know what they're doing.

Have we thought about that? Have we had that kind of wherewithal where we've realized that, hey, you know, what I'm going through is a hard time and it's something I don't enjoy, but this person needs Jesus.

You know, what they're saying about me is a lie and it's hurtful, but, man, they need hope and love and encouragement. Remember Hebrews 10, 24 through 25 says, let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

They don't say complain. They don't say fuss. They don't say riot and rally and picket and all this stuff. They say encourage one another as you come together. An illustration that Spurgeon used.

[ 8 : 29 ] I've been using a lot of Spurgeon lately. I don't know why. It's just a lot of good stuff that I've read in his commentary on Hebrews. So he says this. He says, Our patience should model Christ's. In Pilgrim's Progress, when Great Heart went with much afraid and Miss Feeble Mind on the road to the celestial city, he had his hands full.

He says of poor Mr. Feeble Mind that when he came to the lions, he said, Oh, the lions will have me. And he was afraid of the giants and afraid of everything on the road. And it caused Great Heart much trouble to get him on the road.

And it is so with you. You must know that you're very troublesome and hard to manage. But then our Lord Jesus is very patient. He does not mind taking trouble. He has laid down his life for you, and he is prepared to exercise all his divine power and wisdom to bring you home to his father's house.

So you think about all the trouble that we cause other people, maybe in our stubbornness. Nothing becomes more evident, right? The sin nature doesn't become more evident until really you have kids.

That's the thing that one of my professors said when I was at Word of Life. He says, You really don't recognize or realize how much of a sinner you are and how selfish you are until you get married.

[ 9 : 48 ] And then you think you got it all figured out and things get smoothed out, and you don't really realize how selfish you are until you have a kid. And then you get things figured out, and then

you don't realize how selfish you really are until you have two kids.

And then he had like four. Poor him. But the whole point was this, is that the more that you are around other people, you realize how selfish you are for your space, your time, your whatever. How self-centered we are. Sin is all about me, right? Sin is the big I problem. That's what's in the middle of sin. And we see it in the form of kids' disobedience and talking back, and it's like going to the bathroom, like, wow, what's wrong with them?

And then you look in the mirror, and you realize what's wrong with them. It's the same thing that's wrong with you and your neighbor. We all have a sin issue.

And so we can become very troublesome people to deal with. And I've been on the softball field with some folks, and I've seen it firsthand.

[10:57] And maybe I have been an example of it once or twice before as well. But the fact is, we need to model the patience of Christ, both with other people and also with how he deals with us.

Proverbs 4, verses 25-27 says, Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and all your ways will be sure.

Do not swerve to the right or to the left. Turn your foot away from evil. So lift up your drooping hands, strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet.

Or Hebrews 12-1, looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. He's the goal. And his word is the path. Or obedience to it, I should say.

Proverbs 3, 5, and 6. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. That's what we need here, according to Hebrews 12-13.

[12:06] We need straight paths for our feet. Well, the only way we can have a straight path for our feet, according to this verse here in Proverbs 3, is by trusting in the Lord and not leaning on our own understanding.

Excuse me. We often live by this thing called a retribution principle.

All right? So I'm taking Introduction to Old Testament, and we've had this discussion as we've gone through books in the Bible. One thing you realize in authors, especially in Psalms and Proverbs, Job, is the idea that in the ancient Near East, they live by this concept of the retribution principle. That is, that the good people will always be blessed, and the wicked and bad people will always be punished. And so you get to a book like Job, right? Job is said to be a righteous man before God, yet look at everything he went through.

So if the retribution principle is true, you know, without fault, then what Job's friends were seeing was a man who's actually bad and wicked getting what he deserves, you know, rather than being a righteous man who's enduring suffering and needs to have a right mindset as it relates to that.

[13:33] And so I mention that because I've heard Christians say that, and unfortunately people who've said that, like, oh, well, you know, people who say that natural disasters, you know, Hurricane Ian, Katrina, so on and so forth, oh, well, that's God's judgment on those people.

They're horrible people, and they've done horrible things, and that's God's judgment pouring out on them. And we say things like, not we, like, I've heard things like that said, and that's not true.

