



# Letters About Perseverance

**Lesson Aim: To learn that focusing on Jesus helps us to persevere.**

## THE WORSHIP

**Who God Is:** The Spirit Who Guides Us

## THE WORD

**What He Has Done:** God led Paul and the writer of Hebrews to write about perseverance by focusing on Jesus.

**Scripture Focus:** Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 **Key Verse:** Hebrews 12:2

**Christ Connection:** Deuteronomy 11:18-19

## THE WAY

**The Big Question: What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus?**

## UNIT 5 FOCUS VERSE

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:12-14

<b>Unit 5: The Promise of Guidance</b>			
	Bible Story	What He Has Done	Lesson Aim
22	Letters About Love, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 12-13; 1 John 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:8	God led Paul, John, and Peter to write about love.	To develop strong, godly love toward one another.
23	Letters About Unity, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 15-18, 24b-26; Ephesians 4:1-6, 29-32	God led Paul to write about unity.	To learn what it means to have unity in the body of Christ.
24	Letters About Forgiveness of Sin, Romans 3:23-24; 6:23; 1 John 1:9; James 4:17; Galatians 5:13-14, 19-23	God led Paul and John to write about God's forgiveness.	To know we are all sinners who receive God's complete forgiveness through Jesus.
25	Letters About Forgiving Others, Colossians 3:12-15; 1 Corinthians 13:4-6; Matthew 6:12	God led Paul to write about forgiving others.	To follow Jesus' example in forgiving others.
26	Letters About Peace, Philippians 4:4-9; Colossians 3:15-17; Romans 12:17-18; 2 Corinthians 13:11	God led Paul to write about God's peace.	To pursue peace with one another and to pursue peace of mind.
27	Letters About Perseverance, Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18	God led Paul and the writer of Hebrews to write about perseverance by focusing on Jesus.	To learn that focusing on Jesus helps us to persevere.

**LEADER'S ENCOURAGEMENT** This week, read 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Please join us in praying, "Lord, You are the author and perfecter of our faith. Strengthen the students to run the race You have set before them. Amen."

**Lesson Aims** are based on reflecting God's character as we participate in His actions to, for, and in the world.

**Take Home Elements:** The Journal Entry, Action Card, and Family Discussion Card may be sent home to encourage students to reflect on the lesson. The Journal Entry is an in-depth personal study. The Action Card is a visual reminder of the Bible story, God's action, and how we can join into that action. The Family Discussion Card gives parents and guardians a way to engage their students in what they are learning.

**Leader's Tip:** For larger gatherings, teach THE WELCOME, THE WORSHIP, and THE WORD in a large group setting and divide into small groups for discussion with THE WAY.

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## Getting started

# THE WELCOME

**Suggestion:** Choose a game that focuses on ideas such as perseverance, focus, prizes, running, or races.

### **ACTIVITY OPTION 1: OBSTACLE RELAY**

**Purpose:** To introduce how following Jesus is similar to running a race.

**Supplies:** Obstacles (e.g. traffic or sport cones, boxes, or chairs), items for step 4 which will slow down runners (e.g. weights, large shoes, blindfold)

**Preparation:** Create 2 relay courses side-by-side that incorporate a series of obstacles (e.g. crab walk to the first cone, run sideways to the next cone, zigzag through a series of cones, do five jumping jacks, run around the last cone, and sprint back to the team line).

#### **Directions:**

1. Divide the group into two teams. Each team lines up at the beginning of one of the relay courses.
2. On your signal, the first runner completes the relay. When they return to the team line, they tag the next runner who completes the relay, and so on, until all runners have gone.
3. The first team to have all runners complete the course wins.
4. Before running the relay again, give each runner an item or challenge that will hinder them such as carrying weights, wearing shoes that are too large, wearing a blindfold, tying their shoe laces together, running backward, running while looking backward, or crawling through the course.
5. Run the race again.
6. The first team to have all runners complete the course wins.
7. Talk about how the first relay compared to the second relay. Did the hindrances make it difficult to run the course? What challenges in our lives make life more difficult?

### **ACTIVITY OPTION 2: NEVER GIVE UP**

**Purpose:** To encourage students to persevere.

**Supplies:** Per player: round sandwich cookie, 25 coins, feather, spoon, plastic or hardboiled egg

**Preparation:** Mark start and finish lines for players to use for "Keep It Up" and "Egg Race."

#### **Directions:**

1. Choose several volunteers to play. Explain each of the four games below.
2. On your signal, players are to complete each of the games in order. The first student to complete all four games wins. Note: If your time is limited, set a timer. The player to complete the most games by the end of the time is the winner.

