

# Not Growing Weary

Tom Beohm

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We came out here in June of 2018 and visited on the Sabbath in Kennewick and then on our way back home we made a stop at the Klickitat River for a bit of a walk. Klickitat River for those who may not know—those behind the camera—it's about half way between here and back where we are at in the Portland area. We had just recently outfitted the entire family with backpacking gear; packs and equipment and so forth. So, we loaded up and said that this would be an easy test run. Just a nice walk along the river and it was hot. It was so hot. It was like today hot. No shade, bugs, dust and my poor girls—the struggle was real. There were tears—lots of tears, lots of stops and starts. “I can't do it, not one more step.” No motivation, no enthusiasm, every step was a moan and a groan and of course we have these packs, we're loading all this stuff down this dusty trail. Insult upon injury, the river is going by but it's not close enough to actually get to—you can't actually get to the water. My oldest daughter especially was, “I just want to get to the water, please, please” —miserable. Of course, me, I'm like, “Hey, this is good experience, it's a character builder, right? My grandfather used to say, it'll put hair on your chest, it's good for you”. I went from that to, “Wow, what kind of dad am I, dragging my crying children through the dirt”. There were probably second thoughts to that. Best dad ever Father's Day card I got a couple weeks before. As you can probably tell, I still feel bad about that—sorry.

But on a broader, perhaps more serious note, over the past few years and accelerated with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, the struggle to stay motivated, to stay enthusiastic, interested—it's a fight we all face. We face now more than ever. For some who I know personally, they went into the lockdown in early 2020 and really never came back. To the onslaught of panic inducing news that we are all subject to—the isolation. We were all left on our own and your only companion is what is going on in your head. To concerns about employment; family members who were vulnerable or expanding the horizon—the state of the economy. Social upheaval, war in Ukraine, pressures of society to believe certain things, to align with certain things, to act a certain way or risk being cancelled or perhaps worse—it's exhausting. How do you cope? It's crippling, it's demoralizing. In a word, it is “wearying”.

As we move forward this afternoon, we are going to stop by laying a foundation in how is growing weary is defined. From that we will outline a continuum of symptoms that we can see in ourselves and others that demonstrate growing weary. Then from there, we're going to use scripture to help us create a recipe for combatting weariness. I use the term “recipe” deliberately you'll see. Then we'll end with exploring, in context of that “recipe”, a weariness cautionary tale.

Let's start with terms—definitions. The word *weary*. Webster's Dictionary defines the English word *weary* as, “having one's patience, tolerance, or pleasure exhausted.” From this we can extract the first step in the weariness continuum.

That first step is *fatigue*. Just being plain old tired—exhausted. This may feel kind of obvious but it's important to note because this is representative of the beginning of a process. We're going to talk a lot about processes today. But in this particular continuum, it's the first sign—first step—in this process. I'm sure we can all attest to how hard everything becomes when we are tired. It's harder to focus, it's harder to comprehend, it's harder to engage and feels like everything we are interacting with—the whole world—is like moving through mud. It's this constant resistance to everything that we do and anything we attempt to do.

If we look at the word in the Hebrew Old Testament that is often translated as *weary*, we learn something interesting from Strong's Concordance which adds a nuance in the definition—I'm just quoting here:

"Cause to fly and to tire as if from wearisome flight."

We won't take the time to go into it in detail, but the biblical account of David, fleeing from his son Absalom, found in 2 Samuel 15 and the first part of chapter 16, comes to my mind when I think of this when it comes to *cause to fly*. We read of David's reaction to hearing of Absalom's growing conspiracy—again you don't have to turn to these scriptures, I'll just read them. I'll read it from the Bible in Basic English. David's learning that Absalom is coming, he's bringing his buddies with him, coming to Jerusalem and David responds.

**2 Samuel 15:14** *And David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, come let us go in flight [there's that "cause to fly" definition] or not one of us will be safe from Absalom. Let us go without loss of time or he will overtake us quickly and send evil upon us and put the town to the sword. (BBE)*

So we have this circumstance starting and then, to add insult to injury, what happens a little later? We read in 2 Samuel 16:13 and 14, and I'll read this from the New American Standard Edition.

