

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

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# SERMON SERIES

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TRUSTED | BIBLICAL | FIELD-TESTED

Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students to proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, and biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series are exactly what you're looking for!

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete detailed sermon outlines, discussion questions, and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

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## SERIES OVERVIEW FOR FINISH STRONG: Running with Endurance

William Culbertson, former president of Moody Bible Institute, once said that "it's important to start right, but it's imperative to end well." However, in a world that seems opposite of everything Christ embodies, how do we have any hope of crossing the finish line in good shape? Learning to persevere in our faith is no simple task, but when we discover what to lay aside, what to focus on, and how to do it, the Light at the end of the tunnel becomes much brighter.

## "FINISH STRONG" COVERS THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES AND PASSAGES:

- **Session 1 – Two of Twelve (Numbers 13:25-33)** | As the Israelites are on the doorstep of the Promised Land, they encounter one more hurdle to overcome, and no, it's not the other nations. Ten of the twelve spies return with a negative report, and the Israelites must choose whom to believe. Similarly, when we near goals or finish lines in our lives, we tend to hesitate out of fear of what comes next. But when we believe and hold fast to God's promises, we are able to finish strong.
- **Session 2 – Lay Aside (Hebrews 12:1-3)** | Our world doesn't do us any favors when it comes to finishing strong in our faith. There are countless distractions and sins waiting to trip us up and hold us back, but if we're going to run our race well, we must lay aside every weight and every sin. The only way we can lay them aside and run with endurance is by keeping our eyes on Jesus.
- **Session 3 – Leave Behind (Philippians 3:7-14)** | We're all in one of two boats – when we look at our pasts, we're either proud or ashamed. We're a people who love to look in the rearview mirror, but when we focus on what's behind us, we're unable to move forward into God's call on our lives. To persevere, we have to leave behind all things, good and bad, and strain toward knowing Christ.
- **Session 4 – The Finish Line (2 Timothy 4:7-8)** | At some point in our race, we're going to hit a wall. We're going to find ourselves in a situation that shifts our focus to what's right in front of us, but when we do that, we lose our motivation to run well. How can we get back on track? We can regain our motivation by knowing that if we faithfully persevere and seek the Lord to the end, He will crown us with His perfect righteousness.

## "FINISH STRONG" IS PART OF YM360'S SERMON SERIES LINE OF RESOURCES AND IS IDEAL FOR:

- Any large group setting
- Mid-week youth service
- "Master teacher" format

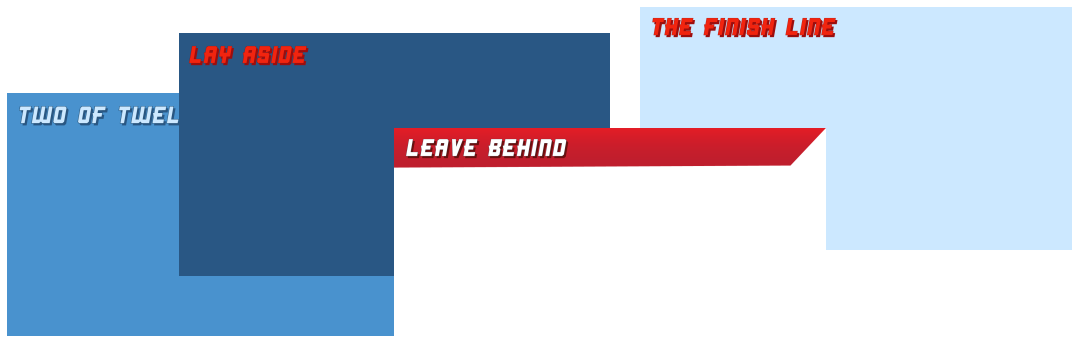
# BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE . . .

## EVERY SERMON SERIES FROM YM360 COMES WITH:

- **Detailed Sermon Outlines** – Every Sermon Series comes with detailed sermon outlines. Teach them "as is" or adapt them to suit your specific ministry context.
- **Discussion questions** – Questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives. You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go.
- **Title and Background slides** – These are designed to be dropped into your favorite presentation software to help you build a creative environment around your sermon. Use them as a backdrop for song lyrics, Scripture passages, teaching points, and any illustrations you choose to display.
- **Artwork for promo and social media** – Social media images, web banners, and a printable poster file are included. Perfect for newsletters, websites, social media platforms, or print them off for posters and bulletin inserts.
- **Logo (including native logo design files)** – We include a logo file and the native design files to allow you to use the logo in ways you see fit.
- **100% downloadable and adaptable**

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

**BACKGROUND AND  
TITLE SLIDES**



**PROMOTIONAL  
ARTWORK**



**INSTAGRAM  
IMAGES**



**LOGO  
TREATMENT**



NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.

## **Finish Strong Sermon Series | Session 1: Two of Twelve**

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**How To Use A YM360 Sermon Series** | YM360 Sermon Series are designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. Each series download provides various elements such as a detailed sermon outline, suggestions on illustrations or images, Scripture passages, background information, and application points that you can use to craft a message that speaks to your students in your specific context.

This series download also includes discussion questions that can be used to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

Make sure to leverage the series logo, title slide, background slides, and social media artwork this YM360 Sermon Series provides for promotion and message support. We've even included the native design files to allow you the freedom to use the logo in any way that meets your needs.

This YM360 Sermon Series was created to be suitable for all types of churches and ministry environments. It was intentionally designed to provide you with everything you need while also allowing you the freedom to make it fit your particular ministry context. Nobody knows your ministry like you do. Therefore, we encourage you to make any adjustments to this series you feel are necessary to best fit the needs of your students, church, or ministry context.

**A Prayer Before You Prepare** | God, thank You for the opportunity to teach the students You've entrusted to me. Lord, as we look back to those who have finished strong in their faith, help me not to assume I am simply in that category because I'm preaching to students or because I'm in ministry. Let me honestly evaluate how I am currently running the race You've set before me. Give me the discipline to use the tools and structures in my life to equip these students to stand strong in their faith. I pray that we all would run our race well so that we can hear You say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Help me give students a picture of what it means to finish strong and a clear path toward faith and spiritual health. Use me to say what You want to say to these students. Amen.

# Finish Strong Teaching Guide | A One-Page Glimpse Of Everything You Need To Prepare

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**Series Snapshot** | *Finish Strong* is a four-session sermon series that will challenge your students to evaluate how they're running their race of faith and equip them to run so that they may obtain the prize that awaits them. Your students will be encouraged to know that perseverance isn't all up to them but rests on the power of God within them.

**Series Overview** | William Culbertson, former president of Moody Bible Institute, once said that "it's important to start right, but it's imperative to end well." However, in a world that seems opposite of everything Christ embodies, how do we have any hope of crossing the finish line in good shape? Learning to persevere in our faith is no simple task, but when we discover what to lay aside, what to focus on, and how to do it, the Light at the end of the tunnel becomes much brighter.

- **Session 1 - Two of Twelve (Numbers 13:25-33)** | As the Israelites are on the doorstep of the Promised Land, they encounter one more hurdle to overcome, and no, it's not the other nations. Ten of the twelve spies return with a negative report, and the Israelites must choose whom to believe. Similarly, when we near goals or finish lines in our lives, we tend to hesitate out of fear of what comes next. But when we believe and hold fast to God's promises, we are able to finish strong.
- **Session 2 - Lay Aside (Hebrews 12:1-3)** | Our world doesn't do us any favors when it comes to finishing strong in our faith. There are countless distractions and sins waiting to trip us up and hold us back, but if we're going to run our race well, we must lay aside every weight and every sin. The only way we can lay them aside and run with endurance is by keeping our eyes on Jesus.
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**Large Group Teaching Summary** | As the Israelites are on the doorstep of the Promised Land, they encounter one more hurdle to overcome, and no, it's not the other nations. Ten of the twelve spies return with a negative report, and the Israelites must choose whom to believe. Similarly, when we near goals or finish lines in our lives, we tend to hesitate out of fear of what comes next. But when we believe and hold fast to God's promises, we are able to finish strong.