**Cookie Face:** Each player sets a cookie on their forehead. They must get the cookie in their mouths using only their facial muscles. No hands!

**Stack It Up:** Players must stack 25 coins on the floor in under a minute using only one hand.

**Keep it Up:** Players must blow a feather from the start to the finish line. If the feather falls on the floor, they must return to the start line and begin again.

**Egg Race:** Players move from the start to the finish line as they put the spoon handle in their mouths and balance an egg on the spoon. If the egg falls, they must return to the start line and begin again.



The Spirit who guides us

## THE WORSHIP

**Note to Leader:** The instructions below are suggestions only. Adapt this time of worship to suit your environment, resources, and cultural expression. Encourage students to broaden their view of corporate worship by including a variety of expressions such as group prayer, group praise, silent meditation, singing, listening to music, reading scripture, collecting an offering, drama, dance, visual arts, and/or a physical exploration of nature or neighborhoods.

**Ideas for Optional Visuals:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Today, we worship the Spirit who guides and encourages us to keep following Jesus. The Holy Spirit can help us keep our thoughts focused on Jesus everywhere, every day. He can help us to never give up.**

Read the Unit 5 Focus Verse: Colossians 3:12-14.



Sing worship songs and guide students to focus on perseverance.



Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.



Invite students to offer sentences of praise to God by completing the following sentence:  
"Lord, we worship You for \_\_\_\_\_."



## Letters about perseverance

# THE WORD Presentation

**Note to Leader:** Adapt this segment to your setting (Sunday School class, youth group, multi-age gathering, youth camp, retreat, etc.). In some settings, you may choose to have a student read the scripture aloud, and then have the leader, in his or her own words, briefly communicate the Teaching Points, the Christ Connection, and the Big Question. In other settings, a teacher, pastor, or other experienced speaker may present a lecture or extended message that includes those same elements.

### Ideas for Optional Visuals:

You may choose to include an object lesson, video clip, drama, dance, song, or work of art to illustrate the teaching points.

Option 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 2: \_\_\_\_\_



## TEACHING POINTS

Consider current culture and influences impacting your students, and adjust the teaching accordingly.

*Read the suggested scripture and communicate each of the points noted.*

Last time, we learned God can give us peace of mind, even in the face of difficulties. Today, we will read New Testament letters that encourage us to persevere in following Jesus. To persevere means to never give up. It is wonderful to follow Jesus, but it is not always easy. Every day we must choose to do things His way instead of our own way.

Although we don't know who wrote the letter to the Hebrews, we can see he was someone who knew believers would need encouragement to keep following Jesus. Hebrews 12 compares following Jesus to running a race.

The leader or a student reads Hebrews 12:1-3.

- In order to understand what the writer of Hebrews meant by "we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses," we must look at the previous chapter. Hebrews 11 mentions people who lived by faith as far back as Adam and Eve's son, Abel. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David are just a few of the Old Testament believers who had faith that the Messiah would come. These are the people who now are "such a great cloud of witnesses." We are encouraged to follow their example of living by faith. They are cheering us on as we pursue faith in Jesus, the Messiah they had been waiting for!
- Hebrews 12:1 mentions two things that can slow us down:
  - (1) "everything that hinders"—Even good things like serving others, hobbies, and relationships can slow us down or get in the way of following Jesus.
  - (2) "the sin that so easily entangles"—We all struggle with sin, but if we keep our eyes on Jesus, the Spirit will help us overcome our sin.
- Every day we must choose to throw off life's hindrances and entanglements.
- Just as in a physical race we must keep our eyes on the finish line so we don't stumble or wander off track, in this spiritual race we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Fixing our eyes on Jesus means focusing on Him, making Him the center of our attention through Bible study, prayer, worship, and service.

# THE WORD Presentation *continued*

- Focusing on Jesus helps us persevere and never give up, even in hard times or times when we fail. The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts and helps us fix our eyes on Jesus and do things His way.
- (12:3) Jesus suffered infinitely more than any of us will ever be asked to endure. We are encouraged to remember what He has done for us when we are weary and tempted to give up.

The leader or a student reads Philippians 3:12-14.

- To win, a runner must keep his eyes ahead, not glancing back at what is behind him.
- Following Jesus for the rest of our lives is like running a race where the finish line is heaven. Everyone who runs the race receives the prize, which is seeing Jesus face to face and being with Him in heaven forever.
- Instead of looking back at our mistakes and our sinful past, Paul tells us to put it behind us and press on toward the prize in heaven.
- Just as Paul encouraged believers to keep going, it is important for us to remind each other that our lives have a purpose and a destination so that we do not lose heart or give up.

