

# Lay Aside

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Preacher: Sam Bunnell

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, amen. Wasn't that a powerful sermon that our choir just kind of preached to us right there? That was amazing. I'm really, really grateful for their ministry to us.

I want to welcome all of our guests this morning. I know we have a number of guests on Mother's Day from out of town and here locally as well. I want to welcome all of you. If you haven't had an opportunity to yet, grab the welcome card in the seat back in front of you and just fill that out as much as you'd like.

And I'd invite you to drop it off at our welcome desk straight out those double doors to the lobby right there and just drop it off at the welcome desk. We have a special gift for you.

In exchange for that, someone will be there to hand you your gift at the end of the service. So take advantage of that. We are continuing on in our series on new life, a fresh beginning with Jesus. New life, a fresh beginning with Jesus. And I think that's a powerful tribute to mothers. If there's someone with whom you can always begin again, it's mom.

[ 1 : 00 ] No matter how much you hurt her, no matter how much you fail her or disappoint her, she never stops loving, she never stops caring. And a godly mother would be like that. Now maybe that hasn't always been the experience of everyone with their mother, but that is certainly the essence of motherhood, is that maybe you might be someone only a mama could love, right?

I know I certainly have had those days in my life. But we're thankful for that kind of faithfulness, for that kind of long-suffering, for that kind of patience that we receive from our mothers.

And I believe that comes from God himself. That's what we receive from God. So no matter where you find yourself this morning, no matter where you've been or what you've done, you can experience new life and a fresh beginning with Jesus today.

And that's what this series is about. Much of our series comes from a book and a sermon series by Craig Groeschel, pastor of Life.Church up in Oklahoma City. And so you'll find a lot of similarities between what we're looking through and resources that he has sent out as well.

A few weeks ago, we talked about how God is doing a new thing. Man, if you need any evidence of that, you look at the baptism waters. Those two young people this morning giving their lives to Jesus.

[ 2 : 21 ] The new thing that I'm thinking of Zephyr's testimony and the path that she was walking down and then how God did a 180 with her and rerouted her onto a completely new path.

God is doing a new thing. He's doing a new thing in our homes, in our church, in our community. Maybe God could do a new thing in your life as well. And then the next week we said, stop trying, start what?

Training. There you go. Stop trying, start training. What do we mean by that? Well, we're going to talk about a little bit more today. Kind of a part two of that, if you would. But stop trying means we could have been trying to do something, the same thing often, over and over and over and over again in our lives and failing and failing and failing each time.

And maybe God wants us to stop trying in our efforts and start training to believe, to be that we are who he says we are.

And he's training us how to be who he wants us to be, which leads us to the next week. We do what we do because of what we think of us.

[ 3 : 28 ] Let's say it together, can we? You do what you do because of what you think of you. That's so true. Our behavior comes from our, or determines our identity.

Our identity comes from our behavior. What we think of ourselves, what would someone like me do in a situation like this? And we process those thoughts in our heads in a split second, and then we act according to what we think of ourselves.

And instead, God wants to change our thinking, as Romans 12, 2 tells us, and he wants to act according to what he thinks of us, who he says we are, and that he is training us to become what he says we are.

So our series text has been 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 17. Can we read it together off the screen? If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, and see, the new has come. Now, this morning, we're kind of beginning a three-part sub-series within this series about new life, a fresh beginning with Jesus.

[ 4 : 41 ] We're kind of having a three-part sub-series, if you will. I'm asking a lot of you to try to keep track of all this, but just hang with me for the next few weeks. We're going to look at two Bible passages each Sunday for the next three Sundays.

So y'all are in here for part one, all right? If you would take your Bibles and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 12. Hebrews chapter 12.

We're going to read one verse there. So if you'll stick a finger there, or if you've got one of these handy Bible markers, I've got two with them, because I'm a preacher.

I've got to have the fancy Bible. It has two ribbon markers there. But if you've got one of those, stick it in Hebrews chapter 12, and then flip over, if you would, while you're holding your place, flip over to Philippians chapter 3.

If you need help with somebody, look on next to you. I will also have these verses on the screen. So if you just want to look up there, that's okay. I swear it's from the Word of God, all right? Hebrews chapter 12 and Philippians chapter 3.

[ 5 : 47 ] We're going to read one verse from each one this morning, and we'll continue that over the next few weeks. Would you stand with me as we read together?

