

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## HOW TO ENDURE WELL

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23RD JUNE 2021

How many footballing careers have been cut short by injury? Countless. Whether it's Brazilian Ronaldo, Fernando Torres or Jack Wilshere - many players fade into the background with niggling knees, worn ankles and pesky metatarsals. Injury comes with the territory. Setbacks, failure and trials are a part of life, listen on to see the surprising advice God gives us to get us back on our feet.

I sprained my ankle the other week after playing Frisbee. I'd played hundreds of times before, even on the same field, but as luck would have it, my ankle crunched over itself in a small dip hidden in the grass. We'd spotted the big ones, but his one caught me right off guard. Immediately I was faced with a completely different day and a changed couple of weeks. I sat indoors all day, I moved very little and I had to work at a desk instead of staying on my feet at my job. Getting into the shower was suddenly a logistical and gymnastic problem. My walk to work was greatly lengthened by a huge boot I had to wear for support. I began to imagine what it was like to be stuck in a wheelchair or burdened with a long term injury, or be 40 years my senior. Oh, and then I also injured my back in a rushed to return to exercise.

In both cases, the doctor's surprising advice was...move around! The sprain and the strain needed to be exercised. They weren't casted or broken, and to return to full use, they needed to move and not get stuck in one position. That *really would be a problem*, and not one that would go away quickly! I needed to discipline myself to do little physio exercises and use my body carefully to return to health.

There is a wealth of spiritual analogy in all this, but one passage that struck me comes from the letter to the Hebrews. It says in 12:11-12:

*11 Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

*12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.*

We don't exactly what the Hebrew believers were facing, but we know it involved temptation to leave the faith due to fierce trials and temptations. If you read the full chapter, it's evident that many were discouraged, down and under pressure from temptation and persecution. They weren't up to usual health and were in danger of serious spiritual injury.

In previous verses, the writer has the guts to tell these people that all these trials are a form of discipline which will shape them to be more like God – if they will allow it and bear with it. It's honestly the last thing you want to hear.

When you're trying to live for God in the midst of trials and temptations, it's like trying to do complex addition with someone screaming in your ear. Our negative feelings won't let us see what God is trying to do through it and they crowd out the bigger picture.

In addition to this, When you're injured, or when you've messed up, it's easy to rush on as if nothing's happened and ignore it, or alternatively, wallow around and lose all motivation to continue. Let's look at how to address all this.

So, firstly, how do we avoid these unhelpful extremes? We need to take the long view of life and shift our focus to what God can make us in the future as he shapes us through present circumstances. But what allows us to do this?

### **1. Embrace the pain of helpful discipline.**

The writer candidly admits that discipline is 'painful rather than pleasant' at the time. It is good; it will not feel good. It is perfectly okay not to feel good as we are being shaped by God into something better. If we can't accept that, then we pile additional pressure onto ourselves to feel good, when the honest truth is that things feel horrible and that's actually okay.

### **1. Embrace the long term result.**

The result for those who endure trials is 'the peaceful fruit of righteousness'. This contrasts the chaos of trials. They are messy and stressful. Injury is hard and boring and annoying. However, if we endure, then the beautiful thing is that none of those bad feelings matter. In the end, good will come of it if we keep trusting God, and that's the final word on the situation. Not our bad feelings.

So, with these long terms goals in mind, what do we do?

### **1. Get fit, avoid potholes**

'Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees' is the prescription we are given. Christians have been rescued from a hopeless and futile life by the most powerful person in the universe. Jesus paid the price for all our sin and failure. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. So, while we may feel broken and useless as Christians – we're not crippled and we have so many reasons to be hopeful. Let's not believe we're done for.

In the same way I was advised to exercise my back and ankle after injury, we must strengthen ourselves to persevere spiritually. If we don't we'll make things worse and it will be harder to get going again.

This advice is coupled with another part: "*make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.*" It's no use doing a ton of physio if you play on an abandoned building site with bricks and holes scattered around everywhere. You'll get another injury in minutes. We need to learn to walk on the path God wants us to so that we stay spiritually healthy.

So how does this advice translate to us practically?

#### **1. Look at Jesus**

It's hard to overstate how incredibly 'for' us Jesus is. If we think God doesn't love us or is against us, that cripples our motivation to continue. Hebrews 4:16 says "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Over time, this will strengthen our resolve to endure trials. However, there is no quick fix to recovery, BUT, God will be with us every step of the way in every trail we face.

#### **1. Look where you're going**

The bible, the Holy Spirit and other believers help us keep on the right track when temptation is blurring our vision and stopping us from seeing the way forwards. Again, over time you will learn the pitfalls which lead to

sin, you won't get it perfect, you will get injured, God will be there to pick you up every single time.

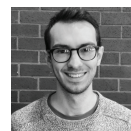
### **1.Look at your feelings in perspective**

Feelings are overrated, don't let them get the best of you. It's easy for negative feelings to crowd out the truth, but it's freeing to know that our feelings don't define us. If we feel hopeless, that is never correct because with God, there is always help and there is always hope available to us.



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