

Please join us this Sunday for the *Pursue* Series

Watch this 3-minute clip from the NCAA Track & Field Championships June 10, 2018: <https://youtu.be/e9XUf0FGCTs>. USC's Kendall Ellis perseveres in pursuit of her goal.

Kendall Ellis was in 5th place when she got the baton in this relay. You will hear the commentators saying they don't think the lead runner could be caught. But, then...it is an epic finish. Kendall wasn't just racing the other runners, she was pursuing her very best.

Pursuing something means trying to achieve it with intense, sustained focus over time.

In its most inspiring expressions it is an all-out effort drawing on training, technique and talent elevated by sheer-willpower going beyond what seems possible physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually. It's suffering and celebrating, receiving and responding.

Why pursue?

Because something important is at stake that matters to you in the core of your being. "I knew I needed to do it"; "I simply committed to doing my best"; "It was worth the effort". If you've read the bestselling rowing saga *The Boys in the Boat*, you understand this. If you've ever done anything beyond your assumed capacity you have experienced this.

Pursuing something doesn't guarantee success, but success is unlikely without it.

In this series we will look deeply at pursuing God in regular worship, in personal growth, in compassionate service, in generous living and in becoming committed disciples of Jesus.

Here are the primary issues in pursuing your faith:

1. Own your faith

Taking responsibility for our spiritual growth positions us to benefit from the resources God and his Church provide for us. We increase our sense of *agency* and *urgency*.

Agency is taking responsibility for your spiritual health and growth.

Urgency is prioritizing your spiritual health and growth.

2. Recognize where you are and what you need

Pursuing God means asking what, why and how. What is this for? Why is it important and essential in my toolkit? How do I learn to use it wisely? How can I bless others with it?

Are you in a stall or a free-fall? How can you tell? What standards do you measure with?

Are you reverting to old habits and behaviors that draw you away from the Lord?

Are you hungry and thirsty for God or apathetic toward him?

When did you last read the Bible?

When did you last pray?

When did you last bear witness to Jesus?

When did you last give financially to God?

When did you last rearrange your schedule to help someone?

Who have you given permission to support you and hold you accountable?

3. Make and keep commitments that shape you and influence others

To God, to yourself and to those who will help you fulfill them and celebrate your progress.

To whom can you turn for honest feedback, wise counsel and authentic encouragement?

Pursuing God is fraught with natural and supernatural obstacles.

Natural obstacles: the world and the flesh.

Supernatural obstacles: spiritual forces opposed to God and his people.

What is your history and pattern with making and keeping commitments to develop spiritually?

Btw, don't equate feelings as the best indicator of your spiritual well-being.

Jesus was spiritually focused and close to God when he sweated blood.

Stress tests our spiritual health it doesn't necessarily reflect it.

I'm guessing Kendall Ellis was feeling a bit stressed when she received the baton. She turned that stress into a laser like focus on her goal. Her training kicked into gear through her body.

She applied her skills to fulfill her commitment to doing everything in her power to help her team.

Her ability to respond was clarified by understanding her role as the anchor for her relay team.

Her strength, conditioning and mental focus all came together for the win.

Please join us this Sunday and throughout September as we pursue the Lord together!