

# Discipline

## THE GIFT OF DISCIPLINE FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Focal Verses • HEBREWS 12:1-13

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: DISCUSS what makes a credible leader; REFLECT on what makes Jesus a credible leader; and COMMIT to following Jesus' example of godly discipline.

#### In Focus

Cheryl, a single mother of two, had worked faithfully for the same company for five years. She was well-liked, hardworking, and a team player. A new manager started in the company, who didn't know about Cheryl's track record, so in cost-saving measures, Cheryl was laid off.

So many questions ran through Cheryl's mind as she struggled to understand why the Lord had allowed her to lose her job. After all, she had children to support and bills to pay. She was disappointed and couldn't understand why she was undergoing this fiery trial. Her world turned upside down at the news of her layoff. There were times when she felt like giving up.

"What should I do?" she wondered. "How am I going to make it with no job and no money coming in?"

Everyone had a well-intentioned piece of advice to give Cheryl. Her mother told her to find a good husband. Her girlfriends told her to get a roommate. A former coworker suggested Cheryl beg for her old job back.

Finally, Cheryl remembered Romans 8:28. She trusted God for what direction she should take, and her faith began to increase even more. She returned to school and earned her MBA. Upon graduating, she found a higher paying job with better benefits and the ability to work from home.

Now Cheryl looks back on the day she got laid off and calls it a blessing in disguise. Without that test, she would never have had the courage to return to school. The Lord gave her strength in her suffering so that she would have the faith and discipline to get her MBA degree. She discovered that her response to this test created an amazing testimony.

*Living a disciplined life takes a lot of faith. In today's lesson, we learn about how God disciplines His children. Jesus set the perfect example of a life of discipline. We are tempted to give in when we experience trials, but Jesus demonstrates that those hardships help us. Jesus endured the pain and shame of the Cross to achieve the joy and victory of eternal life with God. Where do you see the fruit of discipline in your life?*

### Keep in Mind

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"  
(Hebrews 12:1, KJV).

SCAN FOR VIDEO



## Focal Verses

**KJV** Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Rome.** As the capital city of Italy, it was the center of commerce, culture, and religion. A myriad of religions dotted the social landscape at the time this letter to the Hebrews was circulated. Rome was known to tolerate a plethora of religions. Judaism and Christianity were allowed to coexist here with other religions in a cornucopia of religious expression.

**Believers in Rome.** It was not easy or politically correct to be a Christian during this time. Christians in Rome had to deal with the threat of persecution by the Roman authorities, although none of them had become martyrs like Jesus, Stephen, and others. Because they were still alive, the writer encouraged them to continue to run their race and not give up. He

reminded them that Jesus never gave up and neither should they.

## Background

The letter to the Hebrews was written in response to the threat that believers might renounce Christianity and revert to Judaism. The writer wanted to inform his vacillating readers that Jesus Christ, the object of God's final revelation, is superior to the greatest of Judaism's heroes.

The writer also wanted to highlight and remind his audience of the efficacy of Jesus' power of salvation. He reminded them that whereas the Jewish legal sacrificial system was powerless to remit sins, Jesus, the eternal High Priest, "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing

he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Furthermore, the writer explains the need for patient endurance amid the persecution and sufferings to which the heirs of eternal salvation are inevitably exposed.

He suggests that all Christians emulate Jesus’ suffering and patience if they anticipate an eternal reward.

## At-A-Glance

1. Believers Must Run the Race  
(Hebrews 12:1–2)
2. Believers Must Develop Endurance  
(vv. 3–6)
3. Believers Must Learn to Enjoy the  
Discipline of the Lord (vv. 7–11)
4. Believers Must Increase Their  
Discipleship and Become an Example  
(vv. 12–13)

## In Depth

### 1. Believers Must Run the Race (Hebrews 12:1–2)

The writer encourages Christian readers to continue to run their race of discipleship no matter what tries to hinder them. He tells them to “lay aside every weight.”

