

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These "Sermon Discussion Questions" are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What is your most common reaction when you face difficult times in your life? Do you blame God? Do you blame yourself? Do you withdraw from fellowship with other Christians? If you knew with certainty that God loves you and that you were a child of God, how would that change how you face your difficult times?

2. The Biblical worldview teaches that all people will face difficult times during our lives since we live in a fallen world. Therefore, the author of Hebrews wants to encourage his readers to not give up and to not grow weary. How does verse 3 encourage you? How can you encourage a fellow Christian this week?

3. How is your understanding of God's discipline shaped by the fact that He does it from a heart of love for us as His children? Compare and contrast what discipline would look like without this understanding.

4. What is your initial reaction to verses 5-9 that speak of God's discipline of His children? What is your understanding of discipline? How does your understanding change when you learn that the word for discipline has a meaning of training?

5. What do verses 10-11 give as the purposes of God's discipline or training? What has been your experience with God's training for you to "share his holiness"? What "fruit of righteousness" have you seen God bring in your life?

6. What is more difficult for you at this time to "strive for peace with everyone" or to strive "for the holiness without which no will see God"? Why? Verse 15 mentions God's grace during these verses that teach about how we are to live. What is the relationship of God's grace to how we live as Christians?

Gospel Application Questions:

1. What Biblical promises would be helpful for you to strengthen your trust in Jesus during difficult times in life?

2. How would your perspective on your difficult circumstances change if you asked this question: Because God loves me, then what is He doing in me during these circumstances?

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

- C.S. Lewis

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

If you want to connect with our family ministries, contact Pastor Ken (kenc@fpcrome.org)

1. This passage discusses how God the Father watches over His children, especially during tough times. Ask your children what it means that God has revealed Himself to us as our Father in heaven. Make sure to talk about how that means that God is personal and that we can have a relationship with Him. Also make sure to talk about how that means that God loves us as a Father and that His love is perfect unlike our earthly fathers that are not perfect, no matter how good of a father they are.

- a. Read verse 3 and talk about how God the Father is trying to encourage us with this passage so that we will not give up when we face difficulty and when we are tired.

2. This passage brings up God's discipline of His children. Ask your children what they think that means.

- a. Read verse 6 and ask them what it means that "the Lord disciplines the one he loves". It is crucial to understanding this passage that we understand that God's discipline comes from a heart of love and not from a heart to bring fear or to punish.
- b. Talk with them about how the word discipline has a meaning like training. If your children play sports, then ask them how their coaches train them. If they take dance, then ask them how their teachers train them to learn dance techniques.

3. Read verses 10-11 and talk about the purpose of God's discipline or training. You will want to direct your children to the end of verse 10 that states "that we may share in his holiness" and to verse 11 that states "it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness".

- a. Pastor Ken used the illustration of God shaping us to bear the family resemblance of Him. We will begin to look and act more like Christ. Talk with your children about who they look and act like in your family. Then ask them what it will look like in our lives to become more Christ-like. Make sure to tell them that we will not ever be perfect until we are with God in heaven.

4. Read verse 14 and ask your children what this verse teaches them about loving God and loving others. Talk with them about how seeking holiness by the power of the Spirit shows our love of God. Also mention how being a peacemaker shows our love for others.

Big Idea

Because God is our Father and we are adopted as His children in Christ, then we may have the strength to persevere through difficult situations knowing that God is at work in and through us.

Outline

- 1. Encouragement to Not Grow Weary (12: 3,5,12)

- 2. Remember that We are God's Children (12:5-7)

- 3. God's Loving Discipline or Training (12:4-10)

- 4. God's Purpose in His Training (12:10-11)

- 5. Living as God's Children (12:14-17)

Gospel Applications

- 1. Let us ask the Spirit to strengthen our trust in Jesus.
- 2. Let us ask the Spirit to give us a gospel perspective on our lives.

Scriptures for further study:

John 1:12-13

Romans 8:12-17

Galatians 4:4-7

1 John 3:1-2

"God the Father's Loving Training"

Hebrews 12:3-17 ESV

3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **4** In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. **5** And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. **6** For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? **8** If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. **9** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? **10** For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. **11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, **13** and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. **14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. **15** See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; **16** that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. **17** For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

Historical Context

This is what the Book of Hebrews is about –the supremacy of Christ along with the sufficiency of his work and the necessity of faith in him for salvation...the writer warns Christians not to fall back from faith in Christ in the midst of trials and exhorts them instead to press on to full maturity."-Richard Phillips, REC, 6.

"Hebrews is a pastoral exhortation, interspersed with earnest appeals to the recipients to stand firm in their faith. Its academic arguments are deployed not for merely intellectual interest but as the essential basis for the author's appeal. He writes as a pastor closely aware of the specific situation of his readers, of their doubts and uncertainties, and of the issues that move them, and he writes looking for an existential response, not merely for intellectual assent...so the argument is summed up in 10:19-12:29 with an impassioned call to enter into their new heritage and to hold on in faith, whatever the cost, knowing that God has promised 'better' things to those who run with perseverance the race in which Jesus has already gone before them."- Tremper Longman, EBC, 19, 25.

FOR STUDENTS

If you want to connect with our student ministries, contact Pastor Jimmy (jimmyl@fpcrome.org)

1. How does this passage change your perception of the trials in your life? How does it affect your view of God and his purposes?

