



**"No Cross,  
No Crown"**

# The Cross and Crown

a publication of Highway Mission Tabernacle and Resurrection Life Church, Philadelphia, PA

Edition XL | February 4, 2024

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**"No Cross,  
No Crown"**

# The Cross and Crown

a publication of Highway Mission Tabernacle and Resurrection Life Church, Philadelphia, PA

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I studied French for most of my school-aged years and became rather conversant in it. Unfortunately, when my studies stopped, I didn't keep up with the language. By the time my wife and I went to Paris for our honeymoon, I found that it wasn't just like riding a bike: I couldn't simply pick up where I'd left off 20 years earlier.

I've heard bodybuilders say that, if you skip working out for a week, it's as if your last week of workouts never happened. You don't simply pick up where you left off, but, rather, you pick up where you had been before your previous week.

It shouldn't surprise us that the God who designed our brains and bodies to work that way also designed our spirits to work that way. Sometimes, we may take time off from our spiritual disciplines because we're sick, we're on vacation, or we think that we're too busy. We're fooling ourselves if we think that there our spiritual health won't suffer from time off and that we can simply pick up where we left off at some point in the future – not to mention, that, as those who are serious about exercising will tell you, the more time off you take from your routine, the harder it is to motivate yourself to start up again.

What I see in the Bible and in the church is that very few people turn from serving God into rebelling against him overnight. Usually, rebellion results from a process of drifting – which is often so gradual that the person drifting doesn't realize how far he's regressed from where he used to be.

We read Samson's story and see that he lost his superhuman power the moment Delilah cut his hair, but have you considered the other steps in his decline? The haircut was only the last in a series of violations of his Nazirite vow. The instantaneous result was, in fact, the consequence of a prolonged period of drifting.

In Samson's first battle after his hair was cut, he thought that he'd be able to go out as he had before, but "he did not know that the Lord had left him." (Judges 16:20) What a tragic and cautionary tale! We must take care in our relationship with God, staying close to him and allowing his Spirit to confront and correct us.

*Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.* (1 Corinthians 13:5,6)

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