Being a Christian was not an easy thing back then, and it still isn’t today. It is a lifelong commitment that involves peaks and valleys, good times and bad times, and sunshine and rain. Christian discipleship is not a sprint; it is a marathon. That is why the author tells his audience to run with “perseverance” (v. 1, NIV). Perseverance is an inner quality that allows one to continue in some course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition. To persevere is to be steadfast in a particular purpose.

Disciples of Jesus Christ must always look to Jesus as the ultimate model of perseverance. In

His ministry, He suffered insults and attempts on His life. He persisted even though His hometown and relatives rejected Him. He overcame the obstinacy of His followers and betrayal by one of His own. He never faltered during the unjust criminal trial that accused Him of sedition and heresy—or the beating by the Roman police force. Finally, He did not waver on the Cross at Calvary. He did all of that not only so future generations of believers would have access to a spiritual power potent enough to change the world, but also to set an example of the perfect leader who was tempted but did not give in.

As we continue to live as ambassadors of Christ, let us persevere on our jobs, in our homes, and in our communities. God demands our best in this life. No matter what hardships we go through, our history is peppered with credible leaders who have overcome greater hardships than we have ever had to imagine. We can learn from them. If they made it, surely we can make it. With God on our side and “a great cloud of witnesses” cheering us on, we can get through any adverse situation we face.

### 2. Believers Must Develop Endurance (vv. 3–6)

The writer of Hebrews encouraged the Christians in Rome to consider Jesus’ life when they began to complain about the adversity they had to face. He supported his argument by testifying that they had not faced persecution to the degree that they had shed their own blood. He also let them know that trials suffered for righteousness’ sake could be viewed as the “chastening of the Lord” (v. 5). The Lord’s chastening is not arbitrary or without direction—it always has a purpose. The writer suggests that trials could be disciplinary correction and a part of God’s overall plan to edify His children. Corrective discipline is always a good thing and a symbol of love. When an earthly father exercises

discipline on his child, it is beneficial to the child so the same wrong actions will not be repeated. Our heavenly Father operates in the same way. Because God loves us, He disciplines us so we will not commit the same sins or something worse.

### 3. Believers Must Learn to Enjoy the Discipline of the Lord (vv. 7–11)

The writer of Hebrews presents yet another reason that believers should cheerfully bear affliction when it comes. Christians are encouraged to endure the discipline of the Lord because it is the mark of sonship as well as the way to become more holy and righteous. The Bible is clear that those who suffer for righteousness' sake glorify God: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12–13). Second Timothy 2:12 says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." The writers insist that we must look on all the hardships of life as the discipline of God—sent to work, not for our harm, but for our ultimate and highest good.

Consider the failure to discipline a child who is disobedient. It is not a mark of trustworthiness or love, but of apathy and unconcern. Likewise, God's willingness to discipline us is a mark of our sonship. It is never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but His discipline is a sign of His deep love for us. When God corrects you, see it as proof of His love and His ability to lead you in the right direction, and ask Him what He is working to teach you.

### 4. Believers Must Increase Their Discipline and Become an Example (vv. 12–13)

Since we know that hardship, trials, and suffering are a part of the Christian journey, we should face them with courage. To accept Christ

into our lives is to allow the prospect of facing hardship. Jesus told His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

We are to be an example for future generations. We are to be guides and role models for our children, who are standing on our shoulders. If we shrink in the midst of painful trials, what kind of example will we set for them? We must not live with only our own survival in mind. Others will follow our example, and we definitely have a responsibility to them if we are living for Christ. We also have a responsibility to support weaker Christians who may get discouraged by the Lord's discipline. We are to bear the burdens of the weak, for this is what Christ did. Suffering brings us into higher levels of compassion. As a people, where would we be without enduring struggles?

