

# Consider Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, please turn with me in your Bibles this morning to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews 12. And before I really get started, a couple of greetings for you. I was in Owensboro, Kentucky last week. And at church on Sunday, I saw Judy Withrow. And she said, please tell the people at Grace Fellowship Church that I greet them. And so greetings from Judy Withrow this morning. She misses and loves you all. And greetings from our church in Warsaw as well. Our church family there, Grace Baptist Church. But what a joy it is for me to be here today to preach this message on the day of an installation of a new pastor for a church that is dear to me. And that new pastor is dear to me as well. I'm so grateful for the invitation and for the opportunity. There's really nowhere I would rather be today. I love my own church, of course, and I would love to be there.

[ 1 : 08 ] But for this occasion, this is where I want to be. And it is my joy and privilege to be here. I think it's a beautiful and fitting thing to see a younger man, Colin, being called to serve alongside a slightly older man, Pastor John, being added to the eldership here today.

Pastor John, a man who loved and served and patiently brought me along when I was here. We were here for eight years, by the way, Stan. Not ten. It probably felt like ten, but it was eight. And, oh, okay, so it was John. Anyway, yes, it was around eight years that John poured into me and I had the joy to learn from him.

And then later, along came Colin and John spent some time pouring into him. And then I got to do the same. I got to take some of what John had taught me and share it with Colin over the years that he was with us and Warsaw.

And so, sort of as a middle man between a little bit older and a little bit younger man, it is just a really neat thing for me to be able to be here today.

[ 2 : 23 ] But today is not all about me. Neither is it all about Colin, by the way. And neither is it all about Grace Fellowship Church.

It is all about Christ. And His church. Now, God does use individuals for the good of His church and for His own glory.

And He uses particular local churches like this one to advance His cause in the world and to preserve His people and to care for and shepherd His people through this world. God does use individuals and churches in those ways.

And so, what a privilege to be part of this today where we see Christ at work in Grace Fellowship Church giving another good gift to this local church.

This representation of the body of Christ in the world. Now, why do I say it's all about Christ? Is that just language that we use? We know that we're supposed to acknowledge Christ and that seems appropriate for some reason.

[ 3 : 26 ] So we say, it's all about Jesus. Well, no, it's much more than that. We're talking about things that happen in the church. And the church is the body of Christ.

It's His body. Colossians 1, 17 and 18 say, And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything, He might be preeminent. So we say it's all about Jesus because it's His church, and in His church, and in everything, He is to be the one who is preeminent.

Not us. And it's Christ who gives good gifts to His church. He gives good gifts to His church. And so if we're setting apart a pastor, a shepherd, a teacher today, well, that's because Christ has given that gift to His church.

Ephesians 4, 11 and 12. And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. [ 4 : 37 ] He gives the shepherd teacher, Colin, to Grace Fellowship Church today. To build up His body. And so whether you are the one being given the shepherd today, or the one receiving the gift, the congregation, your hope, your focus, should be in the giver of the gift.

The head of the church. The Lord Jesus Christ. And so as I seek to bring a word to Colin today, and a word to all of you, the congregation, my hope is to aim to point us to Christ.

The head of His church. The giver of good gifts to His church. So I want to talk today about looking to Jesus. And then see how that applies especially to Colin. And especially to the congregation. And we want to think about that today from Hebrews 12, the first three verses. And so notice those with me as I read Hebrews 12, the Word of God. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[ 6 : 03 ] Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. So right after this, what we think of as the hall of faith in chapter 11, where all these not just examples of faith, but witnesses to, testimonies of faith, we have these exhortations.

Therefore, because there is this great cloud of witnesses, let us do some things. And we want to think about primarily one of those things, that we'll look at most of them today.

Looking to Jesus. Or to run the race before us, looking to Jesus. You see that at the beginning of verse 2. And so, I want to think again about looking to Jesus, and then what that means for Colin, and what that means for the congregation today.

We are to be looking to Jesus. Or, verse 3 puts it this way, consider Him. Think about Jesus. Look to Him. Consider Him.

And Hebrews gives us in these verses, and really all throughout Hebrews, some particular things to look at and consider about Jesus. It's one thing to just kind of generally say, look to Jesus.

[ 7 : 13 ] But, what exactly about Jesus should we be thinking about? What should we be looking at and thinking of when we look at our Savior Christ? Well, there's a few things in these verses that we should notice.

He is the founder, or the originator, or the leader, or the prince of our faith, as He is, Hebrews 2.10, of our salvation. Even our faith by which we must look to Christ.

