

LIFE Bible Study: Hebrews 12:1-17

For Discussion: What are some important lessons you've learned through experiencing difficult times that you otherwise wouldn't have learned? How was your character affected by those experiences?

Read Hebrews 12:1-17

For review: In Hebrews 11:1-40, the author presented a distinguished list of men and women who had triumphed in their faith, which included both those who had overcome their trials as well as those who faithfully endured them. These accounts together illustrate four important facets of faith: its conviction, call, cost, and commendation. Those who overcame were resolutely convinced of what God had revealed to them because of their trust in Him. This certainty led them to align their lives with their beliefs, though their choices often proved to be costly. To them, the blessings promised to those who endured were worth far more than any price they could pay, even their lives. In the following section, the author addresses several issues in detail as he continues to exhort his readers to hold fast to their faith and demonstrate the same endurance in their own trying circumstances (Heb. 10:32-36).

What image does the author use to illustrate the struggle in which all believers are engaged for their faith, and why is this an appropriate metaphor? How did the author advise his readers to be encouraged to persevere to the end (v.1-3)? In what areas do you struggle to cast off the impediments to your spiritual growth (v.1)?

The author reminds his readers that the hardships they were facing for their faith are because God is treating them as sons (Deut. 8:5). What is the significance of being counted by God as a son (v.5-6, Heb. 2:10-12)? How is the discipline of God similar to the discipline of men? How are they different?

What is God's goal in disciplining us (v.10-11)? How might viewing the hard circumstances that we encounter on account of our faith as God's discipline affect our perception or experience of them? How should we respond in these situations to receive their intended benefit (v.12-14)? What have the trials you faced revealed to you about what the values and priorities of your heart area?

The author concludes this section with a list of three types of people who are at risk of succumbing to weariness. He does this so that his readers can be watchful for them, both to care for them and for the community overall (v.15-17). What are these three categories? How can the author's earlier exhortations to self-examination and encouragement be applied to care for others?

Reflection and application

In an endurance race, the runners do well to ensure that they carry nothing that will be a hindrance to their progress. Over long distances, even a minor burden can have an incremental impact and eventually become a severe detriment. Sin slows us down, trips us up, and keeps us from responding appropriately to the discipline that God uses to grow our faith and train our character. Though initially unpleasant, we can have confidence that God stands sovereignly behind each trial He employs. In His perfectly measured discipline, He does not allow us to be tempted or strained beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13), but what He does allow is done as a loving father to a son. Let us look to Christ and the faithful multitude who came before us and receive encouragement to endure so that we too can one day say with Paul that we fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). Let us also bear in mind that this race of faith is neither solitary nor adversarial and run alongside one another to help each other cast off the worthless burdens that remain in our lives and pursue Christ with renewed determination, vigour, and hope.