

## Unhindered: The Heart

09.11.2022

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OK – let me start out today

With a couple of housekeeping items

I'm going to try to motivate you today

To give this series a shot

I'm willing to take one whole message

To inspire you to give it a shot

Because I know that if you do

Lots of other things will fall in place

But if you don't

Very little else matters

Whether you are new to our church

Or new to faith

Or you've been walking both for a long time

I'm going to try to motivate you today

To give this series a shot

We almost always

Get out of something

What we put into it, right?

This is not a Christian principal

It's just life

We can get a gym membership

And never go

And we'll get out of it

What we put in it

We can open a bank account

And never make any deposits

And we'll get out of it

What we put in it

We can get in a new relationship

And never make any deposits

And we'll get out of it

What we put in it

This series

If you put make investments in it

Will pay rich dividends

And I'm going to try to motivate you to do that

So, I want to be specific on the front end

About what that would look like

This is the first installment of a 6-week series

And they build on each other

So, I want to encourage you

#1 - To be a part of all 6

If you miss a Sunday

We have a bunch of ladies on a retreat today

So, if you miss a Sunday

They'll all be online

Go to our website or app

So that's part one

Catch all 6 messages

Part 2 is we have a devotional we're using

This book was an inspiration for this series

Along with a friend of Amy & I's church in Illinois

So, get the book

**There's a QR code on the screen**

Or you can get that in the lobby

Or you can ask someone at the information desk

Order a book

There are 5 short readings a week

30 total

So, read along with us

<i>Catch all 6 messages</i>
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<i>Read 30 short devotionals</i>
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And then #3 - talk through it with a group of people

For the six weeks

If you're in a group

Consider doing this series

Or talk about it before you do your other study each week

If you're not in a group

Let us help you find one

At least for the next six weeks

<i>Catch all 6 messages</i>
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<i>Read 30 short devotionals</i>
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<i>Attend 6 group discussions</i>
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OK?

I'm trying to motivate you

Because I know that if you do

Lots of other things will fall in place

But if you don't

Very little else matters

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A few years ago, I worked out *regularly*

I know – you can tell  
And the gym I worked out at  
They had a system they followed

If you did the workout as proscribed  
That means it was an Rx workout  
Rx – “as proscribed”

If you had to lower the weights or lower the reps to do it  
Which is what I did  
It was an Rx -1

Or if you lowered multiple things  
Rx -2 or Rx – “leave me alone”

Lots of options

But some of the crazy people  
Would add weight  
Where making it easier was called  
Rx-1

Adding weight to make it harder  
Was called stupid

But I never told them that  
Because we already established

They were crazy

And it wasn't like I could outrun them

So, they would put on extra weights on the bar

Or if it was running or pullups or something

*They would wear a weighted vest*

Like 20 pounds of extra weight or something

So, I always tried to convince the coaches

That since I was already carrying 20 pounds of extra weight ...

It didn't work

So – if you're training

*Adding a weight vest makes a lot of sense*

But if you were just trying to get through as fast as you can

Or if you were trying to do as many pullups as possible

Adding a weighted vest

Doesn't make much sense

Having a weighted body

Doesn't make much sense either

You'll never see an Olympic athlete

Running their race

Wearing a weighted vest

The spiritual version of that

Is the idea of this series

**Hebrews 12:1 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,**

He's referring to an athletic theme

You're in a game

You're in the arena

Spiritually

So, you need to compete

You need to do the best you can

Because a lot is on the line

*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.**

You don't run a race

With a weighted vest

I love that Hebrews divides this up

Into two categories

**There's the sin that gets us tripped up**

Churches talk about this all the time

**But there's also the "everything that hinders" part**

That also holds us back

It's the spiritual weight vest

*And I can tell you without any doubt*

This thing is gonna slow a person down

Now catch that:

There are sinful things

That will keep you from following God fully

And there are non-sinful things

That will keep you from following God fully

They're not sinful

But they do hinder

This could be stuff like schedule and margin and busy-ness

But it can also be deeper than that



**Proverbs 4:23 – Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.**

“Everything you do flows from it”

*It's like the reusable straws*

That don't get cleaned in the dishwasher

And you pull them out

And are like, Oh my word

How am I ever gonna drink through that funky thing again?!?

Solomon's like

You've got to guard your heart

Because if your heart gets funky

Everything else flows through... that... .. mess

It says “Above all else”

Solomon

The wisest person to ever live before Jesus

Solomon said the top priority in life

Is to guard your heart

The New Century Version of this passage says it this way:

**Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life.**

So, what happens

*If your thoughts are hindering you?*

What happens if your heart

*That everything flows through*

Starts to get corrupted

In this corrupt world

And it begins to... hinder you?

**Proverbs 27:19 - As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart.**

Your whole life can start getting off track

Because your heart got funky

And not even because of sin

That's what this series is about

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When I was in college

I worked as a lifeguard

During two of the summers

At a church camp

And so I mastered

The two most important skills of a lifeguard

Skill #1 – saving people’s lives

*Skill #2 – twirling the whistle*

And to this day

If I have keys

Or a name tag

Or a lanyard

Or a random piece of string

I will twirl them

Without even thinking about it

I’ll twirl them

Question:

If something so unimportant as that

That didn’t matter to me then

That certainly doesn’t matter to me now

Has become a long-term pattern in my life

What other things do you think got stuck in there?

Patterns in my life

That I learned to do  
Without thinking about them?