We walk by faith, not by sight. We must exercise faith. We have to... Jesus tells us to repent and believe. It's something that we do. It's something we must do. But even the faith that we have to exercise is a gift of God.

It's given to us by Him. That comes from Christ. Now, that's good news. Because we couldn't conjure it up on our own. We wouldn't even want to look at Jesus in our sinful state.

It wouldn't be a desire. It wouldn't be an aim. It wouldn't matter to us. And so, He is the founder of our faith. He's also the perfecter of our faith.

[ 8 : 21 ] We won't be perfect or complete until we are with Him, and see Him, and are like Him as He is. And it's Jesus that brings that to pass. He's the founder and the perfecter.

Here's how Paul says it. If you think Hebrews was written by Paul, then this is how he says it. But here's how he says it somewhere else. I don't really think it was Paul. But anyway, Paul says it this way in Philippians 1.

Verse 6, And I'm sure of this, that you began a good work and you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. That's good news too. Jesus gave us faith, but then we had to finish.

We had to keep that faith to the end. And it was all left up to us. We would be in trouble. We wouldn't make it to the end. We'd barely make it a step in the race. What else is there to see about Jesus?

He's the author and finisher of our faith. And then as He walked through this world, verse 3, He endured hostility from sinners. He was insulted, tested, tempted, tried, and executed on a cross, and He endured all of it.

[ 9 : 26 ] This means He's the perfect one to strengthen our faith. As we seek to endure to the end of the race. Not growing weary or losing heart. We look to Him for that.

If we need to endure in the race, who do we look to? But the One who Himself endured all of these things. For us. And listen to this. Back in verse 2 again.

He had joy set before Him. Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. You see Him enduring things in verse 2 and 3. But it was for the joy set before Him.

The joy of returning to glory with His Heavenly Father. The joy of purchasing a people for God and having them join Him as brothers and sisters. One way our Savior endured was by anticipating the joy that was to come.

The people that would be His. The return to His Father in glory. The return to glory. Anticipating that joy that was ahead was how He endured. We too have joy waiting for us.

[10:27] We have a crown of life waiting for us after we're made complete when we see Him and are like Him as He is. Hebrews 10.36 For you have need of endurance. That's what we're talking about here.

So that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. God has promised us something when we endure to the end by the grace of Christ.

There's a prize waiting. A crown of life for all who finish the race. And what a joyful anticipation that is for us as we look to Him running this race through this world.

We're looking to Jesus. He finished His race through this world. He is with us as we finish ours. As we seek to endure, we look to the One who Himself endured.

Who better to look to who endured for the joy set before Him? And how great was His suffering? Suffering greater than ours. And the shame.

[11:26] Despising the shame. There wasn't much greater shame than what came with being crucified. But Jesus endured all that and much more along with hostility from sinners in verse 3. All of that He endured for us.

And having risen from the dead, He's now seated at God's right hand ruling and interceding for us. You can see that at other places in Hebrews. Hebrews. And so He is helping us as we run this race. And so as we run our race, the only way we can do it is by looking to Jesus. I think that phrase is so key in these verses. Looking to Jesus. This is the Jesus that we fix our eyes on and consider. Now how in the world are you supposed to fix your eyes on someone that you can't see? Well, that's the nature of faith. We walk by faith and not by sight. There's not someone that we can see with our physical eyes.

And so, faith lays hold of that which we cannot see. So, we don't need a physical picture of Jesus to look at. That's not what looking to Jesus means. But we must by faith fix our minds and our affections, our heart, our desires on the Christ portrayed for us in Scripture.

[12:35] We walk by faith in Jesus. Looking to Him. Thinking about Him. Loving Him. Deepening our affection for Him.

And so, fix your eyes of faith on Jesus. When you take your eyes off of the Savior, it's not good. You remember Peter. Peter's walking to Jesus on the water. And then he starts looking at the wind and the waves and boom, he starts to sink like a rock because he wasn't looking at Jesus anymore. Now, he had Jesus physically there to look at. We don't. But that was just an expression of faith. And so, if you find yourself sinking in the waves, pray with Peter.

All Peter could get out as he's sinking. He goes, Lord, save me. If that's all we can get out because we've taken our eyes off Christ and we're too focused on the wind and the waves, then we cry, Lord, save me.

And He does. Consider Him. Fix your eyes on Him by faith. Make use of the means He has given. The Word.

[13:37] Read it. Soak it up. Hear it preached. Prayer. Draw near to Him. Worship with the body of Christ. The sacraments. Baptism in the Lord's Supper. Fellowship with the body of Christ. In all of these things, we are looking to Christ.