You're not going to find that in Scripture, of being true. But what you will find is God allows these things to happen, allows these heartaches and hardships to bring people to him, to bring people to Christ's likeness and righteousness.

Sorry, moving on. I'm just getting off on a tangent. Verse 14, Hebrews 12, 14, Seek peace and holiness. Here it says, strive for peace with everyone, and for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

We're to make every effort to live in peace with all men. We must make every effort to maintain peace while we endure discipline or training. Maybe that eases it a little bit for you.

[14:52] Widespread trials often destroy a sense of community and produce an attitude of looking out for number one. When we're losing everything, when we're losing our security, when we're losing our comforts, and we're losing our health.

Well, now it becomes all about me and nothing about you. It's like, well, I'm concerned about my health and who I'm exposed to and what I'm around and so on. But this verse warns against that tendency.

Strive for peace with everyone, for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. We need to be at peace with people because it's, well, we saw it in the pandemic, right? We saw it with the way

people responded to COVID.

Now, there were people out there that like, if you weren't wearing a mask, you're an evil person. You are hateful and you don't consider others.

You're a murderer. That term was thrown around once or twice with that. So with this great trial, this disease, COVID-19, it's real, right?

[15:57] I mean, it's a real disease. People get it. People have died from it. People are still getting it. But we've reacted in such a way that community broke down.

There was really this, there was no sense of unity, but it seemed like there's more disunity and chaos and frustration and anger at one another.

And that's what happens when something's going hard and something that we don't understand is going on. It's like, oh man, we start to break down against one another. Now we're looking out for myself. I'm more concerned about me than I am about you, really, right?

Because I'm a selfish person. So are you. This verse says, seek peace with all people and strive for holiness.

Romans 12, 18 says, if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. You have strife in your home? You have a, maybe, disagreement?

[17:02] Maybe you live in a home that is, you know, you got some people, you know, somebody's spouse is saved, another one's not.

Galen, quiet. So you live in a home where you've got that tension, right? If it's possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

I've had people come up to me and say, you know, talk about how they're being maligned, mistreated, and such. And they say, well, what do I do about this? How do I go about this? And I look at them, I quote this verse. I said, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with all people.

You know, my family is dysfunctional, right? Not my kids and I. I mean, we're dysfunctional to a degree, right? But I'm just thinking about, like, my siblings, my parents, my siblings, myself.

Like, my siblings don't get along. And there's always this, I have to kind of keep it written down somewhere, who's on good terms with who and whatnot, right? And so, I've never given my siblings reason, at least I thought, to be upset with me and to be angry with me.

[18:17] Until one time, I was in Georgia. My brothers both lived in Georgia with their spouses.

And they lived like three hours apart, but never saw each other. Anyway, that's a whole other issue.

So we went to Georgia about 10 years ago to visit my eldest brother. And I tried getting a hold of my other brother and couldn't. Tried for months.

Didn't work out. Didn't work, couldn't get a hold of him. Couldn't get in touch with him. And I didn't know where he lived. And I was like, all right, well, he's not responding to me. I want to try to get together with him. Couldn't work out. So it didn't work out. We went to this peach factory and I was like an hour from his house and had a good time.

And I did what everyone does, right? Posted on Facebook. Like everyone in the world needs to know what I'm doing. Everyone in the world needs to know what I'm having for breakfast. So like I just kept, we visited this peach factory and all that.

And no kidding, my brother was angry with me. He said, you're only an hour from the house. I'm like, you never called me back. You never sent me a need. Nothing. Like there was no communication and he got angry with me.

[19:18] Literally held a grudge where he did not talk to me for five years. Five years. The only time, and what brought him back was a trial.

Both of my grandparents passed away. They're believers and I was asked to do a memorial service for them. I was honored to do it. It was awesome. I was like, man, my grandparents had a tremendous impact on me coming to know Jesus.

So yeah, I will gladly do it. And so I did. And my brother was there and I didn't know what to think of it. I was like, oh, he's here. So, okay. You know, I, I resolved not to say that he didn't go.

Like he's not talking to me. And he was just like broken, you know, through the loss of our grandparents. And, um, you know, and so we were able to go out to lunch and, you know, reconciled.