If you're able to stand, please do that. If you can't for a physical reason or something, I totally understand that. But if you're able, join us in standing.

Let's read Hebrews 12 and verse 1 together. Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us, watch these two words, ready?

Lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us. I said we were going to read one verse, but we're just going to do the next half.

Keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. Now look back at Philippians 3 and verse 13. Philippians 3, verse 13.

[ 6 : 47 ] Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. What's he talking about? If you look back in verse 12, he's talking about the goal that we are pressing toward with Jesus.

Okay? There is a goal of becoming like Jesus, being a Jesus follower. We call that being a disciple. Becoming more and more like Jesus.

The mission of this church is to make disciples. How do we do that? Church, this is a little trivia quiz for you. We have three parts to our mission statement. What is it? Loving God, seeking truth, serving people.

How do we become Jesus followers? How do we make disciples, both inside and outside our church? By loving God, by seeking truth, by serving people.

So that's the goal that Paul is talking about here in verse 13. He says, I don't consider myself to have taken hold of it. I don't consider myself to have already hit that goal.

[ 7 : 54 ] But one thing I do. Here we go. Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray together. God, I pray that you would speak to us from these two passages in your word. Well, three passages also, if you count 2 Corinthians. I believe that you are leading our church into a new era of your power, your glory, your fruit, your blessing.

New life. How do you see new life in a church that's been here since 1876? How do you see God do something new?

Because God, you are as fresh, as powerful, as real, as you ever have been. Back in the 1800s, back before the world began, you are still that same God.

So allow us to experience your new life. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All right, church, you may be seated. Thanks for standing. So the theme today is this. Lay aside. Lay aside.

[ 9 : 05 ] This is a direct quote from back in Hebrews in chapter 12. Lay aside every weight. Now, what does that look like?

Well done. 16-pound backpack. It's not exactly a backpack. It's a what? Weighted vest, right? Yeah, it's a weighted vest. It's there for runners to train.

If they train with that and it's heavy and they're adding this extra weight, then when they run without it, it feels so much lighter, right? And they can run so much faster and have that big weight off of them.

So we understand, as this gentleman here has his ankle weights on him, is that making him faster as he runs with them or is it slowing him down as he runs with them?

Slowing him down, right? The ultimate goal when you're training with these is to make yourself stronger and faster. But when you add this extra weight, you're going to be slower, aren't you? Aren't you?

[ 10 : 05 ] I think so too. But I think we should put it to the test. I think we should find out if these extra weights actually make you slower or not.

So Caleb Wilson, would you come on up here, sir? All right, here we go. Y'all have to wait for this day, haven't you? And you know I'm going to go off the way.

All right, here we go. You know I'm still in here right now? All right, here we go. But you're a beast, so I'm thankful you're a beast.

How does that feel? Kind of run across here. How does that feel? It's not fun. You can take it off.

You can take it off. Here's the deal. Do you think you're faster than I am?

I ask around a little bit. Most of the young people tend to agree. Hey, well, it's probably faster than I am. How many of y'all know I'm training for a 5K?

[ 11 : 12 ] Yeah, I see who has Facebook and who knows. All right, that's fine. Or at least checks it. Yeah, I'm on this Nike run club thing, and this coach is in my ear trying to motivate me.

And I feel like he's annoying me more than anything else, but it's all right. So I've never run a 5K before. I know that shocks you. I look like a runner. I'm going to look like a runner.

Okay, I am a runner, right? I'm not trying. I'm training. Okay? Here we go. I've decided that I am a runner, and I'm just going to train to look like it. All right, so here we go.

Caleb, when I say here we go, here we really go. So you ready? You ready to go? Caleb agrees to race me. This morning, right now. We'll go back to your starting point.

Here we go. God conflicted who to cheer for. All right. We're going to race to the front.

[ 12 : 11 ] Please don't trip over Wade. I'm going to feel so bad. Please. Okay. It's going to be 3, 2, 1, and on one you go.

Okay, ready? All right. Who do y'all think so? I'm going to win. If any of you think I'm going to win, you are really sweet but really creepy.

So I have? I have. All right. 3, 2, 1. Oh, shoot. Wow.

I mean, I knew you were sweet but wow. Y'all making strikes again? Yeah. Just give me one more and I feel like I can get it.

Okay, Sam. Oh, we ain't done. We ain't done. We ain't done. We ain't done. This is nice.

