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Unshakable Series

This series was developed by Eric Gray. Eric is the youth minister at the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, AL. You can follow Eric on Twitter (@ericthegray).

Series Synopsis:

Life is crazy. Our world is crazy. Sometimes some things can happen that can really shake us to our core. But in Hebrews 12:28, it says that we are a part of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. In this series, we are going to look at how to live in a way that is unshakable.

Week 1: Shake It Off•

Text -- Hebrews 12:1•

THP -- You weren't created to carry the extra weight of sin.

Week 2: Fix Our Eyes•

Text -- Hebrews 12:2•

So many things in this life shake us and distract us because we aren't focused on what really matters - Jesus.

Week 3: Heaven Is Here•

Text — Hebrews 12:22-25•

THP — Heaven is not just something we are waiting for...it's something we are already a part of. So don't forget where you're from.

Week 4: Game Over

Text: Hebrews 12:28 & Romans 8:35-39•

THP -- The battle is over. God won. So live like a conqueror because nothing can separate you from God's love.

Week 1: Shake It Off

Unshakable Series

Text -- Hebrews 12:1

THP -- You weren't created to carry the extra weight of sin.

OPENING: I need a volunteer. I was planning to run a half-marathon this weekend but I injured my knee and I need someone to run for me. And since a half-marathon is 13.1 miles and it could take a while to run, I've got some supplies for you.

[Start to load the volunteer down with a heavy backpack filled with junk, a hat, jacket, chair, umbrella, cooler, sleeping bag]

You good to go? No? Why not?

Series Synopsis: Tonight we are kicking off a new series called "Unshakable".

Life is crazy. Our world is crazy. Sometimes some things can happen that can really shake us to our core. But in Hebrews 12:28, it says that we are a part of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. In this series, we are going to look at how to live in a way that is unshakable.

>> Read Hebrews 12:1

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...

WEIGHT

It can refer to physical weight (obesity), or to unnecessary baggage. Ancient Greek runners would actually run naked so as not to be encumbered. Olympic athletes in our day wear some pretty skimpy outfits. They don't want anything to slow them down or drain their energy.

Picture the start of the Boston Marathon. The lean, muscular Kenyan runners are at the front of the pack, waiting for the starting gun. A couple of skinny American runners are there, too. But next to them is a fat, flabby guy wearing a parka, all-weather pants, hiking boots, with a 50-pound pack. You ask curiously, "What's in your pack?" He says, "I've got all the sodas and Twinkies that I'll need to finish this race." You're thinking, "Right!" That guy wouldn't stand a chance of finishing, let alone winning, because he has not laid aside every encumbrance.

"Weight" here is distinguished here from sins. They include things that are not intrinsically wrong, but they're wrong because they keep you from running as you should. If you got rid of those heavy hiking boots and put on some jogging shoes, you'd run better. If you dropped the pack and dressed in shorts and a tank top, you might finish the race.

What types of things would hinder you from...

- Running in a race?
- Playing football, basketball, baseball?
- Playing in the band?
- Cheering?
- Winning on Battlefield?

CLING

"entangle" — something that slows you down and trips you up, like a long, loose robe clinging to the runner's limbs

RACE

"race" — Greek word "agona" or agony. Sometimes the race is agonizing & grueling, like a marathon.

Living the Christian life, or running the Christian race, is tough. You don't need anything to slow you down or trip you up.

So shake it off. Get rid of anything that is wearing you down or tripping you up.

CONCLUSION:In 1845, the ill-fated Franklin Expedition sailed from England to find a passage across the Arctic Ocean.

The crew loaded their two sailing ships with a lot of things they didn't need: a 1,200-volume library, fine china, crystal goblets, and sterling silverware for each officer with his initials engraved on the handles. Amazingly, each ship took only a 12-day supply of coal for their auxiliary steam engines.

The ships became trapped in vast frozen plains of ice. After several months, Lord Franklin died. The men decided to trek to safety in small groups, but none of them survived.

One story is especially heartbreaking. Two officers pulled a large sled more than 65 miles across the treacherous ice. When rescuers found their bodies, they discovered that the sled was filled with table silver.

Those men contributed to their own demise by carrying what they didn't need.

But don't we sometimes do the same? Don't we drag baggage through life that we don't need? Evil thoughts that hinder us. Bad habits that drag us down. Grudges that we won't let go.