**2 Samuel 16:13** *So David and his men went on the way; and Shimei went along on the hillside parallel with him and as he went, he cursed and cast stones and threw dust at him. [while he is on the run]*  
**14)** *The king and all the people who were with him arrived weary and he refreshed himself there. (NASB)*

So, what do we have? They are on the run for their lives and then being harassed while on the way. I think *weary* probably sums up the circumstance. Now switching gears, back to the English, looking at the definition of the word "weary" from the website, vocabulary.com, gives us some additional details. This is quoting from vocabulary.com, the definition of the word "weary":

*Exhaust or get tired through overuse or great strain or stress and*

(a second definition)

*lose interest or become bored with something or somebody.*

So, losing interest or becoming bored. Now these give us the second and third steps in our weariness continuum.

We started with *fatigue*, just being tired.

The second step we could have is what one could view as, either the source of *fatigue* or the outcome of *fatigue* or likely both, and that is *stress*; *strain*; *overuse*. When we get tired, we start making mistakes. We aren't listening to our bodies and perhaps, we push ourselves too hard, or we ignore those signals that tell us "Enough is enough, don't do anymore". We carry more upon ourselves than perhaps we should. We're going to come back to that concept, so hold onto that.

The third step that we saw from the [vocabulary.com](http://vocabulary.com) definition was: *loss of interest or boredom*. It's at this point on this continuum that we start crossing into more dangerous territory. We all get tired, right? We get tired, we get stressed, we get fatigued, these are all common to man. But when we start losing interest, when we get bored, stories start to change. We have a good example of this that we are going to touch on. Turn to Numbers 21:4-6. I'm going to read this from the Bible in Basic English. Just as a programming note, my default Bible translation is, New American Standard Edition 1995 unless otherwise noted. I'll be sure to call it out if I use a different translation. Numbers 21, the children of Israel are wandering through the wilderness, let's check in on them.

**Numbers 21:4** *Then they went on from Mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, going round the land of Edom: and the spirit of the people was overcome with weariness on the way. (BBE)*

There's our topic. The word *weariness* here is not the same Hebrew word we've been talking about. But it's a pretty apt descriptor because, as it's found recorded back in chapter 20, Edom didn't allow Israel passage through their land so they were forced to go around the hard way. How hard was the hard way? I have a description out of [Albert Barns Commentary](#) about the hard way. This is quoting from [Albert Barns](#):

*They were thus some days in the Araba, a mountain plain of loose sand, gravel and of granite which furnishes extremely little food or water and is often troubled by sand storms from the shore of the gulf.*

So—not vacation territory, right? Not fun, not a good time at all. Might be tiring—yeah—stressful—yeah. It happens but here's where things fall off the cliff for them, verse 5.

*5) And crying out against God and against Moses, they said, Why have you taken us out of Egypt to come to our death in the waste land? For there is no*

*bread and no water, [and notice this] and this poor bread is disgusting to us.*  
(BBE)

The New King James translation translates the end of this verse as *worthless bread*, probably more familiar. But the word that is translated *poor* or *worthless* comes from the Hebrew meaning “insubstantial” or “light”. This was the food of angels, right? It tells us that in Psalms 78:25. But the response? “It’s boring, it’s worthless”. I specifically chose the Bible in Basic English because of the wording, *poor bread*, as I thought that it gave it a bit of attitude. “This bread is beneath us, it’s not worthy of us.” How did God feel about that? Well verse 6 tells us that doesn’t it?

*6) Then the Lord sent poison snakes among the people and their bites were a cause of death to numbers of the people of Israel.* (NASB)

So, God took this snubbing, this lack of interest, this contempt, pretty seriously. Again, this is the line that starts to get crossed when we grow *weary*. It’s that change of attitude, it’s that change of perspective for the worse.

There is a final step in our continuum that is not covered in any of these definitions, but it’s a critical terminal point if it’s reached. We’re going to use a parable that Jesus gave to explore the last step of the continuum. Turn to Luke 18, we’ll read the first three verses.

**Luke 18:1** *Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart ...* (NASB)

That is the final step of the continuum. That’s the point of no return; losing heart. So, what does that look like? What does losing heart look like? Let’s keep reading.

