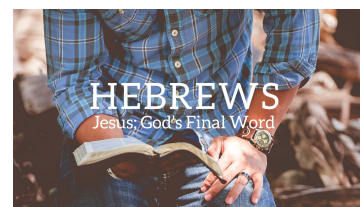


DISCUSSION GUIDE :: EPISODE 8

JESUS; GOD'S FINAL WORD
GOD'S DISCIPLINE
HEBREWS 12:3-13
11/05/2017



MAIN POINT

God corrects and changes us in order to create dependence on Him and prepare us for what's coming in the future.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How did discipline generally look in the home you grew up in? Do you agree or disagree with the way your parents disciplined you? Why?

Can you share one specific story from your childhood when you were disciplined and it helped you grow or change?

Do you tend to think of discipline from God in a beneficial way? Why or why not?

Typically when we hear “discipline” we think about the relationship between a parent and a child. It could mean a time out, a spanking, or a stern conversation, but it carries with it the idea of helping the child grow and change for his or her own good. As with any loving parent, God’s discipline is often painful and never fun, but the brokenness it brings is necessary for change. In fact, one of the ways we know that God loves us as sons and daughters is because He is willing to exercise discipline.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

What is the difference between discipline and punishment? Why is it important to recognize the difference?

Have you ever felt like you were being disciplined by God? When?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 12:3-13.

How did the writer of Hebrews see the Lord’s discipline?

Is that different than we usually look at it? How so?

When we find things not going the way we should, we often think it's evidence of God's anger or absence. But this passage reminds us that when God disciplines us, it's actually evidence of His love. He loves us too much to allow us to go our own way unchallenged.

One of the reasons for the Lord's discipline is to create dependence on Him. Is recognizing your dependence on God difficult for you? Why or why not?

What are some things you might depend on other than God? How have you seen God use discipline to remind you that you are dependent on Him?

Discipline also prepares us for the future. Have you ever seen this to be the case in your life?

Discipline also corrects. What is the relationship between God's discipline and grace?

How does discipline help us see the true destructive nature of sin?

Given God's purpose in discipline, what is the right perspective to receive that discipline with?

Though God has provided warnings and encouragement in His Word, sometimes the most effective way for us to grow and change is through having something taken away. Though painful, God uses His discipline for our good that we may share in His holiness. His discipline breaks us, and in our brokenness we can gain a sober look at our sin and at the state of our soul. We need that brokenness to surrender to God, so that He can work in us again. That is why discipline is a form of grace.

In verses 12 and 13, what is the end result of God's discipline? What does this look like in your life?

God is going to restore the brokenness that sin has caused. He will bind up our wounds and mend our broken bones. He will set our feet to walk His paths and to live in His righteousness. The strength and renewal that God imparts through discipline gives us a glimpse at His plan and purpose. He is making us more like Him.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How do we tend to try to escape the discipline of God? How can we fight that tendency?

Are you feeling the Lord's discipline right now? What specifically can we pray for you about in that situation?

Who are the people in your life who God can use to discipline you? Why do you think these are the best candidates? How can they have a better opportunity to help you come to a place of brokenness when brokenness is something you need?

What are some practical ways as a group that we can encourage discipline and surrender in each other's lives?

PRAY

Close your time in prayer, thanking God that He loves us enough to discipline us. Pray that God would show you the areas of sin in your life that need to be confronted, and ask God to graciously bring His discipline to take away the things that keep you from worshiping Him. Pray that God would make straight the paths of the people at our church, that through brokenness you can surrender to God and be restored in Him.

COMMENTARY

HEBREWS 12:3-13

12:3-4. The word “for” introduces the reason the Hebrew Christians were to fix their attention on Jesus (v. 2). The term “consider” has the idea of weighing something for comparison. The readers were to compare Jesus’ enduring hostility with the opposition they were experiencing. Jesus’ enduring opposition should have inspired the Hebrew Christians to renew their efforts and helped keep them from growing weary and losing heart. The writer contrasted Jesus’ death to the readers’ suffering. Evidently they had experienced opposition without loss of life.

12:5-6. The writer reminded his readers of an Old Testament exhortation (encouragement) in Proverbs 3:11-12. Believers were not to view God’s instruction or training as insignificant. They were not to grow weary when God reproved them because “God punishes every son . . . He receives.” The idea is that in love God allows or inflicts punishment on His people to discipline us. Others note the Hebrew word behind “discipline” and “disciplines” has the ideas of correcting or reasoning. They see the verses as meaning that as a loving father reasons with and corrects his son, God uses difficulty and opposition to train or educate His children.

12:7. The writer urged his readers to endure persecution as opportunities for spiritual growth. They could view hardship as a reason to give up or as training in perseverance. Like all believers, these were God’s children; and far from abandoning them in their trials, God was training them as a human father trained his sons.

12:8. All genuine believers receive God’s discipline or instruction. If God had not been training the Hebrew believers, they would have been illegitimate children and not sons. Thus their trials proved they were God’s authentic children. When believers recognize difficulties may be God’s discipline, they will view them as opportunities for spiritual growth. Doing so will help Christians endure.

12:12-13. The word “therefore” connects the emphasis that God was using opposition to train the readers in endurance (vv. 5-11) with the writer’s encouragement for them to persevere. The use of Isaiah 35:3 likely returns to the analogy of a marathon in 12:1. Tired (“dangling”) hands and weakened (“feeble,” KJV) knees convey exhaustion. The admonition probably was addressed to the entire Christian community. Believers are to inspire one another by their perseverance in faith. They are in the Christian marathon together, and they have a mutual responsibility to support and encourage one another.

The exhortation for the readers to “make straight paths for their feet” (see Prov. 4:26) probably has the sense of removing obstacles and leveling the ground so impaired runners might not suffer dislocated joints. Stronger Christians are to help weaker believers so the latter will not suffer greater spiritual injury but will be healed instead.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Hebrews 13:1-8