



**Focused on
Finishing Well
and a Fresh Start
Hebrews 12:1-3
Bob Stone**



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I. The Central Questions for us

A. **The Main Questions** - “How can we finish well?”
“How should we sail (run) to the right destination in a manner that will give us a good finish to our course, even if we are younger?”

B. The Supplemental Questions

1. **What will inspire us to finish well?** (Symbols?)
2. **Who didn't finish well?**

Quote - Howard Hendricks: “The bulk of people who failed to finish well in Scripture failed in the last half of their life.” (Only 30% finished well.)

3. **Why didn't they finish well?** A summary:
 - a. a clear and/or major choice(s) that wasn't wise or thought through (study of 1,200 contemporary/historical figures). Barriers to a good finish: 1) Misuse of money; 2) Abuse of power; 3) Pride/success; 4) Sexual Misconduct; 5) Family Dissention; 6) Complacency. Source: R. Clinton (It was a clear choice...)
 - b. an accumulation of small choices that slowly moved them from the course God had chosen for them to follow, e.g., Demas—2 Tim. 4:10.

Example: CT Studd (Missionary)

II. The Call to End Well. How have some finished?

- A. **The Apostle Paul was obsessed with finishing well**
—Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Tim. 4:7; Galatians 5:7.
- B. **Daniel was inspired and committed to finishing well, too!** (See the book of Daniel.)
- C. **Others who finished well inspire us...**
- D. **Sadly, not all Bible characters finished well.**

Running: Abraham, Joshua, Daniel, Paul, Peter;
Walking (fell short of God's intention, ramifications of disobedience plagued them, even though they finished with God): David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah;
Limping (on a decline in the latter phases of their life): Gideon, Eli, Solomon; **Disqualified:** Absalom, Ahab, Saul. **Summary:** The real problem is obedience and character development, not skill.

Example: (See eagleflight.org/character-studies)

III. The Characteristics of those who finished well—Heb. 12:1-3. There are seven main characteristics:

- A. **They had a network of meaningful relationships with peers and those they disciplined, as well as important mentors and examples during their lifetime.** Heb. 12:1—“*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...*” (See Heb. 11.)

- **Stats:** Those who finished well had 10-15 significant people/mentors who helped them at various stages in their life. (R. Clinton)
- **Summary:** Scripture and our contemporaries can encourage us with all the aspects of the race described in Heb. 12:1-3. (See 13:7-8.)
- **Example:** Eagleflight Mentoring

Heb. 12:1-3 has six other characteristics:

- B. **They all had a weight problem and were clumsy, but they were constantly working on it.** Stated another way: **They all needed to be honest and confessional about their weaknesses and sins.** Heb. 12:1b—*“Let us throw off everything that hinders (KJV, ‘every weight’) and the sin that so easily entangles.”* No one has it all together, but we press on—Phil. 3:10-15a

Summary: To finish well means we have to deal with those weaknesses and sins that tangle us up by being authentic and confessional (repentant) about them.

- C. **They “persevered” in difficult times, were “passionate” about their race, and were “disciplined” in the important areas of their lives.** Heb. 12:1c—*“...and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”* (Yes, struggling & stumbling, but persevering).

1. **Perseverance:** finishers are “hupomone” people—Acts 27-28; 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33.

Definition: steadfastness, constancy, patient endurance, holding on tenaciously, e.g., a bulldog

2. **Passionate/compassionate** about their race (with a touch of craziness)—Matt. 9:35-38.
3. **Discipline** is a synonym of “**persevere**”—1 Cor. 9:19-27. (It’s training that develops self-control, character, orderliness, and efficiency.)

- D. **They had a perspective that enabled them to focus.** Heb. 12:2—*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter (finisher) 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.”*

1. Perspective stands out as a characteristic of every good leader and finisher.

2. Perspective allows us to see beyond what others might do to us and focus on how Christ might use our circumstances to help advance the race—Phil. 1:12-20; Gen. 50:20; 2 Cor. 4:7-11.
3. Perspective: Seeing the end of the race enables a person not to be discouraged when he or she sees an evil person prosper—Psalm 73:16-17.
4. Perspective is developed as we study the priorities of the Author of the race, and then try to personalize them, i.e., make the Lord’s priorities our own—James 1:27; Micah 6:8; John 13:34-35, Acts 1:8, etc.