*2) saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.*

*3) There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’* (NASB)

Let’s put this together, we have a widow—someone already having suffered loss, tremendous loss, somebody at risk. Being devoured, as it’s put, by an *opponent* in verse 3 and that word *opponent* is the same word used in 1 Peter 1:5 for *Satan*—an adversary, someone seeking to destroy, to devour. It’s not just someone getting on her nerves, this is serious. She is desperate for help and the only place she has to turn and has been repeatedly turning to, *kept coming to him* as it says in verse 3, is a judge who can’t be bothered, doesn’t care, has no interest, no respect for God or for doing what is just—his job. He can’t even do his job, what he’s there for. Now working backwards, it’s easy to see the type of circumstance that can be created in which one can lose heart. When we are tired, exhausted from the fight, becoming discouraged and in the process, starting to wonder “Is it worth the fight. Is the juice worth the squeeze?” Then in the end, giving up. That’s *weariness* at its end state—giving up the fight.

We may lose some battles in this life, frankly we may lose many of them. But it's when we allow *weariness* to claim victory in the war, that we get into some serious spiritual trouble. Okay, we have all this in mind, we've laid the foundation, so what do we do? How do we win this war against *weariness and losing heart*? What can we do to stave off growing fatigued, collapsing under the pressure, losing interest, losing heart?

We're going to build our "recipe" and we are going to use what we read in Hebrews 12 as our ingredients for our recipe. There's a ton to unpack and we're going to spend the rest of our time together this afternoon in Hebrews 12. You may want to put a marker in there, because we're going to be doing a little flipping back and forth. We're going to start reading through the first 15 verses of Hebrews 12 and then we're going to deconstruct what we've read, but we are going to do it in a slightly different order.

**Hebrews 12:1** *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

3) *For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

4) *You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;*

5) *and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him;*

6) *For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."*

7) *It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

8) *But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

9) *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?*

10) *For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.*

11) *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

12) *Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,*

13) *and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.*

14) *Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*

*15) See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; (NASB)*

We've our context in place. Let's grab our ingredients and start cooking; we have six. Six ingredients that we will explore for combatting *weariness*. For the first one, let's go back to Hebrews 12:4. I'm going to read this from the Amplified Bible as it gives it a little more nuance.

**Hebrews 12:4** *You have not yet struggled to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; (AMP)*

This ingredient then, is kind of a reality check and is foundational, because it is oftentimes, difficult to accept. But to put it simply:

***The first ingredient:*** it's not as bad as it seems.

When we dwell on the trouble around us or we focus on our own failings and we ruminate on these things and we grind them over and over in our minds, they tend to grow beyond reality in our mind's eye. Now there may be times in our lives where it feels like our world is falling apart. In many respects, conditions extant are getting worse by the day, there's no doubt. But the reality is, the physical world, for now anyway is still spinning. I think of the words that were left for us by Solomon found in Ecclesiastes 1. We'll read verses 5-7 and I'll read this from the Contemporary English Version of the Bible. While you are turning there, I do want to emphasize, because I was thinking about this, "What are you saying Tom?" I'm not saying that everything is hunky-dory, I'm not saying everything is good and coming up roses. It's about perspective, about framing things in the context of realities that continue to exist. As it says in Ecclesiastes 1:5—we tend to forget so it's a good reminder.

**Ecclesiastes 1:5** *The sun comes up, the sun goes down; it hurries right back to where it started from.*

*6) The wind blows south, the wind blows north, round and round it blows over and over again.*

*7) All rivers empty into the sea, but it never spills over; one by one the rivers return to their source. (CEV)*

This can sound like a downer, but there is actually encouragement in this aspect of this ingredient and that is this: The rising of the sun tomorrow, the blowing of the breeze, the cycle of the water, from rain to river to sea and then back again, represents new opportunity. It's a reset, a chance to regroup, to regather and try again. Yes, it could be worse but it also could be better. Each day gives us that opportunity to have that better experience. We can also take great comfort in one of my all-time favorite passages in the Bible. Turn to 1 Corinthians 10:13, I'm going to read this from the Bible in Basic English.

