

Winning Against All Odds



After returning home from visiting the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Monument in Washington, D.C., Julius and Tony were even more determined to become better track athletes. On Thursday, their coach, Mr. Murray, set aside time for Dr. Lee, a former track star and civil rights activist, to give the team a weekly pep talk. Dr. Lee spoke about famous African American leaders, past and present, who had defied numerous odds to make history. He is also responsible for the team's name, the "Jesse Owens Track Team."

"Jesse Owens was a great track star despite being a sickly child. As a young boy, he would run through the fields of Alabama; little did he know, he was building his body to become one of the best athletes who ever lived," shared Dr. Lee.

Jesse Owens is quoted as saying, "I always loved running. I wasn't very good at it, but I loved it because it was something you could do all by yourself, under your own power. You could go any direction, fast or slow as you wanted, fighting the wind if you felt like it, seeking new sights just on the strength of your own feet and courage of your lungs."

Dr. Lee went on to say that while in high school, Owens had set a world record in track and success continued to follow him. "He faced racism and hatred throughout his life, but he continued to break track records and win high honors." Julius and Tony were very inspired by Dr. Lee's words.

In My Heart

"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, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"
(Hebrews 12:1–2, NIV).

WORD!

Hebrews 12:1–11, NIV—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, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. **4** In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, **6** because the Lord disciplines the one he loves and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." **7** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? **8** If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. **9** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! **10** They disciplined

us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. **11** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

SIDEBAR

Faith Is Endurance

What is endurance? Endurance is the ability to keep on going no matter what is happening to you or around you. The athlete may be tired and feel as if he or she can't finish a competition; but when endurance kicks in, the athlete can face the difficulty and keep on going. Endurance continues until it achieves the expected result. Endurance survives even though there are wounds, traumas, mistakes, and setbacks. Life is a road. Some parts of the road might be smooth and without bumps or potholes. Other parts might have cracks that slow you down. Other areas in life's road may have holes and gaps. No matter what part of the road you are on, endurance keeps you moving forward.

How to Endure

E—Every day, renew your commitment to follow Christ.

N—Never give up. Keep going until you achieve what you have desired.

D—Don't let others interrupt your faith walk with negativity.

U—Understand that Jesus is with you always.

R—Run the race of life with patience.

E—Earnestly seek God's Will for your life.

GOT IT!

A. Enduring the Word

Use Word! to help you with this activity.

1. What does discipline produce? _____

2. Can the Lord rebuke you?

YES

NO

3. Why does God discipline His children? _____

4. Whom should we fix our eyes on while running the race? _____

5. What should we throw off? _____

B. The Race Set Before You

1. Select a partner.

2. Describe the most difficult goal you've achieved.

3. Share with your partner.

4. Discuss the common things you did to achieve your set goal.

JAM SESSION

Steadfast Fortitude

People know that to win a race we sometimes have to suffer, but we must keep our eyes on the goal. The writer of Hebrews tells us there is a huge crowd of witnesses of the faith who have trained well, kept their eyes on God in Christ Jesus, and grown in grace and character.

Rising track stars Julius and Tony were surrounded by a crowd of witnesses that were helping them to achieve their goals in today's Reality Check Story. Dr. Lee shared the accomplishments and struggles of Jesse Owens, a famous African-American track star. Jesse Owens prevailed despite the opposition, and Dr. Lee knew Julius and Tony, along with the other track members, would learn from his story. Who are the people you can call your cloud of witnesses?

JAM ON IT!

Plan for Success

This week, develop a plan to achieve a goal. Write this goal on an index card and also on the computer. Keep the index card in places where you can see and read it often. Also, read your plan on the computer as often as possible. Be sure to tell somebody when you reach your goal!

LAST JAM

I have that enduring type of faith!

Really Awesome



“What are you watching?” Anthony’s father sat down next to him on the couch.

“A special on magicians. These dudes are awesome!”

“Really? School me. What’s so awesome about them?”

Anthony told his father about Criss Angel, David Blaine, Houdini, Copperfield, and a host of other masters of optical illusion.

“Those guys are cool, but you are far more awesome just sitting here. What they do tricks the mind, but what God has done in you boggles the mind.”

“What do you mean, Dad?”

