

The God Who Is

The Father Who Disciplines

Hebrews 12:5-11

Background

Not much is known about the background of the letter to the Hebrews. The author was writing to a body of Christian believers, most of whom were (probably) from a Jewish (Hebrew) background (thus the name). The letter is rich with explanation about the relationship between the Old Testament (or “covenant” that God had made with the Jewish people) and the New Testament. Although an exact date isn’t known, Hebrews was certainly written sometime during the first century AD, perhaps near 68-69 AD.

The passage we’ll be looking at today talks a lot about discipline. What exactly *is* discipline?

Give an example of when and how a father might discipline a child. Why does the father do this?

Read Hebrews 12:5-11.

This passage explains that God is a Father, and we are His children. What is God’s discipline? What does it look like? How does He chasten us with words? With calamities?

Most of the time we think of discipline in a negative light--we’d really rather our lives be free from hardship and difficulty. But how do v.7-8 challenge this attitude?

Why does God discipline us (v.10)?

How is sharing in God’s holiness our good?

The word “endure” (v.7) means to “stand under”. What are some ways we try to “get out from under” the hardship of discipline? What happens when we do this?

What happens when we *do* submit to God and His discipline (v.9)?

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What else does v.11 say is produced in those who are trained by God's discipline? How will our lives be better *later* if we endure His discipline *now*?

In v.11 the author of Hebrews borrows words from the worlds of agriculture (“produces a harvest”) and sports (the Greek word for “train” is the same word we get “gymnasium” from—it is usually used to describe athletic training). What lessons about the costs *and* the benefits of discipline can we learn from these two worlds?

Are all the hard things that happen to us a part of God's discipline?

Questions for personal reflection:

In v.5, the author of Hebrews gives two instructions: 1) Do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and 2) Do not lose heart when He disciplines you.

1. Is there any discipline from God that you are making light of? What do you need to do to take it more seriously?
2. Are you discouraged about the discipline from God you're enduring right now? How can this passage give you hope and encouragement? Maybe read through the passage again, inserting your particular situation whenever you see the word “hardship” or “discipline”.

Passages For Further Study:

The whole book of Proverbs!
(See 1:7; 3:11-12; 6:23; 10:17; 15:5,32)
Romans 5:1-5
James 1:2-4
1 Peter 1:3-9

“There is a God we want, and there is a God who is—and they are not the same God.

The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is.”