**1 Corinthians 10:13** *You have put to no test but such as common to a man. And God is true who will not let any test come on you which you are not able to undergo. But He will make with the test a way out of it so that you may be able to go through it.* (BBE)

Again, it's very easy, when we're under stress to make—we're all familiar with the term—"mountains out of molehills". We make these in our minds, especially if we are feeling alone or isolated in the experience. But through the lens of creation which we read back in Ecclesiastes 1, or perhaps frame it in the context of eternity, frame it in the context of our potential. Whatever our circumstance, whatever that "molehill" is, it's a "molehill" and it's a "molehill" that many, many others have had to face. We have the help to scale it. You're not alone. It's not as big as it might actually look. So, let's go back to Hebrews 12:1 and pick up the second ingredient for our recipe.

**Hebrews 12:1** *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us ...* (NASB)

Love verse 1. It is jam packed and we're going to dig into every aspect of it. For now, we're just going to focus on the middle part of verse 1. Let's re-read it.

*1 continued) ... lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us ...* (NASB)

Or if you want this in simpler terms:

**Our second ingredient:** If you don't need it, get rid of it.

The word translated here as *encumbrance* in the Greek means "bending or bulging by its load". A couple of mental pictures I get when I think about this definition, I'll share one of them with you. It comes from hiking trail maintenance that I've had a chance to do as a participant with the Washington Trails Association. I was on a recent project; we were doing some work on a trail and one of the things we got to do was some logging work. A bunch of trees had fallen over the winter across the trail, so we went to clean it up. In that process, one of the key evaluations that needs to be done is to ensure that other trees that might be caught under the tree as it fell and saplings or other trees it might have captured or maybe it's leaning on a tree or other trees are leaning on the tree that fell, think—"Pick up sticks". If you remember that game it's where you have all the pieces together and you try to pull that one stick out without knocking the other ones out. We have to account for that and have a plan—that if we take this stick out, what is going to happen to everything else around it. Especially dangerous are trees trapped under the fallen tree because it's being bowed under the pressure—that strain. You remove that strain and what happens to that sapling that is caught underneath? It's going to snap back up and that could hurt somebody or kill somebody on the crew or somebody hiking up the trail, to have that tree come back and spring up on them.

What strikes me considering this relative to the second ingredient—if you don't need it, get rid of it—is that our *encumbrances*, our *sins* are not just weights for us. It's not just burdens we are carrying ourselves unnecessarily, but they pose a threat to those closest to us. We won't go into details but consider the principles and protocols regarding being *unclean* as outlined for Ancient Israel. Those things—it could be pots or buildings, walls, people if you have some sort of skin thing—you have to go through this process. If you were considered unclean, if they weren't addressed properly per God's commands it would defile everything and everyone around them. The risk therefore, the impact, wasn't just to that individual or that one house but potentially to the entire community.

Going back to Hebrews 12:1, we see here the image that is painted of a runner running a race. You think of a runner—in the Olympics running the tracks—you don't envision someone loading up with a bunch of gear. I've talked about hiking a couple of times. You don't seem them out there with a big backpack and boots and pants and jackets, and hats—they are not dragging something behind them. They are streamlined in every aspect possible. They would be as lightweight as possible. We are talking fractions of ounces being shaved here and there. Think about the first Olympics, what did those runners wear? They wore nothing at all. Talk about being unencumbered. The mechanics of how one goes about getting rid of sin, those things that weigh us down, we're not going to get into detail today. The second ingredient, to combatting *weariness*, if you don't need it mentally, emotionally, in your life—get rid of it!

We're going to stay in verse 1 of Hebrews 12, for the third ingredient.

- 1) *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us ...*  
(NASB)

We're not going to take the time to go through it in detail, but we would be remiss to not pull in the context. So verse 1 starts with the word *therefore* so we are leading up from somewhere and that somewhere is Hebrews 11. We all know the stories and the characters. We've read their accounts numerous times. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, even the entire nation of Israel, is called out twice for their faith. That's important, we're going to come back to that in a moment. But before we do:

***The third ingredient:*** To look to those who surround us, and strive.

It's not just those we read of in the Bible, but they might be someone like those that we read of in Hebrews 11 who you know personally, or who maybe new or maybe is more contemporary to you—someone you can relate to. Someone who has run their race or is running their race today and who inspires you, who is a "David" in your experience, someone who is trustworthy and loyal. Someone who is a "Samuel"—a real servant of God, A Gideon, a Jephtha, a Samson—not a lot of Samsons running around. These are supposed to be examples to consider. Hebrews 11:32 calls these out by name—these very individuals. So, we have something to glean from their experience. They are part of



that *cloud of witnesses*. As we mentioned in verses 29 and 30 of Hebrews 11, it talks about the faith of the nation of Israel and there is a lot in the Old Testament not good about the nation of Israel. So, what's the deal? Remember the ingredient; look to those who we're surrounded by both past and present, and strive. It's not about getting everything right all the time. It's about the initiative, it's about the effort.

