

***Start to Finish – A Plan for 2009***

This weekend's topic: Discipline – Hebrews 12:1-11

*January 31 & February 1, 2009*

***Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 (927)***

- every weight that slows us down - get rid of any good thing that slows me down from running my race of faith
- the sin that so easily trips us up - the sin that entangles my legs
- The only way I run MY race of faith successfully is to get rid of everything that holds me back
- My race is a marathon, NOT a sprint
- What I do after I fall is one of the biggest indicators of how I will finish my race!
- Marathoners who get up after a fall can still win the race

***We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates & perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility Jesus endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 2 - 4 (927)***

- The ONLY way I'll ever finish my race of faith is to focus on Jesus!
- I won't finish if I focus on my struggles or my problems or my pain!
- When ANYTHING other than Jesus becomes my focus, I will get weary & give up

***Have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as His children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when He corrects you." Hebrews chapter 12 verse 5 (928)***

- Most of us find little encouragement in discipline because we don't understand what discipline is!
- "discipline" literally means to educate & train
- It has NOTHING to do with inflicting pain

***For the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child.***

*Hebrews chapter 12 verse 6 (928)*

How does God discipline me?

- God takes away my joy
- God takes away my peace
- God takes away my feeling of purpose
- God takes away my sense of significance
- God allows me to feel distant from Him
- God actively opposes me & my efforts
- ✓ *When these are present in my life, I need to take the time to ask God if He is disciplining me...if He is, I need to purpose to correct my behavior!!!*

(over)

***As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as His own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as He does all of His children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really His children at all. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 7 & 8 (928)***

- **THE** job of parenting is to discipline (*train, educate*)!
- Training & educating require the parent to spend **LOTS** of time with their kids!
- Training & educating are **THE PROOF** that a child has been parented
- Dads...

***Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits & live forever? For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in His holiness. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 9 & 10(928)***

- None of us had perfect parents
- Most of us had parents who loved us & did their best to raise & discipline us
- Dads & parents...
- Our earthly parents disciplined us for our own good...
- Why then do we resist Father God's discipline?
- God's discipline is always right & always good for me! God never operates out of selfishness, laziness, or embarrassment! He always has my best in mind!
- ***Jesus said, "It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin."***

*Luke chapter 17 verse 2 (799)*

***No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening, it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.***

*Hebrews chapter 12 verse 11 (928)*

- Pray & ask God for wisdom (*James 1*) to discern God's discipline in my life & why it's there
- Once I know why it's there, set out to correct / change that area of my life
- Why?? So the discipline can stop!
- God's NOT asking me for perfection! He's asking me for a honest heart!
- "peaceful harvest of right living" = a honorable life

### More

- What "weights" & "sins" do I need to get rid of in order to be able to finish my race?
- Honestly, what am I focusing on in my race? What am I going to do to make Jesus my focus?
- Where & how is God's discipline in my life? What change is God asking me for through His discipline? How will I obey God in this?
- What are the specific changes that God is asking me for as a result of today's talk?

Next weekend: Stay the Course – Hebrews 12:12 & 13