

Jesus is best! (The Book of Hebrews)

Week 7: Jesus is the best motive for holiness

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing and sharing together.

Why do thousands of marathon runners seem to enjoy punishing themselves in these races? For the vast majority it can't be the hope of winning. What is it then?

WORSHIP

Thank and praise the Lord Jesus Christ for the ways in which he has blessed you as individuals and as a group since the last time you met.

WORD

Read Hebrews 12.1-17

1. Hebrews 12:1-2 are very popular verses, but what is their context in this passage?

2. So great a cloud of witnesses – All the saints in Hebrews 11 have passed out of this world. They leave behind their legacy of faith and God's grace. They may or may not actively "witness" us from heaven, but this is not the main point. What then is the main point?

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6. Jesus is our example – He perfects our faith. But before we were even born into this world, He already lived out the perfect example of endurance. During his whole ministry He was doubted, scoffed, mocked, challenged, and persecuted. Finally, he was tried and sentenced to death, the most shameful, humiliating, and painful death imaginable. He endured all of this for the joy set before him. He did it because of the reward at the end of the tunnel. What could that be referring to?

WHAT NEXT?

We must remember that we too are in a race. Our life is short, but we have a purpose and a goal. We should always keep our goal before us. Do not allow “good” things to keep you from the best thing. Do not allow anything to distract you from what you know God wants you to do. It is very easy to fill our schedules with things that are not the most productive. Sometimes we need to evaluate and consider what activities we may need to cut out so that we can be the most productive. We should also be willing to say “no” at times if people ask us to do things that may hinder us.

“God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12.10b-11).

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With this in mind read and consider how we can apply Hebrews vv4-9.

Verse 4 – None of us reading Hebrews 12 have been martyred for our faith. We had not paid the ultimate price or been tested with the ultimate test yet. If the saints in Hebrews 11 could endure to the end, some to the point of giving their lives for their faith, we too should be prepared to do this.

Verses 5-6 – Some readers of Hebrews had forgotten about God’s discipline. Perhaps they were surprised to face the consequences of sin. Maybe they had been taught that belief in God guaranteed a life of health, wealth, and happiness. Many believers today have forgotten or ignored this as well. Perhaps they go to a church that focuses on God’s love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. At the very beginning of the teaching on discipline, however, the author first reminds us that the motivation of discipline is love. Teaching about God’s discipline is not incompatible with teaching about God’s love. Rather it shows us another aspect of God’s love and the depth of His love.

Perhaps the most important advice for us in these verses is: “do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord.” We should not cast it aside. The book of Proverbs 15.5 warns us that “A fool spurns a parent’s discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence”.

It tells us not to “make light of the Lord’s discipline”. We shouldn’t collapse under it or give up. We shouldn’t be surprised when we do face discipline. Instead of fainting we should take it as a reminder that we are His son or daughter and correct the issue that needs dealing with.

The trials we face may be discipline from God – It seems that verse 7 is indicating that the suffering these believers were facing was discipline from God. Discipline could have two meanings. One is “punishment for the

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purpose of correction” against one who has sinned. The other is like training. For example, “She is very disciplined, she goes for run every morning before she goes to work.”

Verse 7 What son/daughter is there whom his/her father does not discipline? The main thrust of this verse is not about teaching parents to discipline their children. However, this is a secondary application of this passage. This phrase implies that all parents SHOULD do this. At that time in history, probably most of them did. The implication is clear, if parents love their children, they must discipline them (see also Ephesians 6:4). Why is it loving to discipline when the world these days say that this is unloving? One reason for not disciplining is that it is inconvenient, or the parent does not enjoy it. It pains the parent emotionally. Love is willing to do what is necessary, no matter how difficult, inconvenient, and for the good of others.

Verse 8 This verse tells us that if we are never disciplined by God then we don't belong to Him.

Verse 9a – This verse implies that children will respect parents who faithfully discipline them. The world is afraid that disciplining children will hurt the parents' relationship with them, that it will create a wall of resentment. But this is not true. Children will have a sense of security when they know the boundaries and these boundaries are age-

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appropriately and consistently enforced. They will see their parents' love through the way that they discipline.

Verse 9b – This phrase shows us how we should apply this passage. We must subject ourselves to God. That means that we must accept correction from Him, and submit ourselves to His authority from our hearts. This whole passage shows us clearly one aspect of our relationship with God. Yes, Jesus called His disciples friends. Yes, God answers our prayers. He is our authority. We are to submit ourselves to Him and respect Him from the heart.

What can we do?

We should consider Jesus' example. We should think about it and meditate on it. What should we do because of Jesus' example? We should not grow weary or lose heart. We should persevere. Is there anything you know God is calling you to do, but perhaps you are growing weary or losing heart about it? In light of this passage, what should you do?