No one listed amongst the pillars in Hebrews 11, was perfect. Not a single one. They all messed up. They all failed at one point or another and ironically some showed some very weak faith and yet here they are. It didn't disqualify them from being amongst those who we can look to for examples and gain that much needed inspiration and encouragement to not *grow weary and lose heart*. It's not just for what they were able to accomplish, but we can be encouraged because of who they were. Flawed, imperfect, human beings, striving in faith.

A little bit of a tangent here, but personally I feel we've done ourselves a little disservice in hammering what we read in Matthew 5:48, you don't need to turn there, we're familiar with it. It's where Jesus says:

*Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

My experience, just speaking personally here, growing up in the church this was often interpreted as,

“Do everything according to the standards and traditions (emphasizing) that have been set before without fault. And not doing so equates with failure.”

A very binary picture—you were perfect or you were failing. More often than not, this perfection was a measure of outward appearance. Did you please men? Did you drive the right car? Did you have the right job? Were your kids perfect and pristine? How did you stand socially?

I appreciated the first definition of the Greek word translated as *perfect* in Matthew 5:48 and I'll read it from [Thayer's Greek Definitions](#). It is, “brought to its end”. Notice, “brought to its end”. Again, we mentioned this earlier, it's a process. It's a process of what? Matthew 5:48, I'll read it from the Bible in Basic English. It's translated in that,

*Be then complete in righteousness, even as your Father in heaven is complete”.*

That has a different vibe, doesn't it?

We're going to come back to this shortly but there is also a vitally important point to remember where ultimately this perfection is supposed to come from and a sneak preview—it's not us. Hold that thought, we'll come back to it.

If we are viewing perfection as a process, like any process it has to have a start and it involves movement; it's progress, it's a journey. It's not a flip of a switch, one day you're

bad, today you're perfect—done. It's that everyday striving. It's that walking the walk and looking forward to that cloud of witnesses, seeing those examples—warts and all. We ourselves showing up and not giving up. Yet, you have to do more than just show up. That's where our fourth ingredient comes into play in combatting *weariness*.

Back to Hebrews 12, back to verse 1.

1) *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, [so we have this example laid before us, we get rid of the weight, get rid of the things weighing us down] and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us ... (NASB)*

Skip down to verse 12).

12) *Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, 13) and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. 14) Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. (NASB)*

Running, strengthening, making straight, healing, pursuing peace—what do we see? These are all actions.

***Our fourth ingredient:*** Do something constructive.

Why is this important? The first, perhaps the obvious reason that may be coming to your mind and that came to my mind, is what we read in James 2:20 and 26, we don't need to turn there. "Doing things" demonstrates our faith, it's an output of God's Spirit working in our lives. But also important is the struggle we all face, to varying degrees, on what we can and cannot control. Going back to where we started this afternoon, facing the challenges that this world puts before us. What we see in the media, what's going on in society, the chaos, the pain, the sorrow, in our own lives and our own relationships and experiences. In the lives of those who we love, those we cherish and enduring the fellowship of suffering with them, knowing that in some cases outside of prayer, there is nothing we can do. There is nothing we can do to fix the circumstance in our own individual struggles, our "thorns in the flesh" that we are tasked to endure. Remember the fourth ingredient. We talked about removing the encumbrances and sin, but that doesn't mean that we're free of resistance. You have to have resistance to build strength, so we still have to have things that we have to face—our own struggles. But doing something, taking action, focusing on what we do have the power over. Our own actions, investments, activities, thoughts—can help take the wearying and discouraging focus off our concerns and interests—the broader world—and put it more effectively to use on what we can control.

Notice that each of these actions that we read in Hebrews 12—running, strengthening, making straight, healing, pursuing peace—they are all positive. These are positive actions. Taking action that has four moving constructed outcomes that help us feel better about the situation and our contribution to it. How do we know that these contributions that we're making are indeed positive? Let's read in verse 15 of Hebrews 12 and we get a glimpse.

