

Jesus And our Better Father - Hebrews 12:5-11

Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

I'm pretty sure I know what my kids are going to want engraved on my tombstone. "It's good for you, it builds character." Let me explain. I am one of those dads that wants to push my kids in a healthy way. Life is tough and scary. Yes, sometimes kids do need to pause and think about safety or be given a moment to lick their wounds. But resiliency in the face of difficulty is important in life. So, occasionally dad will push the kids to do something they fear or that seems too difficult. And hence the phrase that all of my children have heard, maybe far too often. They laugh at me now, but if I would have let my kids off the hook every time they were scared none of them would ride roller coasters or been able to keep competing in their sports.

Our text in Hebrews this week uses the word "discipline" nine times in seven verses. Five of those are the noun, four others uses the verbal form. Simple key to interpretation, when a word is used that often, generally the meaning of the text is tied to the author's use of the word. In this case, the author of Hebrews wants his readers to know that God is their Father, they are his kids, He loves them, and that the hardship they endure is His loving discipline of them.

But to understand the meaning of this passage, we need to do two things here. First, we need to see the text in context. Why does he start talking about God's fatherly discipline? Second, we need to make sure we understand the meaning of the word used here and translated "discipline"? So first, Hebrews was written to First Century Hebrew believers during a season of increased pressure and persecution. Some have left their belief in Jesus, shrinking back to the Jewish religious system which had become a form of self-salvation through religious rituals and pure living. Those who endured in faith felt the heat. Following Jesus was becoming difficult and there was a lot to fear. So, for 10 chapters the author built an argument with one point, that Jesus was better, far superior to anything, especially their former religious Judaism. He is better than all the rituals, symbols, leaders, and laws in the Old Testament for two reasons. First, everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus and was preparation for His coming. Second, Jesus is the fulfillment of every idea, symbol, person, and ritual in the Old Testament, being the substance of the shadows. To leave Jesus is to leave everything the Old Testament and Jewish system was ultimately about. So to leave Jesus after believing is to be unfaithful to the God who revealed Himself in the Old Testament. Chapter 11 shows us how the Old Testament heroes were actually saved and sustained by their faith in God's redemptive story which culminates in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. In other words, they too were saved by faith in Jesus. And some lost their lives believing this plan. Chapter 12 of Hebrews begins the application portion of the book, the "so what" and "now what" section of this great letter and sermon. First, the author tells them it is their turn to run the race, so they need to keep running with their eyes fixed on Jesus. Yet, the race is difficult, legs get tired, and there is suffering along the way. So the author points them back to a text in Proverbs 3:11-12 to remind them that their suffering is not purposeless and random, rather God is their Father, and hardship in life is part of His divine plan of love for His children. "It's good for you, it builds character."

Second, the word "discipline" is so much more than punitive discipline. When I hear the word "discipline" I still imagine the sound of a belt clearing my dad's belt loops which meant a spankin' was on the way. But the actual Greek word here (*paideia*) actually comes from the word for child and was a word referring to the parental call and responsibility to raise, develop, train, teach, grow, and yes, discipline their children. In other words, God is our Father who loves us, and because He loves us He disciplines us. Not just giving

whoopins, but instructing and developing us, and then allowing us to walk through difficulty and hardship in order to develop our holiness and bear the fruit of righteousness. In this world, the kids who thrive are those with loving fathers who lovingly applied both the positive and negative sorts of discipline and their response was to honor and submit to their daddy. So the author asks, "Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of Spirits (our Spiritual Father) and live?" This argument here is so beautiful. It tells these early believers and us by extension that difficulty, suffering, struggle, and even persecution are not random. Rather, God is our Father, and He is sovereignly molding us into the image of Jesus as we believe in Him while walking through the difficulty of life. It may be hard, it may be scary. Yet, hear the loving voice of your Heavenly Father calling out to you to "Endure suffering as His discipline," and saying, "It's good for you, it builds character (holiness, righteousness, joy)."

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Genesis 37	Genesis 38	Genesis 39	Genesis 40	Genesis 41	Genesis 42	Genesis 43

Reading from this past week's sermon: Hebrews 12:5-11

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Hebrews 12

Family Worship

Song - *Son of Suffering*

<https://youtu.be/wlcq5exj8XI?si=ZaaJA0gk1d8I4dC0>

Gospel Project

Unit: God is Gracious

Story: Deborah Led Israel

Big Picture Question: What is repentance?

Answer: Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Scripture: Judges 4-5

New City Catechism

Question 16: What is sin?

Answer: Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, not being or doing what he requires in his law.

Verse: 1 John 3:4

Hebrews 12:5-11

- What first comes to mind when you hear the word "discipline". Why is there more to fatherly discipline than giving kids a whoopin?
- How does our seeing difficulty, hardship, suffering, and even persecution as part of God's loving discipline help us when these things come our way?
- Why must all healthy discipline begin with love? What happens if a child is disciplined in a setting where he or she is not sure if his parent loves them?
- What are the blessings of our Heavenly Father's discipline listed in the text this week? What do these things promise us and why are they a call to endure?

Prayer

*Pray that we would receive tough things in life as God's Fatherly discipline and endure with joy.

*Pray for our journey through Holy Week, and that we would focus on Jesus final days with hope and repentance.