And that lasted for a few years. Then something else happened. I can't even remember. It was something to do a vacation again. And then he didn't say anything to me.

[ 20 : 20 ] And then out of nowhere he asked if I would do their wedding, the wedding for he and his fiancée because they're getting married next summer. I'm like, okay, yeah, I'll do it. But it's just, it's just funny, right? Like there's this tension and I hope I'm not the only one who understands what this is.

You know, that you get this like out of nowhere ridiculousness and there's tension and there's hardship and there's this, you know, perceived anger and whatnot. But ultimately as long as it depends on me, I need to be at peace with all people.

I can't determine what my brother's going to think about me. I can't say, oh, no, he needs to think this way and that way and I'm going to get angry and upset now. No. I need to just say, you know what?

I have no problems, no problems, right? And seek to live peaceably with all people. So sorry, that may have been a little more transparent than you're used to, but my life.

There we go. Matthew chapter 5 verses 8 and 9, blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. Peace, again, following those who are following Jesus.

[ 21 : 26 ] 1 John chapter 1 verses 5 and 6, this is the message we've heard from him and proclaimed to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

So, you see this idea of, you know, strive for peace with everyone, for holiness without which no one will see the Lord. We need to seek to live holy lives.

1 Peter tells us, you know, the quotes God saying, be holy for I am holy. It is an expectation God has of his people to be holy, to be separate, to be different, to be sanctified, to walk in obedience in his word.

And God is light and in him there's no darkness at all and if we say that we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we do not practice the truth. But he wants us to walk in light.

He wants us to have that fellowship with him. We want to have communion with him and I think also to some degree this verse 14 has to do with the anticipation of Christ's return.

[ 22 : 38 ] So again, strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Remember, they're talking about the coming again of Jesus earlier in Hebrews.

And so 1 John 3, 2, beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

So we go through the trials and hardships in life to become, to be made into the image of Christ, to be conformed to his image. He suffered so will suffer.

He was rejected so will be rejected. He was tempted will be tempted. There's nothing that he did not endure that we won't endure. He told us that.

A slave is not greater than his master. If the world hated Jesus, the world will hate you too. And we're God's children now and we don't know yet what we'll be like until we see him.

[ 23 : 43 ] We're going to continue to be transformed, continue to be conformed to his image and molded but not until we see him will it ever be complete. In verses 15 through 17 Hebrews 12 look out for one another.

Look out for one another. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by it many become defiled.

The word translated see to it it's the Greek word episcop... hold on episcopeto. There we go. Episcopeto. Sounds fancy, huh?

Pretty cool. I know that. Now you do too. Episcopeto. Say it. Episcopeto. See? Doesn't you feel great? It's closely related to the word episkopos. Episcopos.

Episcopeto. Episcopos. Okay? What's that mean? What's that got to do anything with you? Well it's this. The word episkopos.

[ 24 : 56 ] Recognize that word at all? Episcopalian maybe? You've heard that? The word episkopos means overseer. It's what we it's where we get our word overseer in 1 Timothy 3.

We translate it bishop. We translate it elder. These two words are very so see to it it's the it's the verb form of episkopos.

It's episkopo. So we're to oversee. We're to have oversight of each other. Helping each other grow in holiness in Christlikeness.

You think about that you know so that word episkopos overseer bishop elder shepherd whatever the idea of just you know you're overseeing and you're caring for right?

That's one thing when you vote at the annual meeting you vote on elders or you know once in a blue moon you vote in a pastor the whole purpose that why you're why you're voting them in and the the leadership is to oversee and care for the people in the church.

[ 26 : 04 ] Am I right? Like your your leadership if you don't think that's the case we need to have a conversation. Your leadership that's what we're supposed to be doing we're supposed to be caring for the flock.

And so now you come to this to this word episkopo in Hebrews 12 he is now saying we are to care for one another we're to be overseers of one another and to encourage and help each other grow in holiness and Christlikeness.

we're also to look out for or oversee those in the midst especially within the church who may not be believers. Is there anybody here that is not a believer?

Quite possibly. And in as much as the care for the flock those who are followers of Christ falls to the eldership so does the care for those who are not believers.

Those who choose to sit in here and to be among God's people. So whether someone is saved or not we're to be careful and have oversight over and encourage each other.