If you want to live the unshakable life, you've got to shake off whatever is wearing you down & tripping you up.

ROOTS QUESTIONS:

1. Leaders, share about a time in your life when there was a burden or struggle in your life that you needed to shake off. 2. Why do you think it's so hard to let go of the sins & struggles that we carry with us? 3. What are some examples of some things in our lives or in our world that can entangle us and keep us from living the way God wants us to? 4. Who are some people in your "cloud of witnesses" that are cheering you on to stay faithful to God? Ask students to name one or two. [It's important that they be able to identify those in their life who are trying to help them grow in their relationship to God] 5. What is holding you back, weighing you down or tripping you up from running the race of faith the way God wants you to? Would you write whatever it is on a card? Then let's throw it away. Shake it off. Get rid of it.

Week 2: Fix Our Eyes

Text — Hebrews 12:2

THP — So many things in this life shake us and distract us because we aren't focused on what really matters - Jesus.

OPENING:What's amazing about this picture is the different ways people are reacting. Some have no idea what's going on. Including the dude that's taking the bat to the kisser.

Ever had an important paper or project due, or maybe you need to study for a test, and so you go to your room, get all of your stuff out, and all you can do is think about everything else but the paper or the test?

•Friends to text•Xbox•Craving to watch the next episode on Netflix•

Caught yourself watching the ceiling fan go around and around

I struggle with this all the time. Weekly.

A few weeks ago I was asked to preach on Sunday AM & PM, plus I needed to prepare our Sunday Bible class & I was speaking at Faulkner to some youth ministers that Monday. So on Friday I get to my office early (bc school was out). Like 7:15am. And it was one of the most productive days ever for me. I was in the zone. Knocked out those lessons and got everything done. I was focused. Mostly because I was on a deadline. It was a weird day.

There are so many things in this world that distract us.

Satan doesn't have to get you caught in some deep, big sin. He just needs you a little distracted on what doesn't really matter.

Like sports. Or entertainment. Or issues with friends. Or having fun. Or video games.

Hebrews 12:2 is pretty simple...

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 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.

If you want to live an unshakable life, fix your eyes on what matters most — JESUS.

If you're going to run a race, focus on the finish line.

If you're going to live the Christian life, focus on Jesus. He's the goal.

- It doesn't say fix your eyes on heaven. Because that can seem too far away. •
- It doesn't say fix your eyes on doing good things.

Fix your eyes on Jesus.

- Because he's the pioneer of faith. Because he's the leader. He's leading the pack. •
- And he's the perfecter. He's complete. The one we need to be living like.

Jesus focused on the cross. And by doing so, he focused on you. So will you fix your eyes on Him?

ROOTS Questions:

1. What are some things that distract people from following Jesus?
2. What are some things you can see in your own life that distract you from focusing on Jesus?

3.What are some things you do that help you focus?

4.What is one thing you can do (or get rid of) that will help you focus more on Jesus this week?

Week 3: Heaven Is Here•

Text — Hebrews 12:22-25•

THP — Heaven is not just something we are waiting for...it's something we are already a part of. So don't forget where you're from.

OPENING:Every day of school begins the same. The bell rings. The announcements begin with The Pledge of Allegiance.

Have you ever thought much about the pledge?

It was written in 1892 by a socialist named Francis Bellamy (picture). It started out as reading, ""I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Over the next 50+ years, words were added to it so that it would become what we recite today.

Originally people would start with their hand over their heart, but as they said "to the flag", the arm was extended toward the flag, palm-down. But during WWII, it looked so much like the Nazi salute that it was changed to keep the hand over the heart throughout.

I give you that little history lesson on The Pledge of Allegiance because daily we are reminded about where we are from. We are reminded that we are citizens of the United States of America. And we pledge our allegiance to this country.

But here's the conflict... Hebrews 12 has a different message.

And if we want to live an unshakable life, we would do well to listen to it.

>> Read Hebrews 12:18-21

18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; **19** to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, **20** because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." **21** The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

The Hebrew writer is reminding the readers about their history...where they came from. They were Israelites. They were God's covenant people. They received the law at Mt. Sinai.

And that scene was designed to teach them some lessons...

0.God is holy. You are law-breakers.

0.God is powerful. You are weak.

0.God is present, but there is a barrier.

Then the Hebrew writer contrasts Mt. Sinai with a different mountain...

>> Read Hebrews 12:22-24

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, **23** to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, **24** to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

There's a phrase that the writer uses 3 times... "You have come..."