The leader or a student reads 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

- Everything we see now (the things of this world) is temporary. Even the most challenging troubles are temporary. To fix our eyes on these things would cause us to lose heart.
- Instead we are to focus on what is unseen; we are to look beyond the physical and instead focus on the spiritual, the kingdom of God. These are the things that last forever. When we focus on the unseen things of God that last forever we are encouraged to persevere.

Perseverance is difficult, especially during difficult times, but God will use it to build our character and to strengthen us on our spiritual journey. We can persevere because we know Jesus persevered for us, and because we know who Jesus is and who we are through Him. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we cannot fail.



Connecting the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Us

## CHRIST CONNECTION

In the whole story of God, what's the connection between this New Testament story and the Old Testament?

- Nearly 1,500 years before the letter to the Hebrews was written, Moses reminded the Israelites to focus on God and to keep His commands. As you read this, think about your favorite way to learn and remember God's Word.

The leader or a student reads aloud Deuteronomy 11:18-19.

- Close your eyes and picture yourself in a life-long race where you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. The prize is being with Him in heaven forever. Before you open your eyes, let's pray the Holy Spirit will help you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus every day. (Lead students in prayer.)



## THE BIG QUESTION

Introduce and elaborate on this question. Students will answer it in their discussion group.

**What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus?**



## THE WAY Discussion



**GETTING STARTED** Display and review the Discussion Group Covenant below:

**We will include everyone here, treating one another with respect and kindness.  
We will encourage everyone here to express their thoughts and opposing views.**

Every student shares his or her best experience or greatest challenge of the past week.



### READ IT AGAIN

Read Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-14; and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 silently or aloud.

**How is following Jesus like running in a race?**

**What kinds of things could hinder us but not be sin? How does sin “entangle” us?**

**What is it about the things that are behind us that can cause us to lose sight of the goal? (Philippians 3:13)**

**How are we being renewed on the inside? (2 Corinthians 4:16)**

**What reason does Paul give the Corinthians for not losing heart in the face of suffering? (2 Corinthians 4:17)**



**THE BIG QUESTION** Invite students to share their answers.

**What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus?**



**TAKE ACTION** Lead students in a discussion using the questions below.

**What sporting event or personal goal have you worked hard to succeed in? Did you ever feel like giving up? What kept you going?**

**Have you ever gotten side-tracked, injured, or lost in your spiritual journey because of past mistakes or experiences? What did you do to get back in the race?**

**What do you most look forward to when you think about life in heaven?**

Ask each student to complete this sentence: **God calls us to persevere SO THAT others might \_\_\_\_\_.**



**PRAY** Share prayer requests and answered prayers.

Have students pray with partners, or have the whole group pray together.



**FINAL FIVE MINUTES** When only 5 minutes remain, begin this segment.

Give each student Action Card #27 and Journal Entry #27. **Take home today’s Action Card as a reminder of how we can join in what God is doing. Use the Journal Entry as your personal devotional study. Complete your Journal Entries at home and keep them together in a notebook or in your Bible.** Optional: Provide parent or guardian with Family Discussion Card #27.

# PROPHETS & PROMISES

## JOURNAL ENTRY #27

### Letters About Perseverance

Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-14; & 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

### WHAT DOES IT SAY?

- **Pray!!!** Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants you to learn from this passage.
- **Read Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-14; and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.**
- According to Hebrews 12:1, who surrounds us in our journey of faith?
- In Philippians 3:12 (NIV), what has Paul not obtained/achieved? What is his goal? What is the prize?
- We all face troubles in life. Paul faced prison, beatings, persecution, and shipwrecks! What word(s) did he use to describe our troubles in this world? (2 Corinthians 4:17)

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- How can we be encouraged by the stories of people who have lived by faith?
- What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus?
- Like a runner in a race, why is it important for us to forget what is behind as we live our Christian life?
- What do you think Paul meant when he said, “our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory”? (2 Corinthians 4:17 NIV)

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- What are the things that distract you from fixing your eyes on Jesus?
- Is there any suffering in your life that is tempting you to lose heart? How can remembering the persecution Jesus faced help you to not grow weary?
- Write down your weekly schedule. Think about what it will look like to follow that schedule while fixing your eyes on Jesus.

Action Card #27/P&P

## LETTERS ABOUT PERSEVERANCE

HEBREWS 12:1-3; PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14; AND  
2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

GOD LED PAUL AND THE WRITER OF HEBREWS  
TO WRITE ABOUT *PERSEVERANCE*.

WE ARE CALLED TO *PERSEVERE*  
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