I remember when I was like 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade

There was a girl in my class  
And I thought she was pretty cute

And I had a crush on her  
So, I was trying really hard to impress her

And I was pretty sure I was hilarious

So, at one point

I still remember this  
At one point she looks at me  
And gives me the squinty-sassy stare  
And said, "It's not good to be conceited"?

And I thought....

"I don't know what that means  
But when I figure it out  
Based on the face you just made  
I don't think it's gonna be good"

So, I got out a dictionary

That was before smartphones  
And I remember being so hurt  
Because she was really smart  
So, I remember thinking  
She's not just saying I *did* something wrong  
She's saying I *am* something wrong

I remember wrestling with the shame  
And the insecurity of not wanting to seem conceited  
And second-guessing my motives

Now I don't want to overstate this  
So, don't miss the point  
But that was about 40 years ago  
There are so many things from that year  
That I couldn't tell you in the least  
But I remember that interaction  
And that little girl  
She's a lawyer now  
Figures

Those things stick

Now some of you are saying

Wait a minute

Grow up

That's just some stupid little thing

From a long time ago

That's true

To a point

When I was in college

I worked on the plumbing crew at the school

And sometimes – if they were short-staffed

We'd have to go help out at the sewage treatment plant

*So, if I had your reusable straw*

With me at the sewage treatment plant

And I got just a little bit of something on it

Just a little bit

How much would be too much?

I mean, it's just a little bit

*Guard your heart*

*For Scripture says everything you do flows from it.*

And if words from a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade attorney

Stick for over 40 years

What happens when we endure real trauma?

Abuse

Neglect

Abandonment

Severe trial

Shame

Rejection

Death of someone we love

Jesus said "In this world you will have trouble"

But Jesus also wants us to live unhindered lives

**Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG) - Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life ... Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.**

For some of us

It's been so long since we've tasted

Freely and lightly

That we don't even know what that means

How would your life be different

If you were suddenly transformed this week

Into freely and lightly?

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We started this message

By reading Hebrews 12:1

Let's go back and read a little further:

**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,**

How do we do that?

How do we throw off the stuff that hinders?

How do we run that race

When we're so tired?

**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,**

We focus on Jesus

It reminds me of the story

Of Jesus walking on the water

Peter asks if he can walk on water too

So, Jesus invites him

And everything is going fine

Until Peter gets his eyes off Jesus

Until Peter starts focusing on the wind and waves and danger



*The Bible here is saying*

You run your race

By fixing your eyes on your Creator

The One who marked your race out to begin with

I want to stop a second

And focus in on the word “fixing”

**It comes from the Greek word aphoráō (ἀφοράω)**

Aphoráō is a compound word

**Από, "away from "**

And horáō, "see"

Literally, “Away from see”

You’re too nice to say it

But that just doesn’t make sense

The Abbott-Smith Greek dictionary defines it:

**"looking away from all else, to fix one's gaze upon"**

You’re fixing your eyes on Jesus

By looking away from everything else

You run the race that God has marked for you

By looking away from every other definition

Of what your race should be

Stop getting every other person's opinion

Of what success in your life looks like

*Fix your eyes on Jesus*

**so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

A few months ago

I found myself to have grown weary

And I found myself *losing* heart

Growing weary and losing heart is the opposite

Of running with perseverance, the race marked out for us

Do you see that?

He says to run with perseverance the race marked out for us

And the way you do that is to fix your eyes on Jesus

And considering Him

Fixing your eyes on Him

Will keep you from growing weary

And losing heart

One of the main obstacles

To a life lived on purpose for God

Is a man or woman

Who has grown weary

And lost heart

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This is not a guilt thing

God wants you to run the race He's marked out for you

Not because He needs anything from you

But because the race he marked out

Is better than any race you & I will mark out for ourselves

Let Christ define you:

Beyond the shame others have given you

Beyond the rejection that you've sometimes endured

Beyond the mistakes and regrets and hurts and hangups

Fix your eyes on Jesus

So that you will not grow weary

Or lose heart

*So, what do we do with all the junk*

This chapter continues in verse 11

**Hebrews 12:11 - 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.**

What would happen

If you allowed the painful things of your past

Some of them, sinful things you've done

Some of them, sinful things that others have done

Some of them, non-sinful realities that just hinder you

What if you allowed those events

To be seeds for a future harvest of righteousness

And a future harvest of peace.

That can happen in your life

**But you've got to be "trained by it"**

This series will bring a harvest of righteousness

And a harvest of peace

Hear that:

Lots more righteousness than you currently have

Lots more peace than you currently have

This series can bring you a harvest of righteousness and peace

But that means you've got to submit your life

All of it

To the master trainer

And we almost always receive from training

In correlation to what we put in

You can receive a lot of righteousness and peace from this series

But you've got to put yourself all in

Pick up a book

There's a QR code at the table in the lobby

Commit to reading over the next few weeks

Get in a group

Where you can have others to discuss this with

And most importantly

Commit this process to Jesus

The master trainer

Look at His words:

**Matthew 16:24 (MSG) - Anyone who intends to come with Me has to let Me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how.**

If you'll join with us

If you'll be vulnerable with Him

Whether you're a Christian or not

If you'll be vulnerable with Him  
We will get beyond the symptoms  
That you're dealing with in your life  
And we'll get to the roots  
That are causing problems  
And Jesus will turn the seeds of your suffering  
Into a harvest of righteousness and peace