All of these things. That's what you do when you come here each Lord's Day. When you fellowship after, you're pointing each other to Christ. When you partake of the Lord's Supper, you're looking to Christ. You're remembering what He's done and having your soul nourished.

Your faith strengthened. Draw near. Some of the best advice I can give you during a trial is literally to think about Jesus. Just think about Jesus.

Who He is. What He's done. All that He's accomplished. Find a passage of Scripture that talks about the Savior. If you open your Bible, you're going to find one. He's there. From cover to cover.

And think about Jesus. Think about Jesus. Think about these things we're reminded of here. His suffering, His endurance, His being the perfect one to author and perfect our faith.

[14:42] Meditate on Christ. Now, that's a little direction for all of us in this passage. Looking to Jesus. Now, I want to take the rest of our time to focus on Colin and the congregation in light of these verses.

And I've got more to say to Colin than I do to the congregation. But all of you should listen to all of it. So you can pray for each other and point each other to Christ. And so a word for Colin.

Look to Christ, Colin. And as you do, notice some of the other things these verses tell us to do.

Verse 1, lay aside the things that hinder.

As you run the race, and particularly this morning we're thinking for you about the race, the work of ministry which is part of your race, you'll of course need to lay aside every sin.

There in verse 1, let us lay aside every weight and sin. Of course, lay aside every sin. And I don't want to minimize this point. Colin, be killing sin or it will be killing you.

[15:45] I stole that from John Owen or somebody. But you know that's true. You believe that it's true. You have to live like it's true. Do not tolerate unchecked, unrepented of sin in your life.

It will be your undoing. It will disqualify you from the work of ministry. I hope it's obvious in some ways how looking to Christ helps you here. He is your hope of forgiveness. He is your strength to resist sin.

He is your model of holiness. Look to Christ. And lay aside sin. But also lay aside every weight.

There are things that aren't sinful that you're going to have to lay aside.

It says lay aside every weight and sin. There's two different things. There's sin, and there's things that aren't sinful that you're going to have to lay aside in order to do the work of ministry. In order to run the Christian life. That's everybody. There's going to be things that maybe aren't sinful, but they're hindering your race.

You're going to have to put them aside. There may be legitimate things, Colin, that you could enjoy that you'll have to forego because God's given you something else to do. Listen, in very personal terms for you, there will be evenings when you just want to sit and watch the Giants.

[16:51] And they are on an East Coast road trip, so you don't even have to stay up super late to watch the game. And they're going to be on a channel that you get, and you've got a night to watch the Giants play baseball, and you're going to get a phone call.

And you're going to need to pay a visit to somebody. You're going to have to lay aside the Giants for a night. And go do that work. You're going to have to lay aside everything that enters. That's sort of a silly example, but there are things that you're going to have to set aside.

Legitimate things that you could enjoy. It may be obvious and go without saying, but enough ministers have missed the boat here that I'm going to say it. Your family is not one of those things that you lay aside to focus on ministry.

You do not sacrifice your family for the sake of ministry. No, they are your primary ministry. Failure to shepherd them disqualifies you from shepherding the church.

And so love and lead and serve and shepherd. Your wife Casey and your children Piper and Judah and Bodhi and Mac. That is your first ministry.

[18:01] Looking to Christ means finding forgiveness in Him. Laying aside all the things that hinder you from faithfulness. And faithfulness in the work of ministry and laying aside every sin.

Put that stuff away and follow Christ with your whole heart. Look to Christ as your example. He is your hope and your example.

Christ is clearly set before us in these verses as an example to encourage us. Hebrews twice sets Him before us as a sympathetic high priest.

He can relate to our weakness and our suffering. And that means we're encouraged to draw near to Him. Here, Hebrews 4, 15 and 16. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then, with confidence, draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. See what hope that gives you.

[19:02] The one to whom you look is the one who is helping you on the way. He is the one who Himself has endured and is able to help those who feel their inability to endure. He is not cold to your suffering.

Your challenges that you face, He understands them. He has Himself endured so that we may look to Him and find encouragement to endure ourselves.

1 Peter 2, 21. For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His steps.

So, look to Christ as your example. He's sympathetic. He knows. And so that's the one that you look to. What a comfort. He doesn't call you to run a race that He didn't run Himself. Now, if all you have is an example, even one sympathetic to your plight, that's not enough to guarantee your safe arrival at the finish line.

So, also look to Christ as your hope. Your hope in what He has accomplished. This is for everybody, not just for Colin. By enduring the cross and despising the shame and sitting down at God's right hand, Jesus has given us salvation itself.