Where do you come from?

I'm from Millbrook, AL. I lived in the same house till I was 18 years old. I went to Stanhope Elmore High School. That's where I come from.

It's good to remember where we come from. It's part of our identity. Much of who I am today is because of where I come from.

So where does the Hebrew writer say that we as Christians come from?

0. Mount Zion — God's spiritual kingdom

0. The city of the living God — God is present and near. No barriers.

0. Thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly — Not fear & trembling but rejoicing

0. To the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven

0. To God, the judge of all men — Not something we have to fear

0. To Jesus the mediator of a new covenant

0. To the sprinkled blood — our forgiveness and redemption

So what is he saying? Where do we come from?

Heaven.

We are from heaven. Not from this world. Not from the USA. Not from Mobile, AL. We are from another world.

>> Read Philippians 3:20

20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, New York, Macmillan, 1960, p. 119.

CONCLUSION: If you want to live an unshakable life... If you want to make a difference in this world... Then remember you don't come from here. You don't belong here. And you won't stay here.

You come from heaven. And that's where your heart belongs.

But it's not just something you are waiting for. It's something that we can experience now.

For the believer, eternity has already begun. Heaven is here because God dwells within each of us through His Spirit.

I'm not saying Heaven is on earth. I'm saying that heaven is within each of us because heaven is where God is. And if God is within us, then a piece of heaven is within our hearts as well.

We aren't just waiting to go home. We are enjoying God's kingdom now. So live like it.

Pledge your allegiance to the King of Kings. To your God and Father. To your heavenly home.

ROOTS Questions:

1. When you think of heaven, what comes to mind?

2.What is one thing you can do this week to remind yourself that you are a citizen from heaven?

3.Read this quote —> If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this (C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity). Do you believe this is true?

4.Why do we get so focused on this world and forget that we come from heaven?

5.What is something we can do when we realize we are too focused on this world and not focused enough on God?

6.For baptized believers, your names are written in heaven. How does that make you feel?

Week 4: Game Over

Text: Hebrews 12:28 & Romans 8:35-39•

THP -- The battle is over. God won. So live like a conqueror because nothing can separate you from God's love.

Open with video clips of the ending of games and movies

•Bama/Clemson•Cubs final out•Final play of Super Bowl 51•

Harry Potter killing Voldemort

Talk about a time where I felt defeated or like a loser...

•Asked out a girl who shot me down•

As a coach, this year we lost I'm MS championship game

If you think you're a loser, you'll live like it.

If you don't think you can win, you won't.

Show clip from the Gospel of John movie where Jesus says "It is finished".

That's it. Game over. It's done. When he walks out of the tomb on Sunday, the war was decided. We just need to finish the battle.

Like in other wars when the war is won but the battles need to be finished.

Imagine being in WWII and hearing that the enemy surrendered as you finish the battle.

You'd have confidence.

But think about on the flip side, if you're fighting a losing battle. No confidence. You're toast.

Hopeless.

Imagine playing on a team with LeBron James, Michael Jordan or Tom Brady. It doesn't matter how much you're down, you've always got a chance.

We are on the team with the King of Kings and he's already won the game.

>> Read Romans 8:35-39

We are more than conquerors.

It's like an overwhelming victory.

Like the girls basketball team from Southern California two years ago that won 161-2.
Dominating.

That's our story. We are on God's team and he destroyed the Devil. And because of that, we can't be shaken either.

So live like it.

In a world that constantly changes, we are a part of the kingdom that never changes. It's always going to remain. It's not going anywhere.

And nothing in this life can do anything to separate you from the love of God and from the victory that you find in him.

Do you want to live an unshakable life? Remember that there's nothing in this life that can shake you because of Jesus. He can't be shaken. And if we're clinging to him, we won't be shaken either.

ROOTS Questions:

1. Share about a time you won or lost in some type of competition.
2. What difference does confidence make when you're competing? How about when you're dealing with difficult situations in life?
3. What are some things / situations in your life that you feel like could be trying to separate you from the love of Christ?
4. Do you feel like you are winning in your spiritual life? Why or why not?
5. How should knowing that Jesus walked out of the tomb change your life?
6. Tonight before you go to bed, look in your mirror and remind yourself that because of Jesus, you are more than a conqueror. Then tomorrow morning do the same. And see if it makes a difference in your day.