[ 27 : 18 ] We're not to judge we're to be sensitive and concerned for opportunities to present people those who might be in our midst that don't know Jesus with the claims of Christ. It's the very letter that's the very thing the letter of Hebrews does over and over again.

It presents the claims of Christ. It shows Jesus as superior over all matters especially as it relates to the old covenant.

We must also so in our oversight and care for one another right? It's not about me. That's the thing in our society right? In a relevant society again. It's the easiest target.

How many people don't have a phone? I mean he didn't thank you. I figured dinosaur. No. Sorry. But no. Most people have phones right? They have phones. They can look things up and do things. Social media. Let's call it anti-social media because that's really what it is.

[ 28 : 20 ] But ultimately society is about this and we've now become more engrossed in our own thing that socialization is less common. Like actual talking to somebody face to face and having a remotely intelligent conversation.

It happens from time to time. Sometimes accidentally. But it's not the common thing anymore. So what's it mean then? If we're to have oversight over each other, we could use social media as a tool to be in touch with people and see what's going on.

Because like I said, everyone likes to post their breakfast and their trips. They also like to post when they're going through hard times. Now I'm going to the hospital. I've got cancer. I've got this going on, that going on.

So we can have oversight and care for one another by noticing what's going on in our lives and other people's lives, caring for them, encouraging them, praying for them, loving them, serving them.

Whatever it might be. She's not here, and she's probably not online, on Zoom.

[ 29 : 33 ] But I'll just be honest with you. Shepherd moment here. I'm concerned for Janie. I'm concerned for Janie because Janie's concerned for people. Janie loves to serve however God brings people into her life to serve.

And you think about everything that's going on that she's mentioned right from here. She's got somebody, a friend, acquaintance, I don't know how she knows Pam, who's homeless, is an alcoholic, and who's flippant on what she wants to do with her life.

She was going to go to Florida, now she's not. She's got a friend slash acquaintance, Robin, who has been here before, who is homeless, without work, and she's caring for her as well.

She has a husband who has, who's had over the last 12 months a myriad of health issues, including stomach cancer now, and intense treatment for that.

Plus, she is a doctor, a chiropractor, and has a practice and works. Plus, she cuts her own firewood, because Don can't help her because of his treatment and weakness and such.

[ 30 : 50 ] So, basically, everything on the home front falls to her while her husband is going through treatment. And plus, she's got two people that she loves dearly and has shown the love of Christ to by caring for and providing for.

And she's continuing to work. She runs FBI, the Faith Bible Institute. She works in Awana. She's a trustee. I mean, she is she's got a lot going on.

You know, and I don't know who here has noticed that or given that much thought or not. But folks, that's what it is to look out for one another.

It's to realize what we're going through and try to provide help and to be there when we can for anybody, right? In the congregation. So, she may be a little I'm sorry, Jamie.

No, she's not here. So, now she may be a little, you know, uncomfortable. She would be very uncomfortable if I was talking about her. But I just want to be honest with you. This is what we're called to do, guys.

[ 31 : 55 ] See to it. Oversee one another. Care for one another. Notice what's going on and provide, you know, encouragement however we can. man. We also prevent the growth of any bitter root.

This refers to a person who is superficially identified with God's people and who falls back into paganism. You might want to write this down, Deuteronomy chapter 29 verses 18 and 19.

I'm going to read it for you. I think that's what this, what that bitter root statement is hearkening back to. It says, Beware, Deuteronomy 29, Beware lest there be among you a man or a woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations.

Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit. One who when he hears the words of this sworn covenant blesses himself in his heart saying, I shall be safe though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.

This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. So there in Deuteronomy 29, the Lord is saying, Don't let somebody be in your presence who doesn't think there's anything to fear as it relates to that covenant, old covenant.

[ 33 : 16 ] Don't let them just continue to go on and to be a negative influence on the people. So these words warn against the development of any practice or attitude which may contaminate the minds or consciences of believers.

First Corinthians 15, 33, good, bad company corrupts good morals. Some individuals can act like a poisonous weed and utterly devastate believers around them.

