

Preparing for Trials  
Hebrews 12:3-11

The book of Hebrews is written by an anonymous author to an unspecified location consisting of an audience of Jewish believers. What we do know is that those Jewish believers were beginning to experience persecution for their faith! Chapter twelve is meant to motivate, encourage, and instruct these Jewish believers on how to endure God's discipline in their lives. Here's a summary of the game plan we find in these verses:

- **Aligning Your Perspective:**

- a. Know who to focus on (v 3) – Jesus
- b. Know what to acknowledge (v 4) – Sin is the enemy
- c. Know what to remember (v 5-6) – The Father's Love

- **God's Discipline – A Good Thing to Receive:**

- a. Believers are Commanded to Endure Discipline (v 7)
- b. Participation is Mandatory...for "sonship" – i.e. co-heir (v 8)

- **The Tangible Benefits of Discipline:**

- c. Compare the Benefits of Earthly vs Heavenly Discipline (v 9-10)
- d. The Peaceful Fruit of Righteousness (v 11)

## Digging Deeper

1. Take a look at the two verses that precede our section of Scripture. This is where the metaphor of the race first surfaces. The first verse is a follow up from the Hall of Faith in Chapter Eleven (could be good to revisit that as well) – Where do our motivations come from in that first verse? How about in verse two – to whom does our motivation shift? What was His motivation? Are you seeing a common word that keeps popping up in all of these questions?
2. Now, cruise down to the subsequent two verses that follow our Scripture passage this morning – what are they instructing? Many of you may have played a sport growing up. If so, you know that Coaches can be notoriously persistent about correcting little behaviors that they believe build bad habits. When I was in high school, I played football. One of my coaches had a pet peeve during conditioning: no one was allowed to bend over with their hands on their knees as they struggled to catch their breath. At the time, I recall him telling us it was so that opposing teams wouldn't see our weakness and feel encouraged (there was probably a little truth to that), but looking back, I think our coach was instilling discipline in us as attempted to build up our endurance. He had a method of chastising us during all this as well...If he caught you leaning over, he would walk up behind you and smack your helmet with his wedding ring...I still hear that dingy sound every time I'm tempted to lean over and suck wind after a hard run.
3. One special note to Fathers: As the man in your house, it is your responsibility to discipline your kids. Sometimes this may require a spanking. One good piece of advice I've recently come across is that God never disciplined the nation of Israel by his own hand once they were in the promised land – He always used another nation as a tool. Perhaps one reason he did it like that was so that they would know that, spiritually speaking, his hands were to love and care for them. This is good practical advice for us too. Taking the time to send a child to their room while you go and get a "rod" of discipline is an opportunity to cool down and make certain you aren't disciplining them from a place of anger rather than from a heart of love.