Frederick Douglass once said, "Without struggle there can be no progress." The great Civil Rights martyr, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said, "If a man has not found a cause worth dying for, then he is not fit to live." Any cause worth giving your life for will involve suffering for righteousness' sake. But we have an eternal promise from Jesus. He told His disciples to be of good cheer because He had overcome the world (John 16:33).

Therefore, no matter what comes against us in the world, whether rumors of war, the fear of terrorist attacks, the elimination of affirmative action, job layoffs, or trouble in our marriages, we know that God is our refuge and a very present help in the time of trouble (cf. Psalm 46:1; 91:1–9). We cannot shrink in the midst of painful trials. If we believe that our God will deliver us, then we cannot live in fear or anger when we face fiery trials.

*Does your behavior in the midst of a trial make it easier for others to believe in and follow Christ, and to mature in Him? Or would those who follow you end up on the wrong path, lost and confused?*

## Search the Scriptures

1. What should inspire Christians to hold on to their faith (Hebrews 12:1)?
2. Why is our Christianity never to be stationary (v. 1)?
3. Who are we to model ourselves after (v. 2)?
4. How are we to handle the Lord's chastening (vv. 5–6)?
5. What is the purpose of trials and tribulations (v. 7)?
6. What is the end result of God's chastening (vv. 10–11)?

## Discuss the Meaning

1. What makes Jesus a credible leader? How would you have turned out if the Lord had not chastised you? Think about your children or children you know. Imagine how they would turn out without someone to discipline them.
2. Why is it so hard for Christians to adjust to suffering? Have you been told that once you give your life to Jesus, everything will be all right? Have we been anesthetized into believing that children of God are exempt from suffering?
3. Many of us have needed to be disciplined into spiritual shape. As you look back over your life, in what ways has God disciplined you? How did you feel while going through it? How did you benefit from it?

## Liberating Lesson

Before a professional sports team takes the field, it goes through training camp. Training camp is a fiery trial that most players hate. However, veterans and rookies alike must endure training camp in order to learn new plays, to get into shape, and, most important, to learn how to become a disciplined and victorious team.

If we Christians are going to be victorious, we have to go through our own version of training camp. God, our coach (leader), wants to turn us into a well-coached, well-trained, and well-disciplined body of believers. In order to

do that, God allows some adversity into our lives. Christians are like tea bags. In order for our rich and robust flavor to come out, we have to be placed in some hot water.

## Application for Activation

Many great biblical and historical characters had to endure much suffering for the causes they supported, whether it was for the spread of Christianity or in the fight for civil rights. Remember that life is a marathon, not a sprint. If we are going to be successful, individually and collectively, we have to keep our eyes on the prize. Individually, that prize is the likeness of Jesus Christ; collectively, the prize is to make the kingdom of God a reality in our midst.

Commit to following Jesus' example of godly discipline. Continue working toward the goals that you have, never giving up, and keep your eyes on the prize. Anything worth having is worth all of the suffering, trials, and tribulations that come along on the journey. Therefore, embrace the struggle because it will bring discipline to your life; and once you achieve your goals, you can give God the glory for the marvelous things He has done.

## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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**Sources:**

Butler, Trent, gen. ed. *Holman Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991. 165.

New Testament Greek Lexicon. Bible Study Tools.com. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/> (accessed June 20, 2008).

## Say It Correctly

Chasten. chay-SEN

Exhortation. ek-sohr-TAY-shuhn

## Daily Bible Readings

### DAY 323

1 Corinthians 11:17–34; 12:1–31

Proverbs 1

### DAY 324

1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 14:1–40

Proverbs 2

### DAY 325

1 Corinthians 15:1–49

Proverbs 3

### DAY 326

1 Corinthians 15:50–58; 16:1–24

Proverbs 4

### DAY 327

2 Corinthians 1:1–24; 2:1–17

Proverbs 5

### DAY 328

2 Corinthians 3–5

Proverbs 6

### DAY 329

2 Corinthians 6–7

Proverbs 7

## Notes

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