[ 13 : 20 ] Alright. Guys for me, guys. Guys for me. All right, here we go. Okay.

Three, two, one, and you're one-on-one, right? Okay, three, two, one. Okay. All right, go give him a hand, man.

What's really sad is they were still competitive. All right.

Anybody got a water or something? That's true. Lily's is closed. I think I hit Lily's up about four times last week. All right.

I got to stop that if I'm going to 5K. Y'all, what do we agree? Do we agree that weight slows you down? So what did he need to do if he wanted to beat me?

[ 14 : 41 ] Get rid of the weights, right? And then what would happen when he got rid of the weights? Huh? He'd be much faster, right?

Would he beat me in a race? No, he would smoke me in a race. I mean, like, it wasn't even close.

That guy's got some wheels. All right. So the whole point of that kind of obvious exercise was there is a big old difference in you when you're carrying all this extra weight.

I can testify to that in my life, okay? There's a big old difference in me when I'm carrying extra weight physically and spiritually.

Now, whether you are in peak physical condition, I mean, I don't think there's too many of us in that. Or maybe you're not in peak physical condition.

Every single one of us is carrying extra spiritual weight that we need to lay down. So you're looking at me? Yes. Because you're no better than the rest of us.

[ 15 : 50 ] All of you and me need to lay down some things in our lives. So Hebrews 12.1 challenges us. Lay aside every weight. Every weight.

What does that mean? It means stop. Stop. Number one, if you're filling in your bulletins, stop. Hebrews 12.1. Lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely.

That's what we're talking about. Lay aside the sin that clings so closely. You know what it is. Maybe it's greed.

Maybe it's selfishness. Maybe it's something you're addicted to. Maybe it's alcohol. Maybe it's prescription drugs. Maybe it's pornography. Whatever it is, the sin that clings so closely to you and won't let you go.

Stop. Stop. You won't be able to run the race that God has laid out for you. Well, if you don't stop. Now, we can look at alcoholism.

[ 17 : 02 ] We can look at addiction to pornography. We can look at those cheating on their spouses. We can look at those who abandon their family. We can look at all kinds of very obvious, physical, outward sin problems that everyone sees.

But what about the things that people don't see? What about the things that aren't so obvious? Those things can be just as damaging.

And I know that all of us are prone to these kinds of toxic traits. In fact, you're a control freak. You've got a need to control. And so people outwardly see you as manipulative. Inside, you're bitter because someone wronged you.

And so outwardly, we see your passive-aggressive behavior. Inwardly, you think all the world is about you. You're a narcissist. You don't care so much about everybody else.

[ 18 : 10 ] Maybe you wouldn't admit that to yourself. But in reality, the way you live, it's all about number one. People see you as entitled. And we could go on and on and create more and more lists.

But the whole point is, there are many toxic traits that can be just as damaging as those which we would look at someone else and say, Man, they really need to get their life together.

Man, look at that obvious problem that they have. They need to stop that, don't they? They need to quit that habit. They need to get that fixed. But in reality, our inward self is just as unhealthy, just as damaging, just as destructive as the outward problems that we see in others.

And God is saying, you've got to lay it aside. You've got to stop. You've got to stop. So, why do we do these things? Because of what we think of us.

We do what we do because of what we think of me. I am this kind of person. I am someone who always has to scratch my itch.

[ 19 : 22 ] So, I will go do this self-destructive habit because I have this itch that needs to be scratched. I am someone who doesn't tell myself no. So, I will go do this because I don't tell myself no.

Whatever it is, you do what you do because of what you think of you. And like we talked about last Sunday, or maybe it was the one before, but God says, I want you to stop that and do what you do because of what I think of you.

Because of who I tell you that you are. You are my son. You are my daughter. You are forgiven. You are chosen. You are free. Live like it. Let it go.

Lay it down. Stop. This could be the day. This could be the day that you stop doing that self-destructive thing that you do. Maybe you don't go to bed until 2 a.m.

Nothing good happens on the internet after midnight, does it? Maybe you come home and you don't shepherd your family well, men.

[ 20 : 30 ] Maybe you don't lead your family well. Maybe you don't check on your wife's heart. Maybe you don't engage with your kids. Whatever that self-destructive thing is that you do, today could be the day that you stop.

So, this could be the day. Lay aside every weight. Lay aside every sin.

But I don't think this is the only thing that we need to lay aside. So, number two, move on. There might be something you need to stop, but there also might be something you need to move on

from.

