

thankFULL: witnesses

1. Understand the _____

a. We are _____

b. We are _____

c. We are _____

2. Utilize the _____

a. Run _____

b. Run _____

c. Run _____

All of us know that we're supposed to be thankful and not take things for granted

The trick is how to do that, and over the next 3 weeks we want to look in depth at some things that can help us live with hearts full of thanks

This life we're living is a journey, and the author of Hebrews talks about it as a race

This week, we'll be taking a look at the witnesses who encourage us along the way and how they can help us be thankful

1. Understand the situation

- Let's agree that we tend to make bad choices when we don't fully understand the situations we may find ourselves in
- Public nose pickers, kissers, loud talkers
- So the first step to being sure we can be full of thanks is to understand your situation
- Understanding our situation helps us keep perspective
- Here are 3 truths about the situation you find yourself in:
 - a. We are surrounded (v. 1)
 - i. sometimes it's uncomfortable
 - (a) when you're caught
 - (b) when the police have you surrounded
 - (c) for some, the holidays will create awkward moments surrounded by family
 - (d) show the "Family" clip from Ransom media
 - ii. sometimes it's a good thing to be surrounded
 - (a) on special days
 - (b) when you need support
 - iii. In this case, being surrounded is a very good thing
 - b. We are seen (v. 1)
 - i. By who? The great cloud of Hebrews chapter 11
 - ii. Men and women who have gone before us and fought the fight we're now fighting
 - iii. literally means "a numberless multitude"
 - c. We are supported (v. 1)
 - i. This third truth about our situation is what keeps the first 2 from being creepy
 - ii. It's one thing to be surrounded, it's another thing to be surrounded by people who are on your side
 - iii. Home Field Advantage

2. Utilize the strategy

- So, we get it. We're running a race. People are cheering us on, but the race still gets hard, and we still lose our thankfulness.
- The goal is to live in our situations with hearts full of gratitude, and running by these 3 strategies will help you not only run thankful, but finish thankful.
 - a. Run light (v. 1)
 - i. "throw off" - don't take off, lay down
 - ii. cf. Mark 10:50 - in order to get to Jesus
 - iii. What are we to throw off? Everything!

- iv. The sin that entangles
 - 1. like kudzu!
 - 2. We act surprised that others (and ourselves) get tripped up by sin, but the Bible says it's easy (it "easily" entangles)
 - b. Run long (v. 1)
 - i. Don't just run. Keep running.
 - ii. My advice to a first time HM runner: "Run. Don't stop."
 - iii. cf. Hebrews 10:36
 - iv. God has marked the course
 - 1. because He wants us to see the way
 - 2. He doesn't try to confuse us
 - c. Run looking (v. 2)
 - i. Fix our eyes - like Sydney getting candy during Dora!
 - ii. On who? Jesus!
 - 1. We see that He ran with endurance
 - 2. When we see Him, we see that He suffered
 - 3. When we see how He suffered and overcame, and how others have as well, we find ourselves thankful to be numbered in the crowd.
3. Conclusion
- a. When we understand the situation (that we are surrounded, seen and supported) and when we utilize the strategy (run light, long, and looking), then we will find ourselves running with...
 - i. confidence that we can make it because others have
 - ii. perseverance to continue, no matter what we face
 - iii. thankfulness for the witnesses that point the way
 - b. Stephen would have been 42 tomorrow, and I'll always be thankful that he is in the crowd, and that he taught me the greatest example of this one day at Special Olympics
 - c. Stephen's story
 - d. Pray