**Key Takeaway** | When we believe and hold fast to God's promises, we are able to finish strong.

**Scripture Focus** | Numbers 13:25-33

**What You May Need** | *Optional Illustration: Not Finishing Strong (Personal Story)*

### I. Introduction

#### A. *Optional Illustration: Not Finishing Strong*

1. ***NOTE: Open the series by telling a story of a time you didn't finish something strong. Whether or not you had good intentions, you ultimately fell short in the end. The goal is to communicate to students that we all have stories of not finishing as strong as we started – it's more common than we may think.***
- B. It takes a lot of practice, commitment, and effort to finish something strong, and not many of us are very good at it. I would even say that very few, if any, of us are good at finishing strong. And that can be a big problem when it comes to our faith because endurance and perseverance are brought up over and over again all throughout Scripture as things we should make a part of our faith and spiritual life! In fact, some stats say that 50-70% of students won't be attending church just a few years after they graduate. So what are you to do?
- C. Thankfully, God doesn't just tell us to have perseverance. He also tells us *how* to have it. The Bible lays out for us how to practice perseverance, why it's important to endure in our faith, and what's waiting for us at the very end. That's exactly what we'll be talking about in this series called *Finish Strong*. We're going to seek to discover how and why we should faithfully endure to the end. So with that being said, let's jump into this first session.

### II. Tension

- A. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew exactly what the outcome would be as long as you did XYZ? For example, maybe you were promised that as long as you cleaned your room or did the dishes, you would get whatever you wanted – ice cream, extra screen time, \$100, you fill in the blank. And even though you had that promise of a reward, you still didn't do what was required of you. It could have been because you didn't think the promise would actually be fulfilled, you thought it would be too hard to do whatever was asked of you, or any other excuse you could come up with. Have you ever been there?
- B. Some of you are probably like, "Oh yeah, been there, done that," and maybe others of you are thinking, "Why in the world would anyone not follow through on one simple task if they were promised to get whatever they wanted? If someone promised me whatever I wanted, I would do whatever it took to get it!" But would you? If we had the receipts from all of our lives, would the pattern be that we came through on our end of the deal and finished strong? Or would the record show that we all have a tendency to hesitate before we get to the finish line in fear of what comes next?
- C. That's where we find ourselves in our passage for this first session. The Israelites have been given a promise from God, and they're approaching the finish line, but what will they do? Will they finish strong or hesitate? Let's take a look at Numbers 13 to see that WHEN WE BELIEVE AND HOLD FAST TO GOD'S PROMISES, WE ARE ABLE TO FINISH STRONG.

### III. Scripture

- A. Before we read our passage, let me give you some background on what's going on. The Israelites have been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years, but God sends Moses to free them from their slavery. Pharaoh, Egypt's ruler, doesn't let them go until God sends 10 plagues on the land. But even as all the Israelites are fleeing Egypt, Pharaoh changes his mind and sends his army to chase after them. God uses Moses to part the Red Sea, the Israelites cross through to the other side, and as the Egyptian warriors are chasing them, God makes the sea fall back to where it was, drowning the Egyptians.
- B. So the Israelites have now escaped and are heading toward the Promised Land, which God promised to Abraham way back in Genesis. They've been holding onto this promise for hundreds of years, and they're finally getting to head in its direction. While they wander in the desert, God does many incredible, miraculous things for them. He proves over and over that He is trustworthy and faithful. He watches over them and guides them for 40 years until they are now on the doorstep of the Promised Land. Moses sends 12 spies from the 12 tribes of Israel to scout the land and see whether the people living there were strong or weak, many or few, and how rich the land was. The spies go into the land and see that it is very prosperous and lush, which is great news. But let's see what the spies say when they return to their people.
- C. Read NUMBERS 13:25-33
1. *At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan." But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."*
- D. What?! Where is this message of fear and inability coming from? At this point, it's important for us to remember that this is the *PROMISED* Land. God Himself *promised* to give it to the Israelites. And after all He's done for them over the last 40 years, surely they would believe He could give them victory over their enemies, right?! But despite two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, reassuring the people that they could take the land, the Israelites choose to believe the other 10 spies' bad report. Even though the same God who parted the Red Sea, gave them food and water in the wilderness, saved them



from their enemies, and guided them for 40 years has promised to give this land to them, they hesitate.