Back in Philippians 3.13. Philippians 3.13. Forgetting what lies behind. Forgetting what lies behind. Paul is talking all about attaining this goal. Reaching this goal. Y'all, I've got a goal of running a 5K. Now, step number one, I've got to find a 5K to run. Have you realized that the 5Ks in Wichita Falls, like most of them, are canceled?

[ 21 : 39 ] It's true. I went to sign up for about three different 5Ks on Facebook because it said they were doing it. And then Sarah told me one of them is a boxing gym.

Pueblo. Pueblo Gym or something. Apparently, they shut down in New Mexico. So, I don't think they're going to do a 5K. And I was going to win. So, there you go. I know there's the Midwestern 5K in August.

I'm not going to run my first 5K in August. Setting yourself up to fail, right? I ain't doing it. I'm waiting until, like, November or something. We'll find one.

But anyway, as I've got this goal of running this 5K, which is something a lot of work to get there, do you realize how many times I've tried to get in shape in my 39 years of life on this earth?

Do you think it's a lot or a little? Yeah, it's a lot. It's a lot. I've tried a lot. I've tried a lot of different diets. I've tried a lot of different exercise plans. I've done a lot of different things. So, I'm not going to get in shape.

[ 22 : 47 ] I mean, I have a shape. It's just not the shape I want. I'm not going to get in better shape. If I don't forget all the times that I have failed, that I have tried and I have failed, if I keep remembering that, then that is my identity.

Then that's all of a sudden who I am, and I'm the guy who tries to get in shape and doesn't do it. Fail. So, if I don't forget what lies behind and then reach forward to what lies before and believe that God says, you know what?

I gave you this body. I know your body better than you know yourself. And if you do it my way, then I can help you get more healthy. God can help us get to where he wants us to go.

So, if he wants me to live longer and be able to get on the floor and play with my grandkids someday, then I've got to do it his way. So, I've got to forget what lies behind.

Why? Why? Because we've all got a past. Every one of us has things that we need to move on from. It might be failures on you.

[ 24 : 00 ] It might be failures of others. But it's time to move on with Jesus. Oscar Wilde said this quote.

I think it's powerful for our sermon today. Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future. Did you hear that? Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.

He was kind of making the point, we're all on level ground. We're all on common ground. But I'm also going to say, look, everybody, no matter how well they dress up, and how nicely they speak, and how, you know, appropriately they conduct themselves, every single one of us, have a past that we need to move on from.

And every sinner who looks like they're a mess, and they can't get themselves together with Christ, they do have a future. Will they ever get to it?

I pray they will. But with Jesus, we all have a past, but we all have a future. It might be something you did.

[ 25 : 08 ] It might be something someone did to you. There's all different kinds of trauma. There's physical trauma. Maybe you experienced that. Maybe someone harmed you.

Someone touched you. Someone hurt you. Maybe there's psychological trauma. Maybe you were in an abusive relationship. Maybe you can't get out of your own head.

Whatever it is that is holding you back physically, mentally, or emotionally. Emotional trauma can be some of the most damaging. Things that people have said that you never got over.

Maybe someone left and never came back. Whatever the trauma is, God can help you forget what lies behind and walk into his beautiful new future with you.

Holding your hand. Leading you. Saying, walk in my steps. I know that this world is full of hurt. I've experienced my own trauma before.

[ 26 : 20 ] As have probably every person in this room. We've all experienced trauma. But God says, I can help you past it. I can help you.

Whether you failed yourself, or you failed someone else, and you just can't get over what you did. Or someone else failed you. Someone else hurt you. God says, I can heal.

I can heal. But you've got to move on with me. God's doing a new thing. See how that applies here? God's doing a new thing. We're excited about kids getting baptized. And we're excited about new things happening. And new people coming into our body of fellowship here in this church. But God can do a new thing in your life.

By helping you. Stop doing something that is self-destructive. Or stop doing something that is harmful to others. Or move on from something in the past.

[ 27 : 18 ] God can do a new thing. And you can have a fresh beginning with Jesus today. How do we do that? James 4.7. You don't have to turn there. Unless you'd like to.

James 4.7. I'll read it quickly. Therefore, submit to God. Submit to God. Resist the devil. And he will what?

Flee from you. Yeah, some of you remember that verse. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. The devil is trying to hold you back. The devil is trying to keep that thing from your past in front of you.