[ 20 : 16 ] That's your hope. It's not you trying to do enough good to get to heaven or trying to conjure up enough faith to make it. It's that Jesus has accomplished your salvation. He's given us then a true object of faith.

He has completed His work so that we have someone to trust in. He has guaranteed our place in glory which guarantees that we will finish the race that ends in glory. And so, what a comfort that He Himself has done this.

He's not just one who has endured and we have to endure too. Go be like Jesus. Good luck. He's the author and the finisher of our faith.

He's also the object of our faith. The one to whom we look and the one who actually guarantees that we will make it across the finish line because He is with us for every step of the race.

There's never a minute when He's not with you. He has guaranteed our place in glory. And He guarantees that we will make it there because He goes with us.

[ 21 : 24 ] That's why we look to Him and away from ourselves because He is the one that will get us to the end. He has saved us by His grace. He suffered the punishment we deserve. He took our place under the wrath of God.

His work is the way our sins are forgiven. His righteousness is what goes on our record so that we may enter glory when we get to the end of the race by His grace and strength.

He dwells in us by His Spirit enabling us to take every joyful step and every labored and painful and difficult step. Without Him, we aren't in the race.

Without Him, we won't finish the race. And so to abandon Him, to look away from Him, Hebrews are thinking about looking away from Jesus and going in a different direction. What folly?

Never take your eyes off the Savior Christ. It's the height of danger and folly. No, you must fix your eyes on Him which is what the whole book of Hebrews helps us to do.

[ 22 : 22 ] You guys have just gone through Hebrews at First Baptist I think. And so, you've seen Christ portrayed. Look to Him moment by moment, day by day. And He's willing to be seen. It's not like He's hiding.

He's willing to be seen. He's willing to be found. He's given us His Word. He's given us His sacraments to nourish our faith. And so, may we continue in that path. There's joy to keep before us.

He welcomes us. He started on this journey. He will ensure we finish it. That's someone worthy of your faith. That's joy to keep before you as you run the race and find difficulty along the path.

Also, verse 3, don't grow weary or faint-hearted. Consider Him who endured hostility Himself so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted. That's not just a, come on, big man, don't quit.

You don't have what it takes. But you must persevere. And don't forget everything we said. It's in looking to Christ that you'll find your strength and spirit renewed. Listen, there are many, many things in ministry that can lead to weariness and being faint-hearted.

[ 23 : 28 ] You already know this. By experience, you will find more of it here. And so, you already know the importance of looking to Christ. Again, who better to help you than the one who did not lose heart Himself?

Don't grow weary or faint-hearted. And then I would say, Colin, point the people to Christ. Christ. He is the author of faith. You are not.

What a comfort. You can't save people. You can't sanctify them. Christ alone can. And so, point the people to Him. But, God can use you in those things.

And so, you'll be most useful to the church body as you point them to Christ and as you set an example for them of looking to Christ yourself. When you stand to proclaim the Word, point them to the Savior alone who is their Deliverer.

Not just from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. Point them to the Savior who is not just their hope of eternal life, but is their hope in this life right now. Point them to that Savior.

[ 24 : 36 ] Show them that Savior. Explain that Savior to them. How He is relevant to their moment-by-moment, day-by-day walk. Not just saving them and then getting them into glory, but everything in between too.

Make sure they see that and hear that. Do that in the pulpit. Do it when you're counseling. Do that over the dinner table. Do that in the foyer after the service. Do it at the hospital bed.

Don't need your people to depend on you, but to depend on your Savior. Your shoulders are not broad enough to bear this or any congregation.

His are. You'll need to stay close then by His Word. Reading it yourself. Meditating it on it.

Memorizing it. Soaking it up so that you're full of the truth so that's what comes out with you in your interactions with your congregation.

His Word. What's Colin always talking about? It's the Word. It's Christ. It's the Savior because that's what you're soaking up. That's your daily bread. And so you're glad to feed it.

[ 25 : 38 ] Share it with everyone around you. It's for everybody, y'all. I'm talking to Colin, but it's for all of us. When it's your privilege to do so, baptize newly converted believers and use that to point them to Christ.

And minister the Lord's Supper to them. And make sure they see Christ in it. The Jesus who has given Himself to nourish our faith. Pray to Jesus for your sheep that they would see Him.

That deserves so much. It could be its own message, but pray for your people. Pray for your people. Look to Christ and point the church to Christ.

That's God's Word from Scripture for you today. Now for all of the congregation. Trust in Jesus. Not Colin. Don't expect from Colin what only Jesus can provide. You all too must be, moment by moment, day by day, looking to Jesus.

