

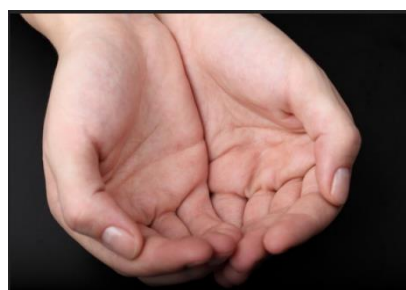
## Running the Race with Perseverance Hebrews 12:1-3

This is an invitation to spend time retreating with Jesus, to put aside 2-3 hours to be in his presence. It was originally written in April 2021 as an encouragement for IFES staff to stop in the midst of their busy lives in order to feed their own souls.

**Be still and know that I am God. (Ps 46:10)** We know this and yet we don't know it. So often our lives and ministry turn around something else than God. We always live in response to something or someone: to what? to whom? Currently, large parts of our world are living in response to Covid 19. Maybe that is also true for you. Or other concerns have become the centre around which your thoughts and actions turn.

We are invited to live in response to the living and gracious God who has revealed himself to us in Jesus. In order to do so, we need continually to re-orient our lives to him. We need to stop, intentionally spend time in his presence and listen.

The following notes are there to help you retreat with Jesus. The suggested timing is for a two-hour period; this can help guide you through this time. If you feel God speaking to you, then stay there longer. Just make sure you have 20 minutes left at the end to close well.



This is not a work sheet to be completed. This is not about producing anything, but receiving from God. It is about slowing down, waiting and listening. I encourage you to enter into this time in a posture of open hands – holding out your life to God and ready to receive from him.

You may have a deep encounter with Jesus. You may not. Don't be under pressure for any result. Simply spending time in God's presence is precious and will have an impact on your life. Retreats are about letting God be God. They are about giving God the space to do whatever he wants to do.

And now: Enjoy!

Sabine Kalthoff (IFES Secretary for Scripture Engagement; [sabine.kalthoff@ifesworld.org](mailto:sabine.kalthoff@ifesworld.org))

### Some practical comments:

- \_Plan 2-3 hours in your schedule and tell others so you will not be disturbed.
- \_Print out these notes so that you will not need your computer during the retreat.
- \_Writing down key thoughts or prayers during the retreat can help bring clarity.
- \_If the weather and surroundings allow, you might also want to include a prayerful-reflective walk in your time.

### I. Slowing down... to be in God's Presence (10 min)

Choose a place to settle down for this short retreat. Turn off your phone and computer. Ask not to be interrupted. Have your Bible, paper and a pen at hand. Take time to enter into God's presence. Spend some minutes simply sitting in silence. As your thoughts wander, you might find it helpful to make a note of the concerns and distractions in your head – and entrust these things into God's hands. Then gently return to God's invitation in Psalm 46:10, "*Be still and know that I am God.*"

### II. Listen and prayerfully start reflecting on Hebrews 12:1-3 (15-20 min)

Read this passage in your preferred language – slowly. Listen to it again as you read it out loud.

What captures your attention (words, phrases, images)? What resonates with you today? Stay there in prayer. Close by rereading this passage. This is a time of listening and talking with Jesus about what you are hearing. Later there will be time to reflect and study some aspects more deeply.

### III. Look at your past 3-4 months through the following windows (20-30 min)

Looking at what is happening in our lives is key for our spiritual journey. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you so that you can see what was significant for you in each of these areas during the past months. Do not try and be complete, otherwise you will get stuck in this section.

What burdens have weighed you down?

Which people have journeyed with you as an encouragement to run the race (living people today as well as from Scripture)?

What have been windows to Jesus in these past months – where have you seen something of his presence, goodness, life-giving work?

### IV. Going Deeper (30-45 min)

Read through the following options and **then choose one of them**. Do not try and do everything: then, you will not be able to go deep. If you are tempted to do so, I suggest that you plan to continue your journey a week later and then choose another option. Stay in a prayerful mode as you reflect, pray and make notes. And make sure that you have 20 minutes left for a good closure (see below).

**Start by slowly reading Hebrews 12:1-3 two more times.**

**Option 1: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus... Consider him... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”**

Take some time to look at Jesus and consider his path. He is so much more than an example of endurance for us. What do we learn about Jesus in Hebrews 12:1-3?

Write your own confession of who Jesus is: “Jesus, you are...” Put in your own words what is said about Jesus in Hebrews 12:1-3. Feel free to add some affirmations – aspects of who Jesus is for which you are particularly thankful today.

Read out loud what you have written as a prayer of worship.

How does looking at Jesus encourage you today?

**You can close this time with a short walking exercise (inside or outside).** First, as you walk, stare at your feet so that your perspective is very narrow. Do this for at least two minutes. What does this feel like? Then look up and take in the wide perspective that opens up in front of you. What feels different? (Doing this in your daily life, can remind you to stop staring at the problems and challenges, and instead to open your eyes for the presence and much larger reality of Jesus.)

**Option 2: “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles...”**

Let us do so. Not by trying hard to get rid of our sins and burdens, but by bringing them to Jesus – throwing them on him. Look at the window in which you noted the burdens that have been weighing you down these past months. Bring each one to Jesus.

God promises: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9). You might want to write down sin that you are aware of in your life on pieces of paper – as you ask God’s forgiveness, tear them up and throw them in a rubbish bin.



We are invited: *“Cast all your anxiety on him [God] because he cares for you.”* (1 Peter 5:7). You might want to write down your anxious burdens and place them in a bowl as a symbol of placing them in God’s strong and loving hands – trusting him to walk you through the challenges of your present life.

As you look at your life, ask God: What burdens are mine to carry with his help and where have I over-burdened myself? What is the race “marked out for me”, that I am asked to run?

**Option 3: “Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross... and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

Look at what lies ahead of you in the next 3-4 months. You can draw a path and mark some of the key people, responsibilities, challenges and joys that you are expecting along its way. (Do not try to be complete, but ask God to help you see what is key.) As you do this, what thoughts and feelings rise up in you: joy, fear, tiredness, anxiety, a list of what you need to do, thankfulness, something else? Talk to Jesus about your next months.

When you look at the challenges that await you, what motivates you to keep going? What motivates you to continue in ministry?

Jesus was motivated “*by the joy set before him*” – the promise of the Father to raise him to life and through him, to bring life to many – to make him “*the author and perfecter of faith*”. He knew that pain and death would not have the last word. What promises of the Father help you to look to the future with joy and hope? Write out one or two of them.

If you have time, read Hebrews 11:8-16. They show us how Abraham lived on the basis of God’s promises to him.

**V. Closure (20 min)**

Settle down again in silence. Prayerfully review what you have been hearing from God during this retreat. Write a prayer of not more than six lines in response.

What one or two things from this retreat do you want to capture and take with you in your life and ministry? Write them down – maybe on a memo card that you can stick to your computer or desk. (Not more than one or two things; otherwise it is too much to remember and have an impact.)

We have been looking at Jesus. Close by giving him a name that reflects how he met you during this retreat. (e.g. Jesus, my hope for the future...)