At all times. He's trying to keep you locked down into this habit that you just can't break. The Bible says, resist the devil with the power of God. And he will what? Flee.

He'll run. He can't stand up to it. He can't handle it. He can't handle that power. You say, the devil doesn't have any power. Sure, he has power.

[ 28 : 15 ] The Bible calls him the prince of the power of the air. He has power on this earth as much as God allows him to have. But God's power is so much greater. You can't win a fight with the devil.

But God can. And always will. Devil can't beat God in the race, okay? Whether he's wearing weights or not. You can't resist.

You can't stop. You can't move on. And that's the message for today. You have the power through Jesus Christ. So, two questions.

What are you holding on to? Lay aside every weight. And maybe the better question for some of you might be, what is holding on to you?

Forget what lies behind. What are you holding on to? And what is holding on to you? God is a God of freedom.

[ 29 : 21 ] God is a God of new life. Fresh beginnings. And maybe you walked in here carrying a burden this morning. And you put a smile on your face. And said good morning to someone.

But the truth is, it's not a great morning for you. Because you're carrying a burden that you just can't seem to lay down. Jesus says, if you run to me, I will help you.

With my power, you can resist the devil. With my power, you can do something that the old you would not do. But I can create a new you.

So, stop trying. And start training. Accept who God says you are. And start training to be that person. And when the temptation comes to remember the past.

Or when the temptation comes to do the thing, the sin that easily weighs you down. You can say, wait a minute. That's not in my training regimen. That doesn't work.

[ 30 : 24 ] Now, y'all, I'm not saying I'm doing this perfectly because I'm a weekend. But I ran five times last week. Let's go, baby. It was fun. But I've noticed now when I go to a restaurant, it's like, what I would normally order, wait a minute.

That's not going to help me. I'm in training. I can't have one and a half back to the 50th of a day. So, I like to limit myself to like three chips, you know.

Why? Because I've got a goal I'm trying to reach. Maybe after the goal, you know, I'll let myself have more than three. But I've got this goal I'm trying to reach.

Do you have a goal? Or are you coasting through life? Giving in to your sin. Giving in to what's holding you down. Or can't move on from what's holding you back.

What's holding on to you. You can't move on from that. Because you don't have that goal that you're trying to reach. What is your goal for your family? What is your goal for your walk with Jesus?

[ 31 : 28 ] What is your goal for yourself? Paul said, I have a goal. I'm trying to reach Jesus. That's my goal. So, stop trying.

And start training with Jesus. He'll help you get there. He'll help you reach that goal. I'm not going to run a 5K next week. Wouldn't work, okay? It's going to take a little while. It's going to take months of training.

For me to be able to run three miles without stopping. Right now, no. It's not going to work. But I'm in training. And so are you. Every one of you can be. So, here's our takeaway.

And we'll pray and be done. God, show me what you want me to lay down. We'll release you. So I can live the new life that you have for me.

I don't know what it is for you. Some of you I know better than others. And some things you've shared with me. And we've talked a little bit. And if you'd like to come talk to me during the week. Joyce Schaffner is in the office.

[ 32 : 25 ] Monday through Thursday. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Make an appointment. And we'll sit down and we'll talk. And if you can't meet those hours. We'll figure out a time when I can come to you. And we'll sit down and talk through some of the things.

I can pray for you. Show you some verses from the Bible that might help. Or we can maybe try to find you a certified counselor that can help you. If you have some problems. Some trauma to deal with. Or things like that.

But listen, y'all. Whatever it is. I don't have to know all the problems in your life. I don't have to know all your past. But Jesus already knows. And Jesus wants to help. Can you bow your heads with me?

God, show me what you want me to lay down or release to you. What's holding on to me. Or what am I holding on to you. That I need to stop and move on from.

God, do a new thing in our church. Help us to reach the goals that you have for us. Help us to train together to be the church that you want us to be. God, a church with this much history.

[ 33 : 23 ] It's so easy just to sit back on the way we've always done it. The church we've always been. But God, you want to do something new here. You want to lead us into a beautiful new future that you have for us.

To help us to train together. To be the church you want us to be. And individually. Show us what we need to lay down. What we need to release to you. We'll give you the glory.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing a verse of a song. Brother Greg's going to lead us. I'm going to come down front. And I'll talk to you a little bit. Would you join me in standing if you're able to?

Amen.