*15) See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; (NASB)*

If we are taking action, if we are doing something, not allowing *weariness* to consume us, we're going to be less focused on ourselves and more focused on others. Notice how verse 15 starts—*see to it*—this is an instruction. We are to do this for others and in doing so, we're going to nip that root of bitterness, we're going to keep it from taking hold, from springing up, from tainting, from contaminating not just our own hearts, minds and attitudes but those around us. Those closest to us. Instead of a root of bitterness, we're building relationships, we're building bonds that will be mutually supportive and pretty tough to beat. To read about this, turn to Ecclesiastes 4:9 from the New Living Translation.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9** *Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed.*

*10) If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.*

*11) Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? (NLT)*

What do we see? Action, doing something useful, constructive, contributing to solutions, helping those in need and in turn the reciprocal nature of the action, especially what we see in verse 11—two lying together keep both warm. It's not that one is warm and now one is cold because they gave them all the warm. No, it's win-win, they both are warm.

*12) A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. (NLT)*

I love how the New Living phrases verse 12 and I think it fits really neatly with what we're talking about today. Alone, burdened, encumbered, drug down, we grow *weary*, we lose heart, we are defeated when we are attacked this way. Taking action, doing something, standing back-to-back, we conquer and the more we—the triple braid, the three-fold chord as it's often translated—the stronger and the less likely the “we”, the “all of us”, are to reach that point of failure, that point of losing heart.

We have our inputs into this recipe, the first four ingredients contributed. We now get to the final two and they are really the foundational pieces to having strength through “thick and thin” — sometimes it seems more like “thin and thinner”. The strength to get

through the “thin and the thinner”, to having the courage and power to *not grow weary, to not lose heart.*

For ingredient number five, back to Hebrews 12:2 this time.

**Hebrews 12:2** ... *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

3) *For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* (NASB)

So, this fifth ingredient—and I’ll do the first part of verse 2 from the Amplified Bible—as our ingredient, is this.

2) *Looking away from all that will distract, to Jesus.* (AMP)

**The fifth ingredient:** Look away from all that will distract to the work of Jesus Christ.

As we’ve talked about, weariness comes so often from being drawn into our own heads. From being burdened unnecessarily. From being worried about things we have no control over. We are fundamentally, when that happens, being distracted from where our focus should be—on the work of Jesus the Christ.

Conceptually, there are a couple of ideas I would like to touch on when considering Jesus. The first being His example. In His example, we most often focus on His righteous life—absolutely necessary and absolutely appropriate. He set the standard, (and we’ll get back to that in a moment), and provided us with a template on how to live a human life as God desires us to live. Not only did Jesus set the conceptual example, He set, perhaps a less focused on, but important literal physical example for us too. Remember Jesus was, in the flesh, as much a human being as any of the rest of us are. Subject to the same impacts as the mileage we all put on. He got tired, He got hungry, frustrated, He wept, He enjoyed the company of others, He went to Feasts and celebrations. The important example that He set for us to notice is that He took steps to combat weariness in His physical experience.

Jesus’ life was one spent fully on the will of the Father. Giving, sharing, service to men in teachings and miracles and ultimately His death and resurrection. Again, He was a human and we’re going to take a look at one example where He stopped and took a “time out”. Turn to Mark 6—while you are turning there, we’re going to break into the narrative, in which I’ll give some context. We have three major events happening in Mark 6. In the first 6 verses we have Jesus coming to His home town and essentially being rejected. In verse 5 it’s recorded that He could do no miracle there. Pretty unpleasant—for you and I that would be pretty discouraging. In front of the home team, being turned down? Then in verses 7-13 we have the commissioning of the 12 to go out in pairs to preach and heal. It’s a landmark event, very positive for sure but probably kind of intense though. I can’t help thinking of the milestones of our children as they

grow and approach those milestones. Maybe a little stressful, maybe a little sad—they'll never be this young again. Anxiety going through that process, going through that milestone and then seeing it actually achieved. Then in verses 14-29, we have the murder of John the Baptist. The one that Jesus said *no one born of women has been greater*—someone He knew was important, vital to the process and likely fond of as well. So there is a lot going on here. We pick up the story in verse 30.

