

Hebrews 12:7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

Central idea

God gives us the discipline of adversity as a means of our sanctification. Our role in this discipline is to respond to it and to acquiesce to whatever God may be doing, even though a particular instance of adversity makes no sense to us. As we do this we will see in due time the fruit of the Spirit produced in our lives.

Developing the Discipline of Grace

1. Hebrews 12:4-13 illustrates how God uses adversity to discipline us in godliness. Read that passage. In which of the following ways do you typically respond to painful circumstances? (More than one may apply)
 - I often despise God’s discipline by viewing adversity as something to be escaped as quickly as possible
 - I often lose heart, feeling that God is mad at me and must not love me very much when He allows me to suffer.
 - I often get angry, asking “Why did this happen to me?” and accusing God of injustice. However, after an initial outburst, I get over my rage.
 - My anger at God may continue for months, even years.
 - I often accept hardship as coming from God’s hand for my good, even when the situation makes no sense to me.
 - I openly rebel against Him, thinking I know better what’s good for me.
 - My primary response is one of humble submission and trust.
 - I diligently apply God’s mind and will to my situation, trying to figure it out.
 - I renounce my self-will and resign myself to God’s will – not always immediately, but usually in due time.
 - I throw a pity party and invite as many friends as I can to behold what manner of suffering I endure.
 - I pray for relief from the difficulty and seek legitimate means to gain that relief.
 - Other (explain)

2. We cannot know for certain if a particular adversity is related to some specific sin in our lives. But the Holy Spirit will catch our attention if we need to know in order to deal with a particular sin. If no linkage comes to mind, we can pray, asking God what He wants us to consciously learn. Prayerfully

reflect over your life. Can you cite one situation when the connection between a painful hardship and God's loving disciplinary purpose was clear to you? What was God's aim in that situation?

3. The writer of Hebrews presumes a rational, ideal family model- one where the children respect the father who disciplines them (because he does so for the right reasons), and thus they will submit to that discipline (12:9-10). The biblical writer draws a parallel between our imperfect human fathers and our perfect heavenly Father. Some readers struggle with this passage because their own fathers were so different from the heavenly ideal. What was your own earthly father's style of discipline?
 - I could see the loving, character-developing purpose behind my father's discipline
 - My dad abused me with his anger.
 - My dad never disciplined me.
 - My dad did what he thought was best, but he was often wrong.
 - I had no father during most or all of my childhood.
 - Other (describe)

4. How do you think your father's way of disciplining you affects the way you respond to God's discipline?

5. The road to holiness is paved with adversity but eventually leads to a "harvest of righteousness and peace" (Hebrews 12:12). Where are you along that road? What kind of harvest have you seen?

6. Are you experiencing a painful situation right now?
 - a. If so, describe it.

 - b. How do you intend to handle this situation in light of what you know about discipline?

7. Remember the airplane metaphor- with the two wings, dependence and discipline? We have now covered six duties of discipleship, or things we can and must do to grow in godliness. Those six constitute the wing of discipline. But counterbalancing that is the weighty other wing- dependence on God – without which no growth is possible. On that wing we find two ways in which God disciplines us. These eight factors are the means by which we become like Christ. How would you describe in your own words the six ways we discipline ourselves and the two ways in which God disciplines us?
- a. The wing of discipline – six ways we discipline ourselves:
 - Beholding Christ in the gospel
 - Making a commitment to holiness
 - Developing Bible-based convictions
 - Acting on choices
 - Mortifying sin
 - Watching and praying against temptation
 - b. The wing of dependence – two ways God disciplines us
 - By adversity
 - By grace

Remember, “discipleship without desire is drudgery”. Training in godliness, with desire instilled by the gospel, is anything but drudgery.