“Just in you sitting here talking with me, your brain is taking the words from my mouth and processing them as quickly as you are watching me speak. That means your brain is a far better processor than the best and most expensive computer ever built by people.”

“Hmm, I never thought about that.”

“Here’s something else,” Dad said, smiling. “Your body needs oxygen in the air and blood to survive. Your heart and lungs are an awesome machine, working all the time without fail, even when you’re not thinking about it at all. And of the tens of trillions of cells in your body that God made and keeps in order, He also made tens and trillions of galaxies to fill up the universe. How is that for awesome?”

“Are you serious, Dad?” Anthony’s eyes were shining with excitement.

“You can look it up, son. I wouldn’t kid about how amazing you were made to be. So what do you think about the awesomeness of those magicians now, after you think about how God made you?”

“They don’t come close.”

In My Heart

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe”
(Hebrews 12:28, NIV).*

WORD!

Hebrews 12:18–29, NIV—You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; **19** to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, **20** because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” **21** The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” **22** But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, **23** to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, **24** to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. **25** See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? **26** At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” **27** The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, **29** for our “God is a consuming fire.”

SIDEBAR

Faith Inspires Gratitude

Have you ever heard the term “fear of God”? In our Scripture passage, Moses speaks of trembling with fear when he meets with God. Fear is also a synonym for respect and awe. Often when people hear the term “fear of God,” they think only of being scared and frightened. However, there is another meaning. Sometimes there are things so amazing that the human response is a trembling shock. The children of Israel were in awe of not only the power of God, but the commitment required of them to keep God’s covenant. They did not always heed the words of God through Moses, however.

We are reminded to follow the words and ways of Jesus. We and the children of Israel are reminded at the end of our Scripture passage that our reaction to the awesome love and majesty of God, should not be terror but thankfulness.

How to be in A.W.E.

A—Acknowledge the love of God.

W—Witness the majesty of God in your life and the lives of others.

E—Express your feelings about God’s grace, forgiveness, and love with others.

GOT IT!

A. Fearful or Thankful Faith?

Use Word! to help you choose the best answer.

1. The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with _____.”
a. excitement b. fear c. surprise
2. Jesus is the mediator of a new _____.
a. disagreement b. program c. covenant
3. We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be _____.
a. broken b. shaken c. changed
4. Worship God acceptably with _____ and _____.
a. blessings and honor
b. reverence and awe
c. offerings and tithes

5. Our “God is a consuming _____.”
a. fire b. fog c. blanket

B. What Are You Thankful For?

1. Stand up in a large circle.
2. One student will volunteer and say the phrase, “I’m so grateful, I’m so thankful, I thank God for _____,” inserting what he or she is thankful for. Keep the responses to one or two words (for example: “I’m so grateful, I’m so thankful, I thank God for friends”).
3. The next student will say the same phrase, repeating what the previous student said they were thankful for and adding what they are thankful for as well. (for example: “I’m so grateful, I’m so thankful, I thank God for friends and movies, etc.)
4. Each student will continue in this fashion, until the student at the end of the circle has repeated what every student before her or him said they were thankful for.

JAM SESSION

Steadfast Thanks

People fear many things, especially judgment and death. The writer of Hebrews says that God, in Christ Jesus, brought us forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. In our Scripture, the children of Israel speak of the power and majesty of God with overwhelming fear. Awesome is a word that is often overused; but God’s omnipotence, which is beyond our comprehension and really inspires wonder and awe, is worthy of this word. In Reality Check, Anthony is amazed by the magicians he is watching. His father points out that “awesomeness” is really evident in what God does for us and how He created us. To think on what God does can be a lot to consider. How do you give thanks for forgiveness, grace, and love? Instead of being fearful and feeling inadequate, we are asked to live a life that is pleasing to God in thankfulness. Can you think of some ways to please God? How can a person live a life that is pleasing to God?

JAM ON IT!

Keeping Track

Sometimes it is easy to lose track of all of the blessings in life. Take one day this week to write out every blessing you receive that day. Be mindful of the blessings God has given and make sure your actions reflect appreciation. If you’d like, share your list with a friend or family member.

LAST JAM

God’s love isn’t too good to be true. It’s true that it’s good.