- E. They complain to Moses and say that they were better off as slaves in Egypt if God was just going to bring them out here to die. And because they choose not to trust in the Lord but to rebel against Him, God doesn't allow them to enter the Promised Land. They have to wander in the wilderness for 40 more years until the whole generation who rebelled and didn't believe has passed away. So even though all 12 disciples had seen the great works that God had performed, received all of the blessings He had given them, and heard the promise of the Promised Land, only 2 of them persevered. The other 10 had a greater fear of man than of God and led all of the Israelites away from faith in God. Instead of believing and holding fast to the promises of God, the Israelites lived in fear of what was going to come next. They don't trust that God will actually come through on His promise. They didn't come through on their end of the deal, and they felt the consequences of it.

### IV. Application

- A. So what does all this mean for us? Does a story about the Israelites failing to enter the Promised Land really have that much to do with what you're facing today? Yes! The entirety of Scripture is living and active, and the Holy Spirit is able to speak to us through any passage we read. So when it comes to you persevering and finishing strong in your faith, I think there are three big questions you need to ask yourself.
- B. HOW DO YOU SEE IT?
  - 1. There are two ways to view the world around us. We can either view God through our circumstances, or we can view our circumstances through God. When we live the first way, we will never be able to fully trust God. When we look at the circumstances in our lives and let them dictate whether God is good or bad, loving or vengeful, we will always hesitate when we get close to our goal. We'll never be able to really believe that He's going to come through on His promises, no matter what we've seen Him do before...just like the Israelites. Even though they had seen God do incredible things, they still weren't able to fully trust Him because they viewed Him through their circumstances. That's why they could say that God had let them out to die! Because they didn't fully trust in His character.
  - 2. Or we can view our circumstances through God. We can believe that God is who He says He is and that our circumstances don't change that. So in the case of the Israelites, even though the people in the Promised Land are big and strong, God has proven Himself capable of following through on His Word. And when we live this way, we can trust that no matter how bad our circumstances may appear to be, God is *still* trustworthy and faithful. And that gives us the strength to persevere.
- C. WHAT ARE YOU TRUSTING IN?
  - 1. This second question has more to do with how you view yourself in comparison to your situation. In our passage for today, did you notice that the 10 unfaithful spies said, "**We** are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than **we** are...we seemed **to ourselves** like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to

them.” They were so self-centered! These spies were measuring their chances of success on the scale of how strong the Israelites were in comparison to the other people. They deemed their smallness a defining factor in whether or not they would be victorious. They were trusting in their own power and own abilities.

2. Instead, they should have trusted in the power of God in comparison to the other people! Because they were no match for Him! Similarly, when you encounter certain situations in your life, are you relying on your power, ability, intelligence, or anything else you have to get you through? Or are you trusting in the power of God to bring you through? I know that it’s hard to always believe that God is there and that He is for you, but He has promised to never leave us or forsake us. He has revealed His love to be unconditional and His power to be limitless. You can hold on to those promises, and they will give you the strength to rely on Him instead of yourself.

### D. WHO ARE YOU BELIEVING?

1. Finally, let’s talk about who you’re believing – what voices you’re listening to. The Israelites were given a choice. They could either listen to the 2 faithful spies or the other 10. I mean, they had seen all the things God had done too. They chose to listen to the 10 spies, and even though we don’t really know why, we can still learn from their mistake.
2. When you receive advice from people, always, always, always check it against what Scripture says. Does this advice agree with what God has said or done, or does it contradict it? If the Israelites had asked this question, they would have realized that God is more than capable of defeating their enemies, no matter how big they were. That would have led them to believe Caleb and Joshua. So do an honest check of the people you hang around and who you let speak into your life and decisions. Does what they tell you line up with what God has said and done, or does it not? And then surround yourself with people who speak the truth of God into your life!

## V. Gospel

- A. Now, we’ve been talking a whole lot about persevering, enduring, and finishing strong in our faith. But the fact of the matter is that that’s only possible if you’ve started your walk with Jesus. If you haven’t started your relationship with God, then it’s going to be hard to persevere in it! So how can you do that? Well, let me tell you a story.
- B. In the beginning, God created the whole world and everything in it in perfect relationship with Himself. However, Adam and Eve, the first two humans, sinned against God. That means they disobeyed God’s commands and His will for their lives. And because all sin is equally intolerable to God, all sin gets the same punishment and warrants the same penalty. So Adam and Eve’s relationship with God was eternally broken. They became spiritually dead. And we’ve all received that sinful nature, and we sin every day. We do things against God’s Word and will for our lives, like not trusting in His character or believing what He says He’ll do. So we’re spiritually dead and separated from God too. We all owe Him a perfectly obedient life because that’s what we were created to do, but we can never make that payment.

