Dear Open Door Family,

Have you ever felt like quitting? Have you ever been so tired or discouraged that you just did NOT want to continue? If we are honest we have all been through something at one time or another that made us wonder if it would not be smarter to just walk away. I usually went through that the first week of two a day practices for the basketball season. When I was sore and tired and had blisters on my feet, there were times I briefly considered quitting. But I knew that in a few of weeks I would be in great shape and I would enjoy playing in the games, so I kept on going. In my walk with the Lord Jesus there are times I feel tired - discouraged - hopeless. There are times when I wonder if I can keep going or sometimes even if I want to keep going. In those dark times I go back to passages like this. I go back to verses that remind me the Christian life is NOT a sprint - it is NOT quick and easy - it is a marathon.

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NLT) ...let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. [2] We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. [3] Think of all the hostility He endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

Hebrews 12:3 (HCS) For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so that you won't grow weary and lose heart.

These verses are some of the most comforting and challenging all at the same time. We are reminded that we are ALL running the race - the race which is the Christian life. We are reminded we are NOT alone and that many others have run before us. Then we are given very, very practical advice so that we can RUN WELL. Take OFF everything that hinders: Put aside anything that gets in the way of running the race. Take off anything that can slow us down, or trip us up. "Our race is NOT for sprinters. It is for faithful PLODDERS who fast or slow, strong or week, keep on PERSEVERING." RUN with Perseverance: Run with endurance refusing to give up or quit. "Perseverance has nothing to do with GIFTEDNESS, but everything to do with your heart and determination." Run the RACE God chooses for you: Each of us must run the race. I cannot run the race for you and you cannot run my race for me. "We can finish well if we choose to RELY on Jesus who is our Strength and our guide." We can keep on going enduring and running by putting our FOCUS on Jesus: He saw the end goal of providing forgiveness of sins and being seated once again at His Father's right hand so He went to the Cross for us. REMEMBER, Jesus endured Hostility for us: We must think about the price that He paid on the cross for us SO THAT we will not get discouraged and give up. When we FEEL like quitting, when we think we cannot go on, we MUST go back to Hebrews 12 and refocus our hearts and minds on Jesus SO THAT we can hang on. "Persevering grit possesses a terrible beauty, but it is eternally beautiful when devoted to the real-life spiritual race that is marked out for us. The sense of biblical perseverance is patient fortitude, patiently gutting it out. Perseverance that refuses to be deflected, overcomes obstacles and delays, and is NOT stopped by discouragement within nor opposition without." All quotes from R. Kent Hughes. Disciplines of a Godly Man

PRAYER: Lord God, thank you that I do NOT have to run this race alone. Thank You that I can look to You for encouragement and strength. Please Lord Jesus, help me to hang on tight and keep on plodding no matter what. Please Lord, don't let me quit. Keep me going. Amen.

Pastor Mark Kieft