



THE WEIGHT WE WEREN'T MADE TO CARRY

with Doug Elks

▶ FOCUS VERSES

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2

▶ DISCUSSION

1. **Over the course of your spiritual journey, have you ever felt like you were, in Doug's words, "checking boxes"—going through the motions of being a Christian, but not having a personal relationship with Jesus? Not doing anything bad, but not doing anything particularly good or constructive, either?**
 - a. Was there anything in particular that you felt yourself lacking that inspired you to seek a deeper relationship with God?

2. **What's the greatest physical pain you've ever personally experienced?**
 - a. What about emotional pain?

 - b. What were the circumstances behind those experiences—were they of your own making, or were they caused by forces outside your control?

 - c. Looking back, did you learn anything from either of those experiences that has helped you in any way today?



- 3. Have you ever been in a situation where you were experiencing great physical or emotional pain, and there was a relatively easy way of relieving that pain, but you turned it down because it was unhealthy, selfish, or went against your personal values?**
 - a. Talk about how you came to the decision to refuse that relief. How difficult was it to say no?
 - b. In what ways is your life better now for not having made that easy choice?

- 4. How often do you think about the kind of person Jesus was in His time on earth, and the suffering He endured for us?**
 - a. Do those reflections help you put your own challenges or suffering in context or perspective?

- 5. What's the one aspect of your life about which you're the most vain? It might be something about your appearance, but it could also be career prestige, a certain luxury item you like to own, anything about the image you're concerned with projecting to the rest of the world.**
 - a. Are there any important or meaningful things you've been distracted from in your pursuit of attention or praise in that one area?

- 6. Think about the weighted vest Doug will be wearing when he runs an ultramarathon later this year, and think about unnecessary burdens you might have been carrying for a long time.**
 - a. What's one weight you'd like to be able to "put down," and what's keeping you from doing that?
 - b. Is there something—or someone—who might be able to help you do it once and for all?

