

### 3k - God's Severe Mercy

#### *Read Hebrews 12*



Twenty-six miles is a long way to go. You've been running for over two hours; your heart is pounding, your chest is heaving, your body aches, and your pace begins to slacken. How nice it would be to quit, to lie down and rest, to take it easy. You begin to wonder whether the race is really worth all the effort.

The Hebrew believers wondered that about Christianity. Within the Jewish community their lives had been tranquil and carefree. However, now as Christians they were ridiculed, rejected, persecuted—and ready to give up. Like an experienced trainer, the author encourages them to keep on running. He helps them and us to understand why hardship can be God's severe mercy.

1. What do athletic training and parental discipline have in common?
2. Read Hebrews 12:1-13. In what ways is the Christian life like a marathon (Hebrews 12:1-4)?
3. How can the "great cloud of witnesses" in the stadium (those described in Hebrews 11) motivate us to keep on running?
4. What kinds of things can hinder or entangle us as Christians?
5. Jesus has already completed the race. How can fixing our eyes on him keep us from growing weary and losing heart?

6. In Hebrews 12:5-13 the imagery changes from a race to a family. What "word of encouragement" does the Father give us about hardships in life (Hebrews 12:5-7)?
  
7. We often want our lives to be free from hardship or difficulty. How does Hebrews 12:8 challenge such an attitude?
  
8. How does the discipline of our human fathers compare with God's discipline (Hebrews 12:9-10)?
  
9. If we endure God's discipline now, how will our lives be different later on (Hebrews 12:11-13)?
  
10. Read Hebrews 12:14-29. What factors can lead us, like Esau, to miss out on God's blessing (Hebrews 12:14-17)?
  
11. Looking at Hebrews 12:18-24, describe in your own words the vivid differences between Mount Sinai (symbol of the Old Covenant) and Mount Zion (our heavenly home).
  
12. In light of the glorious destiny of the righteous, why is it perilous to refuse to listen to God's encouragement and warning in this chapter (Hebrews 12:25-27)?

- 13.** Look back over the whole chapter. What have you learned about how discipline can be God's severe mercy?
- 14.** Our God is not only a loving Father but also a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28-29). Take time now to thank and worship him with reverence and awe.