**Mark 6:30** *The apostles \*gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught.*

31) *And He \*said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) (NASB)*

Busy, busy, busy.

32) *They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves. (NASB)*

So, what's the example that we see here? Disconnect, rest, all this activity and drama, it's going to wear everyone out. It didn't last long, but if we skip down to verse 45-47.

45) *Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away.*

46) *After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.*

47) *When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. (NASB)*

So even Jesus Himself needed time to rest, to pray, to recharge, to regroup, to get away from it all. It's a lesson we can all take to heart. Disconnect, turn off the TV, turn off the computer, turn off the smartphone, turn off the noise of this world and rest. The sabbath—this day, today—perfect opportunity. But it doesn't have to be the sabbath. In our lives we come through a series of intense experiences. I chose Mark 6 because there is a lot of not so good examples but there's also some good ones. Good things, not so good things, can all cause us to get tired, to get fatigued, to get stressed, to grow weary and not have the energy to continue. As Jesus did, we can and should step away and physically and spiritually recharge.

The second idea regarding Jesus, going back to Hebrews 12:2, is that He is our Author and Perfecter; extremely important. The word translated as *author* here can mean "leader or captain". The role of a leader or the job of a captain is to empower and inspire. Rick mentioned in introducing me that I work as a technology executive and in that role, my aspiration is to grow my staff to exhibit leadership qualities in and of themselves. To inculcate my values as theirs by the example that I set in leadership. I can tell any of my staff to do something and they'll do it, generally. I can get obedience, that compulsory action. But the real value—the reward—is in the ownership. That's the inspiration that we can gain from Jesus' example that we find in scripture. He had the

vision and blazed the trail, so we can come after with confidence and in assurance of success. We touched on this earlier and I'm going to come back to it now, this idea of being perfect. What does Hebrews 12:2 tell us? Are we not told that Jesus is the Perfecter? That He, as Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary defines the word *perfecter* here as, "will complete and perfect the thing"; *us* being the thing". Who does the perfecting? Is it us? Yes, we do play a part, we have a role, we have to submit, we have to yield to the Spirit working in our lives, but is it our job to perfect? How much has this concept—speaking personally—wearied me, wearied you? Is it an encumbrance that we're carrying that we don't have to. "I have to be perfect; I have to be perfect." You may say "What about Philippians 2:12—*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?*" To that I say, what does verse 13 say? "*For it is God who works in you both to will and work for His good pleasure.*" Not our will, not our work; it's God's. We have a part to play, but we can look to, fix our eyes, keep from being distracted, on the example that Jesus set and being the One who inspires us and will see to it that this perfection process is completed in us.

In the end, we get to our sixth and final ingredient. Back to Hebrews 12, if you're not already there, we will pick up in verse 6.

**Hebrews 12:6** *For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."*

7) *It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*

8) *But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

9) *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?*

10) *For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.*

11) *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (NASB)*

**Our sixth ingredient:** God our Father loves us and deals with us as His very own children.

While at times, what we experience—the pains of this life, those things which tax us, cause us to grow weary, to start to lose confidence and heart—feels random, senseless, wasteful, vain. The truth is far from it. It is a demonstration of a process—there it is again—a process in motion. A refining in education and improvement in each of our lives coming from the very Creator of the universe, personally, individually, custom-made for each one of us. It's not random, it's not vain, it's because God loves us as His very children. That is our sixth ingredient. God loves us as His very children. Without this experience, how could we become any different than anyone else in the world? How would we know that the sway of Satan in our experience is wrong and worth fighting against? How could we be found legitimate without going through a

process of validation. I know that's been talked about several times in the past. The example used in Hebrews 12—and I couldn't find a better one myself—is that of a physical father to his physical children. As a dad, I do my best and try to shape the experience and interactions I have with my girls with love, respect and clarity of heart and intention, for their good. These girls that I view as on loan to me, but I have the very sacred duty of teaching to think, to reason, and to make good choices now and for the rest of their lives. Isn't that what our heavenly Father is doing for us? Teaching us to think, to be mindful, to be engaged and choose life. To share in His holiness and to have a life that yields righteousness—these outcomes. Through and because of the tough and the tougher. You may remember the old Timex watch commercials,

“Takes a licking and keeps on ticking”.