- C. But thankfully, God didn't want to leave us separated from Him. Despite our rebellion against Him, He wanted to have a relationship with us again. But that required someone to pay that debt of a perfectly obedient life, and since all humanity was filled with sin, we couldn't do it for ourselves. So God came down from Heaven to do it for us. Jesus Christ, God the Son, came and lived the perfectly obedient life that we were meant to live. He had full rights to life with God, but He willingly gave up His life and died on the cross to pay our debt for us. But the best part is that three days later, He rose back to life, having defeated sin and death forever, and went back to Heaven, where He still is now!
- D. Because our debt is paid, we can freely come before God and have forgiveness of all our sins – past, present, and future. All we have to do is repent of (turn away from/ask forgiveness for) our sins and believe that Jesus really is God, that He really came down from Heaven and lived a perfect life, that He really died on the cross, that He really rose from the grave, and that He's the Savior we desperately need. When we submit our lives to Him in this way, we are granted forgiveness of our sins, eternal life, and a relationship with God. He approaches us with incredible grace and mercy; He sees our shortcomings and sins, yet He still chooses to offer us forgiveness. When we repent of our sins, turn away from them, and give our lives to Jesus by committing to follow Him, God doesn't see our sinfulness anymore. He sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus!

### VI. Conclusion

- A. You may think that everything will get easier when you begin that relationship, but that's not the case. We still live in a broken, sinful world, and beginning a relationship with God only makes us more aware of that. Finishing strong is no easy task, but when we believe and hold fast to God's promises, we are able to persevere through anything that this life throws our way. No matter how big. We don't have to be afraid of what comes next because whatever it is, God will still be with us.
- B. Let's pray.

## **Finish Strong Sermon Series | Session 1 Discussion Questions: Two of Twelve**

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**Series Overview** | William Culbertson, former president of Moody Bible Institute, once said that “it’s important to start right, but it’s imperative to end well.” However, in a world that seems opposite of everything Christ embodies, how do we have any hope of crossing the finish line in good shape? Learning to persevere in our faith is no simple task, but when we discover what to lay aside, what to focus on, and how to do it, the Light at the end of the tunnel becomes much brighter.

**Large Group Teaching Summary** | As the Israelites are on the doorstep of the Promised Land, they encounter one more hurdle to overcome, and no, it’s not the other nations. Ten of the twelve spies return with a negative report, and the Israelites must choose whom to believe. Similarly, when we near goals or finish lines in our lives, we tend to hesitate out of fear of what comes next. But when we believe and hold fast to God’s promises, we are able to finish strong.

**Key Takeaway** | When we believe and hold fast to God’s promises, we are able to finish strong.

**Scripture Focus** | Numbers 13:25-33

### **Finish Strong | Session 1 Discussion Questions**

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You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

#### **Get Them Talking | An Optional Opening Question To Get Students Talking**

1. If you could have anything you wanted, what would it be? What would you do to get it? What would you *not* do?

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Read Numbers 13:25-33. What does this teach you about God? What does it teach you about yourself?
2. Why do you think it’s so hard to believe all of God’s promises? What holds you back from believing them wholeheartedly? Why?
3. How have you seen God move in big ways in your life? What incredible things have you seen Him do? How do you think that should change the way we view our life situations?
4. Honestly, which viewpoint do you have – viewing God through your circumstances or vice versa? What leads you to have that view? How do you think it changes the way you approach certain situations in life?
5. In your own words, describe what it means to persevere in your faith or to finish strong. Why do you think this is so important?
6. What makes persevering and finishing strong so hard for you? Why does that thing make it challenging? What would make it easier?
7. Why is it easy to trust in your abilities to get through circumstances in your life? What would it look like to trust in God’s power and presence? What keeps you from doing that now? Why?