



Return To The Race

Sermon Small Group Questions

Speaker: Pastor Tim Bittle

USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group, you may choose one of the following options:
 1. one section of questions
 2. one or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we are going to start our summer series entitled "Return", we are going to talk about some things that God has called us as a church and as the people of God to return to; Our first Love, The Word, Prayer, etc.

To kick off this series, I want to talk to you about Returning to the Race!

How would you respond to these questions?:

- Are you running the race or are you just running in place?

- Are you making progress in your relationship with God?
- Are you getting free of sin, or are you still “working on” that same sin pattern that you were working on the day you gave your life to Jesus.
- Are you being molded and shaped into the image of Jesus or do you still look hauntingly similar to the unredeemed version of yourself?
- Do you have vision for your life or do you still feel like you are in a waiting room in the spirit, waiting for your name to be called.
- Are you making any progress or are you simply running in place?

MESSAGE

In this passage of scripture Jesus has just miraculously feed thousands of people with some fish and some bread and He sends the disciples on ahead of Him on a boat ride to the other side. This is the second time the disciples have made this boat trip, on the same sea, traveling to the same town.

[Matthew 14:22-34 NIV84]

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

“Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!” Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.

[Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV84]

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 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.

Like running on a treadmill at the gym many Christians have the appearance of running the race but are going no where.

We've mistaken MOTION for MOVEMENT. We are going through the motions of Christianity but we're not going anywhere!

You were not called to go through the motions! You were, as it says in Hebrews, CALLED TO RUN A RACE! Not just any race but one that has been custom designed for you by God himself.

Why is it so hard to run the race? People quit running because they forget WHY they are running. People stop making progress when they lose sight of the finish line.

Jesus is the goal, HE is the prize, He is the finish line. And if He called you to run this race, He takes personal responsibility to ensure that you will not only finish but WIN!

The reason Jesus stood on the shore and watched for about 12 hours as the disciples tried to cross the lake and he allowed Peter to walk out on the water to Him is, He was preaching Hebrews 12:1 before it was ever penned.

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

The only way you will get off the treadmill in the spirit and **RETURN TO THE RACE** is get your eyes off of everything else around you and get them BACK ON JESUS!

What are your eyes fixed on? The past and all your failures or maybe the present relational or financial storm you are facing or even your uncertain future?

You cannot look at Jesus and the storm at the same time. You can't look at Jesus and your past at the same time.

You don't want to be a cross eyed Christian!

We need to "fix" our eyes on Jesus.

FIX = Aphorao (a-fa-ray-o) = to turn the eyes from other things and fix them on something else

Because you must go on from here. You can't stay stuck here. Its time to stop treading water and get on with it!

Once every disciple in that boat got their eyes on Jesus, the waves calmed, the storm ceased and they made it to the other side.

Fix your eyes on Him, and **Return to the Race!**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Have you spent much time on a treadmill?**
- 2. Have you looked around in your spiritual life and surveyed your progress? How are you doing?**
- 3. What does "Going through the motions" of being a Christian look like?**
- 4. What are your eyes fixed on?**
- 5. Do you have a vision for your life? What does progress look like for you in a month, a year, 5 years? Do you know what the finish line looks like?**
- 6. How can you keep your eyes on Jesus in your everyday life?**
- 7. What race has God called you to? How will you proceed knowing that God has a custom fit race for you and it is His desire that you not just finish but win?**