It's not just about taking a licking and keeping on ticking though. Our Father gives us not only these experiences but also the strength to endure them, to not grow tired, to not grow weary and to not lose heart. Turn to Isaiah 40; this passage is one of the primary inspirations I had for sharing this with you today. I'll read this from the Contemporary English Version of the Bible. I know there are a few here and probably behind the camera who have sung in various church choirs, festival choirs in years past—it's a beautiful song “They Shall Soar Like Eagles”, it comes from this passage. If you haven't heard it, [YouTube](#) it. You can find it, it's out there and there are some beautiful recordings.

**Isaiah 40:28** *Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured.*

*29) The Lord gives strength to those who are weary.*

*30) Even young people get tired, then stumble and fall.*

*31) But those who trust the Lord will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings; they will walk and run without getting tired.*

(CEB)

Again, as a dad thinking about my experience, if every interaction I have with my girls, if every moment is a teachable moment, my kids are going to get pretty tired of that, they are going to get pretty *weary*. There are times to teach—don't get me wrong—to instruct, to pick battles. There are times to just listen, there are times to hug, to smile, to encourage, to just sit in silence together. To help my kids to find new strength. Our Father is the source of this new strength for His children. The Eternal, the Creator, the One—He doesn't get tired, doesn't grow weary, not subject to age, not subject to failure, the perfect Dad.

As we wrap up our time together, let's look at our cautionary tale. We've talked about all this, but why is it important? Why should we take this seriously? We find “why” in the context of our recipe. You're going to see why I'm using terms “recipe” and “ingredients”. Back to Hebrews 12, pick up in verse 15, through verse 17.

**Hebrews 12:15** *See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; 16) that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.*

17) *For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.* (NASB)

So—our cautionary tale? Esau; let's take a look at his story. Turn to Genesis 25:29-34.

**Genesis 25:29** *When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished;*

30) *and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore, his name was called Edom.*

31) *But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright."*

32) *Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?"*

33) *And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.*

34) *Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.* (NASB)

What do we have here? Talking about *weariness*, what should we be looking for in our cautionary tale? In our lives, in our experiences, we are indeed out in the field. Jesus, in the parable, referred to this state of the world in Greek, the *cosmos* as such—in Matthew 13:38, the field is the world. Are we mentally, emotionally, and spiritually starving ourselves while out in the field therefore becoming famished. What happens when we are famished? What happened to Esau? Rational thought goes out the window, doesn't it? We read in verse 32, "*I'm about to die*" and going back to our first ingredient—likely not true. We can't think straight. We make poor decisions. We grow tired, we lose perspective, we lose interest. "Birthright, smirtright, who needs that when I'm going to be dead?" Ultimately, we lose motivation and the heart to do what's right or to fight what's wrong. That is where *growing weary* becomes a spiritual danger. When we despise our birthright as Firstfruits and we give up because we just don't have it anymore. We just don't have it in us anymore.

With the recipe we've covered today found in Hebrews 12, we can keep from approaching this state of *weariness*—of losing heart and giving up and losing out on the greatest opportunity a human being could ever hope for. A life of eternal fulfillment in a loving relationship with our Father and His Son. What is that worth? A proverbial bowl of beans? Red stuff? I had to laugh at this phrasing "red stuff" because if you think of anything in physical life, anything that could possibly could take the place of our spiritual inheritance, it's all physical, it's all "red stuff", it's all made of the dust of the earth. Is it worth it? Not at all. We can and will do better and



gain strength and power by not becoming famished and using “the recipe” by keeping in mind the six ingredients.

- It’s not as bad as it seems.
- If it’s something in our lives that we don’t need mentally, emotionally or spiritually—get rid of it. Get that burden off of our shoulders.
- To look for inspiration from those in our “cloud of witnesses” who have striven.
- To do something constructive and beneficial to others.
- To break our distractions and fix our attention on the example and the power of Jesus.
- To always remember our Abba, our Father has a purpose and provides for all of our needs.

So, putting these ingredients together, we have what we need as we sojourn through “the field of this life”, to not be like Esau and to not throw it all away for some “red stuff” as a reward. But to not grow weary and lose heart and to attain our birthright—our inheritance—in our Father’s Kingdom.