

His Loving Discipline Hebrews 12:4-11

Because He loves us, God our Father disciplines us so that we might increasingly reflect His character and enjoy His fellowship.

God wants us to live well today...and tomorrow...and sprint across the finish line. Running better and stronger at the end of our race.

How can this happen? Only if we are trained properly. God is committed to our training. Bible calls this "discipline."

1. Our Father's Motive: Love – Hebrews 12:4-8

- When growing up, I did not feel loved by my parents' discipline
 - Ran through my immature mind: If they loved me...
- We probably should be clear on our definition of love!
 - God is committed to our best
 - Proverbs 27:6. Faithful are the wounds...; rather be kissed by everyone
 - God is committed to our best, even though it hurts Him to discipline us
 - Ex – Parents: this hurts me a lot more than it hurts you!
- A bad father ignores his children
 - No affection
 - No boundaries.
 - Ex – Ever known person who grew up without boundaries?
 - College freshman friend of mine: He had a Presidential Scholarship (4 years free ride); but he grew up without boundaries. He was a mess; lost the scholarship.
- A bad father abuses
 - Abuse is about the parent's anger, not the child's training
- A good father
 1. Creates value and identity – Deut 26:18
 2. Sets clear expectations – Deut 27-28; Obey, blessed; disobey, disciplined
 3. Establishes appropriate consequences
 - Consequences are not arbitrary or unconnected
 4. Applies consistent application
 5. Reassures love and commitment – Jeremiah 31:37
 6. Clarifies vision – there is a point to all of this

2. Our Father's Purpose: Character – Hebrews 12:9-11

- Not retribution or vengeance for sin/foolishness
 - The only payment for sin before God is death.
 - Wages of sin is death. Having been reconciled...trained
 - God doesn't demand payment from His children. He trains His children.
 - Part of that training may be restitution to another person
 - God's goal is always to grow our character

- 12:10b – “share” His holiness
 - Holiness
 - Whole-ness; wholesomeness; Mrs. Baird’s Bread
 - Heb 5:14. Maturity – complete, whole; trained = *gumnazo*
 - What you were designed to be. Fulfilling your design
 - Ex – old car sitting in a field; Rolls Royce. Unwanted, neglected. What a waste
 - Ex – violin in the hands of an accomplished musician
 - Heb 12:12b. Righteousness – status; aligned with His personality
 - Ephesians 5:1 – imitators of God
- Practically, what does this look like?
 - Matt 5:43-45
 - Love what is good. What God loves. Forgiveness, reconciliation
 - Look out for others more than self
- By way of contrast, our Father wants us to grow out of “immaturity”
 - 1 John 2:16. Small life

TRANSITION

- God’s motives are pure: LOVE. His purpose is right: MATURITY
- Why is this so important? Because the process of moving from immaturity to maturity is hard and painful.

3. Our Father’s Methods (varied and sometimes painful) – Hebrews 12:11

- Webster’s: “[Discipline is] training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character.”
- Fits well with the biblical definition
 - Development of a child to maturity. Intellectual and moral.
 - *Gumnazo*. “training”
- All training is painful
 - Getting up early for hockey practice. Harder on my dad than on me.
 - Hebrews 12:1 – marathon
 - Heb 12:4; agonizing against. Image shifts to boxing, most dangerous event in heptathlon. Weights grasped in hands; bones broken when struck
 - Description of training alluded to in 1 Cor 9. “I buffet my body.”
 - Joseph Dillow, *Reign of the Servant Kings*, 578-579. The athletes... submitted for ten months to rigorous training under professional trainers. [rain or shine, heat or cold, they trained naked] After their arrival for training...they took an oath swearing to obey all the rules. If an athlete left the gymnasium once during the ten months of training, he was disqualified and could not participate in the games. If he was caught violating the diet, he was disqualified. Every morning there were two trumpet calls. The first was the warning trumpet...The second trumpet was the signal to begin the daily workout in the exercise square called the agony [not Gold’s but Agony Gym]. As he exercised, there were “marshals” observing his effort. If he caught an athlete loafing just once during this entire ten months, he was disqualified. If an athlete missed one trumpet call the entire ten months, he was disqualified from the games.
 - Paul: I submit to His training because I want His holiness more than anything
- How does He train us? What are His methods?
- Through suffering for our faith
 - Context of Hebrews. Why are we suffering?
 - Context of Hebrews 11 – people who have suffered well.
 - Jesus: Hebrews 5:8

- Suffering in a fallen world
 - John 9 – Man born blind. Who sinned? No one!
 - 2 Cor 1
- Consequences for our sin
 - 1 Cor 11 – some are sick
 - John 5:14. Lame man by Pool of Bethesda – pick up your pallet and walk
 - Ex – Howard Hendricks. “Freedom includes fences and accepts responsibility. One is always free to choose but never free to escape the consequences of those choices. The law of gravity provides a choice illustration. A person is free to jump from a high bridge...but once he is over the railing...he is no longer free.”
- Sometimes we can't discern the method of discipline/training
 - Wear ourselves out trying to discern the cause
 - Ex – sprained my ankle in high school. Did I sin?
- All methods of discipline/training serve the same function
 - Romans 8:28. God causes all things to work together for good
 - NOT all things are good
 - Hebrews 12:1
 - Strip us bare of love for this age
 - Sin
 - Best this age has to offer is fleeting; temporary
 - Build in us a longing for the next age – Heb 12:2
 - Strip us bare of self-reliance
 - Build in us a deep dependence

4. Our Response: Embrace

- Psalm 119:75; 119:71
- Lean into your training
 - James 1

Application

Are you fighting against your present circumstances?

- Thank God that He loves you.
- Thank God that He is more committed to your character than comfort.

How badly do you want to be like your Father?

- Specific point of character that God is working on
- Self-discipline, self-control. Something you need to say NO to
- Forgiveness?
 - God has allowed you to be wronged so that you can forgive
- Grace?
 - Someone that you need to initiate with
 - Serve
 - Share truth of gospel