Concerned Christians must take action to prevent that. You know, sometimes in churches it needs to happen where somebody leaves and it's better for the congregation.

I'm not saying that's happening or has happened. I'm just saying, like, sometimes that needs to happen. It's okay to let people leave if they need to leave because sometimes that's a poisonous weed that's only going to make things worse.

I think of OVCS, which, by the way, Workathon is an awesome fundraiser. They go out and they do work in the community, have a great testimony for God's, you know, to God's glory.

[ 34 : 27 ] OVCS, they started a high school a few years back. I was hired on staff because they were starting the high school and I worked with the high schoolers. And for three years I was there and I'm telling you, there was a group of students that were part, that were in that high school that were complete poison to the high school as a whole or to the school as a whole and to the high school specifically.

The year, like when I left to come serve here full time, that next school year there was like a mass exodus, like a bunch of people left and I'm telling you, all of them left not to return to OVCS, some by choice from the administration, some because the parents and students were like, oh, well, they're leaving, I'm leaving too and whatever.

I'm telling you, the last two years, that high school has been excellent. That has been the culture and environment that has needed to happen and it took like five people leaving to make that happen.

If that's the case for a school, a Christian school, you can better believe that's the case for a church sometimes too. It's not easy. It's a trial. It's a hardship.

But it's necessary. So in verse 16, the author mentions both sexual immorality and Esau in the same sentence.

[ 35 : 46 ] I promise we're going to land the plane here. I've gone on a lot of tangents. It's because I'm tired. I'm sorry. So verse 16, the author mentions both sexual immorality and Esau in the same sentence.

The question is this that I asked myself, is there a relationship between Esau and sexual immorality? I had to ask that. I was like, is there a relationship here? I couldn't think of anything being the case.

And scripture gives us no indication that Esau was sexually immoral. So it does not seem that the combination is meant to point to Esau's sexual sin. Rather, the conjunction in the sentence, sexual immorality or unholy like Esau indicates the strong relationship between sexual immorality and irreverence.

They're both markers of unfaithfulness to God. Esau was unholy. Someone who's sexually immoral is also unholy. And we know based on 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 and many other places the sin of sexual immorality is addressed.

It was rampant in the church at Corinth and through other churches early on. It was addressed over and over again. 1 Thessalonians, Colossians, I mean, just Ephesians.

[ 37 : 02 ] I mean, you mentioned everywhere. Sexual immorality is a rampant thing. It was a very prevalent issue in the early church. But not just the early church.

See, the Greek word that's translated sexual immorality, does anyone know? Give me the opportunity to answer. Does anyone know what that is? No? Anyone have a guess?

You won't be embarrassed of your own. The word for sexual immorality is the word pornos. I'll say that again.

Pornos. Probably like pronounced parnos, but what's it sound like to you? What's it sound like? Pornos. Pornos. Pornography. 100%. Pornography is sexual immorality in scripture. Pornography, which by the way is protected as freedom of speech in the United States of America, which is making its way into basically every movie and television series produced by Hollywood.

[ 38 : 16 ] not to mention the absolute disgusting debauchery that is the movie that's been released recently, Bros, which takes it to a whole different level.

From a 2014 Barna survey on porn addiction in the church. I'm sorry, it was 2014. I know it's almost 10 years old, but I couldn't find a more recent survey to use.

So at that time, the statistics for Christian men between 18 and 30 years old are particularly striking. 77% viewed pornography at least monthly at that time.

Christian men, 18 to 30. 77% at least monthly. 36% viewed pornography on a daily basis. 32% admit being addicted to pornography and another 12% think they may be.

This is just in the church. I'm not talking about society. The statistics for middle-aged Christian men, so ages 31 to 49, 77% looked at pornography while at work in the past three months.

[ 39 : 26 ] 64% viewed pornography at least monthly. 18% admit being addicted to pornography and another 8% think they may be. This is 2014. Even married Christian men are falling prey to pornography and extramarital sexual affairs at alarming rates.

55% look at pornography at least monthly. Married men, 35% had an extramarital affair. Adultery. Had to think of the term there for a second. They're like throwing that word affair. It's so, you know, it's just a light, fluffy thing. No, it's an absolute disgrace and a sin.