[ 26 : 48 ] To the Savior Christ who is your only hope. Laying aside sin, you must be doing that. In everything that entangles you in your Christian walk, you too must look to Christ as your only hope for being in the race and for finishing the race.

You all look to Him. But Jesus has provided Colin for you. He is a gift and looking to Christ will mean being reminded of His love and faithfulness and giving Colin to Grace Fellowship Church. And that should lead you to regularly thank God for this gift and to regularly pray for Him and His family. If Colin is a gift of Christ to Grace Fellowship Church, and He is, then you should thank God for that gift and you should pray that God would use that gift for His glory and the good of this church.

Pray for Him and His family. Being a pastor does not make someone immune from all of the daily challenges that we all face moment by moment, day by day.

In some ways, some of those things are escalated for a pastor. But he is not immune. When we send a missionary off to the field, it's, oh, they're a missionary and they've got these glowing reports that come back and they are struggling with marriage problems and raising kid problems and fight and sin problems just like everybody else.

[ 28 : 12 ] It's true for pastors in the local church too. Just because Pastor John and Pastor Colin are shepherds, they're still sheep. And they need the flock to encourage and help them along the way.

Colin has not reached a higher plane of existence where those things are no trouble to him. Care for him accordingly. Make sure his physical needs are met. Make sure he never enters this pulpit to preach without having been prayed for by you.

Make sure he's not going through his week without your prayers to sustain him and your words of encouragement to hold him up. And what might those words of encouragement be? Well, point your pastor to Jesus.

To the Savior. Just as he points you to Christ. Being a pastor, again, doesn't mean you have arrived. It doesn't mean you always practice what you preach.

It doesn't mean you don't need to be ministered to. You may see Colin looking like he's weighed down and weary and faint-hearted. That is not the time to question his qualifications for ministry.

[ 29 : 20 ] It's time to remember that he is, like you, a sinner, saved by grace who needs your encouragement. He needs to be reminded of his Savior. He needs the joy of the Lord set before him.

Remind him of what is true. Promises that have comforted you. Share those things with your pastor. Don't think, oh, he already knows that. He needs to hear it from you. He needs to receive that blessing and encouragement from you.

Pastor John needs this too, by the way. We're just focusing on Pastor Colin because today's the day we install him. But your shepherds need that. And so this is a two-way street.

He reminds you of the Savior and you must remind Him of the Savior. He needs you to pray for Him. He needs you to help Him in the race. You all loved me well when I was here and still do.

Do that for Colin. Colin and Grace Fellowship Church, you must all look to Christ if this relationship is going to work.

[ 30 : 25 ] Talk to each other about Christ. As you see one another stumbling along the race course, remind one another about the One who endured and who started you on the race and is with you in the race and will see you safely to the end of the race.

Have you ever thought about this kind of weird race? We're not trying to beat each other to the end of the line. It's not a race where you're trying to...

Winning doesn't mean beating everyone else. Winning means just getting to the end. And so we can stop and pick each other up and put their arm over our shoulder and drag one another partway down the race course until they get their footing again.

And it doesn't hinder us in our race. It doesn't keep us from finishing. Help one another in the race. It's not going to put you behind. Love one another well along that way.

So on this joyful day for this local church, it is my prayer that Christ will be the center. The One to whom all of you look and the One in whom all of you hope.

[ 31 : 33 ] May He bless you all in that work. Let's pray together. Father, we thank You that our Savior Christ gives good gifts to the church.

We pray this morning that You would make Colin a pastor who looks to Christ and points Grace Fellowship Church to Christ. And we pray that You would make Grace Fellowship Church a church who looks to Christ and points their pastors to Christ.

May Christ alone be the hope and confidence of each one, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Pastor Aaron, thank you for that.

Unless you've been listening to our messages for the last two months, there's no way you could have known how central the word consider has been in this congregation.

We had it again this morning in Sunday school. We considered Christ as the seed of the woman.

And we can't help but see the Lord's hand in bringing you to us to see what considering Him means for us then as flock and pastor.

[ 32 : 58 ] So thank you for that. We're going to make our congregational prayer together. The words of 278 in your hymnal.

Jesus with thy church abide. This same Jesus that we just had set before us is so crucial to our relationship as pastor and flock and together in striving together for the faith of the gospel.

We get to talk directly to Him in this hymn. 278. Let's stand and sing together to the head of this church.

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work in us.

To Him be glory in this church and in Christ Jesus through all generations this one included and forever and ever.

[ 34 : 04 ] Amen.