2. How are you responding to God's discipline today in both good and bad ways?

3. How is Esau's example relevant for our lives today?

4. Hebrews 12:12 is not a pick-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps message. In the context of the book, it is about taking the actions necessary to lean upon God so that you (and He) can have victory in your life. What is God calling you to do (Heb 12:12-13)?

5. List all the areas of your life where God's strength needs to prevail. Write down specific examples. Ask someone you trust to pray for you in these areas. Don't be afraid to ask for help – we all need it.

Selected questions borrowed and adapted from Hebrews for You by Michael J. Kruger and How Jesus Speaks into Everything by John D. Barry

Scriptures for further study:

John 1:12-13

Romans 8:12-17

Romans 8:28-29

Romans 8:28-29

1 John 3:1-2

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

If you want to know more about Jesus and Christianity, contact Pastor Jonathan (jonathans@fpcrome.org)

1. We should see from this passage that the nature of our relationship with God is that of father-son or father-daughter. "Adoption," as the Bible puts it, is key to understanding God's grace, key to understanding God's desire for our holiness, key to understanding trust, key to your prayer life, and key to the way we understand the trials we go through. How would understanding your sonship help you in each of these areas?

2. In our modern day, fathers are often much more permissive, and less likely to discipline their children. This could make it hard for some of us to see our Heavenly Father's discipline as a good thing. But according to this passage, how is God's discipline not only not a sign of his displeasure, but rather a function of his love for us?! In fact, how would God actually be a bad Father if he did not discipline us?

3. Today, we live in an "instant" kind of world. But here the Bible encourages us to imagine the long-term results of God's discipline in our lives. Notice and ponder some of the purposes and results of God's work (verses 10-11): holiness, righteousness, peace, sexual morality, etc. But notice, also, that we must allow ourselves to be trained (verse 11) by God's discipline. We must let God have his way with our lives. Surrender yourself but be patient about the results.

4. Verse 12 speaks of strengthening our feeble arms and weak knees. This could be a reference to the fact that we as Christians need to help one another when we get exhausted. How can you encourage another believer today in the midst of the trials they are undergoing?

5. Someone said, "God's grace never fails, but we can fail to depend on God's grace." Look again at verses 15-18. What sins are robbing you of the grace of God? How, like Esau are you settling for lesser things? Is it lack of spiritual diligence, bitterness against others, sexual immorality, or living for the world? In which of these (or other) areas do you need to appropriate the grace of God?

Like Christina. But even more so...we need something to fix our gaze upon...we need a home to pull us forward...and according to Hebrews, that is Jesus Christ...like the home on the hill in the painting, Jesus is the pinnacle of God's plan of redemption...so considering this painting and background, here these words afresh from Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1-2:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

And so, church, let's begin this journey in Hebrews together...which is not disconnected from our humanity and our struggles...for we to live in Christina's world...a world of suffering, pain, and hardship...but we are in a relationship with the savior, Jesus, who has overcome the world...and because of His supremacy, calls us to fix our eyes on Him in order that we might persevere in faith. -Tremper Longman, EBC, 23-25

About the artwork

Andrew Wyeth is perhaps the most famous American artist of the 20th century. He, along with John Singer Sargent, are the only two American artists invited into the Academy of Fine Art in Paris, France. President Kennedy awarded Wyeth the presidential medal of freedom, the only visual artist to receive such an award. He was also awarded presidential medals from George H Bush and George W Bush.

His art is connected to his humanity. He was a man that experienced loss and grief in this broken and fallen world and often expressed his pain in visual form through art.

His most famous work, and the one that best expresses his struggle with pain and grief, is a painting called Christina's World (1948). Christina is a friend of Wyeth and had a disease that left her unable to walk. Instead of choosing a wheelchair, she preferred to crawl using her arms. The painting is a picture of her struggle...but it is also a picture of her hope...in the painting her hands are gripped to the ground portraying her daily suffering, yet her body is leaning towards the farmhouse, which was her home. Life was a struggle, but her gaze and hope were on her home, which kept her moving forward and not giving up.

The book of Hebrews has a very similar theme...the writer expresses the hope and gaze of home in the person and work of Jesus Christ...the struggle to give up or turn back was very real for the audience...most scholars believe the original audience was Jewish Christians who were facing persecution...it would have been a struggle for them to keep moving forward in the profession of Jesus Christ because with that profession came pain and hardship.

ADDITIONAL NOTES



What is Pulpit Driven Discipleship?

Discipleship from the pulpit to communities therein pressed into the head, heart and hands of image bearers of God every day.

Pulpit Driven Discipleship is the name of a process of discipleship. Discipleship begins on Sunday with the sermon faithfully preached by our pastors then the message of sermon is digested and pressed into the heart throughout the week through prayer reflection and discussion in the home or in smaller discussion groups. It is in this context that life transformation and growth occur.

The pastoral leadership team and the Adult Discipleship Ministry Team are excited to walk together through the Book of Hebrews. Please prayerfully consider incorporating PDD as your primary means of discipleship. We believe that PDD is appropriate for individuals, couples, families, and groups of all kinds. This great resource can be found in the bulletin on Sunday, and will be available on-line and via email each week.

Director of Adult Discipleship Rob Davis welcomes discussion, questions, and comments of all kinds. Rob Davis 706-252-5216, RobD@fpcrome.org

PULPIT DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP



Andrew Wyeth, Christina's World, 1948 ;

Perseverance by Promise ***A Study of the Sermon to the Hebrews***

June 5, 2022
Hebrews 12:3-17 ESV