- E. **They experienced intimacy with Christ and repeated times of inner renewal.** Heb. 12:3—*“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

- Friendship with Jesus is at the core of those who finish well. What happens when we only focus on human witnesses in the stands? What enables us to keep going in the race? When Jesus is the focus, what will be the result? (See v. 3b.)
- Friendship is enabled by creative spiritual health habits in keeping with who we are: prayer walks, journal writing, prayer retreats, meditation on Scripture, caffeine enhanced creative Bible studies, etc. (**See: eagleflight.org/eagleflight**)

- F. **They maintained a positive learning attitude and lifestyle all their lives, and were committed to the Lord and His Word as the main source of that learning**—Heb.12:3; Phil. 4:9; 2 Tim. 4:13; 3:16; 2:15; Matt. 11:28; Dan. 1:17; Prov. 1:5; 9:9.

- They’re constantly evaluating, listening, watching their Lord—Heb. 12:3; Phil. 4:9.
- They became life-long learners; not mental slugs.

Daniel is an example of a positive learning attitude.

1. Like Daniel, we need to establish a pattern/a habit of study and prayer—Dan. 6:10; 9:2.
2. Get a study/prayer buddy(ies)—Dan. 2:17-18.
3. Be a committed observer/student in every area of our life. Excel in learning—Dan. 1:17-20; Prov. 1:20ff. Be a doer—Matt. 7:24-27; Heb. 5:12-14.
4. Know principles of interpretation—Dan. 2:17-23.
5. Let Scripture (truth, prophecy, wisdom) impact our physical life, emotions, volition—Dan. 7:28; 1:8-14.
6. Let's read biographies throughout our life—George Mueller; Oswald Chambers; Eric Liddell; Florence Nightingale; C.S. Lewis; William Wilberforce; Sir Winston Churchill; Billy Graham; Bonhoeffer; etc.

Finally, those who live this kind of life, even imperfectly...

G. **They pass on a legacy that others can run with, vastly improve upon, and eventually pass on to others**—2 Tim. 2:1-2. How do we prepare to do that?

1. **First, we're to be dominated by grace**—v. 1.
2. **Second, we're to be discerning about our entrustment/investment in others**—2 Tim. 2:2.

**What character quality stands above the rest?
They will be reliable - faithful.**

In other words, we invest in those we can trust...

3. **Third, be dedicated to a ministry of multiplication.** v. 2—“...*entrust to reliable men who will also be **qualified to teach others.***” (Commit to exponential discipleship.) A multiplier is a disciple who trains/encourages his spiritual children to reproduce themselves to the third generation and beyond. Example: Barnabas and his ministry to Paul and Mark and beyond.

Conclusion: What's the attitude/response of good finishers? “Don't give up too soon; don't relax before the tape; don't stay down if we fall; get up, refocus our attention on the Author and Finisher of the race; and finish the race.”

- Perfect people won't make it; eventually they will fall big time and their perfection may keep them from getting up.
- Christ followers stumble, fall, and are sometimes weak, but they get up and finish the race—1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 11:30-33; 12:10; Psalm 37:24; Isaiah 40:29-31.

Application Questions

1. What symbols, pictures, stories, or people inspire you to finish your race well?
2. Which of the seven characteristics of those who finished well do you think is your biggest challenge? How will you include (apply or affirm) each of these characteristics in your present lifestyle?
3. What characteristics would you add to the list?
4. How have your mentor(s) helped you most in your life?
5. Spend some time meditating on your own reliability. (Read again 2 Timothy 2:1-2.) Can people count on you in the spiritual area of your life? How would others characterize your faithfulness? (If your answer is not positive, what's your excuse for this condition?) Have you ever trusted in a flaky person? What was the outcome? How can a parent develop reliability in a child? How can you develop faithfulness in a new believer?
6. What are a few of the lessons from your life you want to pass on to others? How will you do that?
7. How will you share with others the seven characteristics of those who finished well?
8. How do you respond to this statement: “We can retire from our jobs, but we can never retire from our calling. Calling gives us our sense of task or responsibility, right up to the last day we spend on earth when we go to meet the Caller.” (Os Guinness)
Summary: Even when we finish one race, we can continue to look for a fresh start at another race somewhere else.