So that was 10 years ago. 10 years ago. And I'm telling you, I am convinced 100% that this is, every one of these statistics is worse because our technology has gotten better.

And so we can hide things quicker and easier and allow things to be more personal for us. The reality is that the way that pornography affects the brain, it doesn't just affect one person.

[ 40 : 40 ] It affects other people. So the way of your interactions are. And pornography increases the likelihood of anger and rage in the brain.

It's just, it's just facts. It's alarming that we allow it and, you know, we're just kind of, oh, whatever. It's no big deal. It's a very, very big deal.

The only thing I don't like about this survey, these survey results, I mean, I hate the results, but, like, the only thing I don't like about the survey is that it's only focusing on men. Because the reality is that women are just as susceptible and struggling with porn addiction as men.

Bonnie and I went to Word of Life Bible Institute and, you know, it's actually where we met and got to know each other. One of the ladies on our ministry team our second year, her name's Jessica Harris, great, great, awesome, godly woman, she had porn addiction in her life.

and it's something that God over the last 12 years has used her to start a ministry, ministering to women. And just, and like, and so we're connected with her, just all the statistics and all the stuff that she puts out there, this is the facts, this is the facts, these are the facts.

[ 41 : 58 ] It doesn't affect just men. It's not just a man problem. It's a human being problem. Men and women both struggle and have problems with this. It's not just an issue that we can sweep under the rug.

We must face it head on. And victory over porn is very possible and it must happen. And we need to be aware of it even in the church, especially in the church.

We're not going to win that battle in society. Forget that. They love their sin. They love what they're indulging in. But that should not be the way for us.

This is a topic I'm very passionate about because this is my testimony. But God has brought me through. And I know, and I've worked with kids.

I've worked with teens who've come up to me and said, hey, that's me. I've got students, former students. Hey, Mr. B, I've got a problem. I'm looking up for an interview.

[ 43 : 02 ] Can you help me? Pray for me. Meet with me. And I do. Because victory is possible. Because what's it say in Hebrews 12.1? Looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Victory is possible. And this is one area that should not be in the church for these. We need to tackle it. Attack it. So I end with this. Anonymous.

So this statement, I found on, I saw it on a Facebook page of a local pastor friend of mine whom I've never met. That's the way social media works, right?

We friend people and we never meet them. I want to. He actually had contacted me because he was interested in his son coming to youth group here, but it was a bit of a haul and it just hasn't worked out that way for him.

But we met, so we connected a couple years ago. He posted this and I thought it was perfect for what we're landing here. Learning in many ways is easier than doing once you've learned enough to do.

[ 44 : 06 ] So like it's easier to learn than it is to do. In doing, you quickly discover the endless nuances of difficulty, the sheer boring pain of endurance necessary for success and the constant pressure of the load of expectations that come with graduation.

But success is only possible in doing, never learning only. It's not enough to know and learn the word of God, but you have to go and do it.

And truth that is known but not obeyed becomes a judgment on us rather than a help to us. And the biggest fool of all is the one who knows the truth but does not apply it to their life.

So it's maybe a long roundabout way and a lot of rabbit trails to go off of. Hebrews 12, 12 through 17 is telling us to live for the gospel, to encourage one another.

Don't give up. Encourage one another. Seek peace and holiness. Be an encouragement to one another. Look out for one another. Let's pray. Father, Lord, I thank you.

[ 45 : 16 ] Lord, I thank you for this day. I thank you for this time and your word. Lord, I thank you for these folks. I know this was a long one. There was a lot to say. I went off on a lot of rabbit trails, but Lord, I pray that you'd use it for your glory.

Draw people to yourself, Lord, and help us to maintain our eyes on the prize. Look into Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. That we might run with endurance. That we might endure the discipline, Lord.

That we might not give up, but we'd strengthen ourselves. Make our paths straight through your word. Lord, that we would seek peace with one another and holiness in our lives. That we would seek to look, that we'd look out for one another.

We'd see to it that our brothers and sisters are walking in Christ and are encouraged, Lord, and not overwhelmed, not overburdened, but know that they're cared for. Lord, thank you for how awesome you are.

Thank you for the victory we have in our life because of what you've done on the cross. Help us to glorify you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.