



October 16/17, 2010

Hebrews 12

*"When God Spanks His Kids"*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

The Faith Lessons series in Hebrews 11 provided a closer look at the inspiring accounts of many great examples of men and women of faith. The writer builds on that foundation in Hebrews 12. In this chapter the writer compares the Christian life to running a race, which is not a sprint; it's a marathon that takes preparation, training and pacing to run the distance.

As we run the race, we need to run as free as we can and as focused as we can. **Hebrews 12:1b** says, *"... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles..."* Serious athletes use special clothing, which is designed to be as light and aerodynamic as possible so that nothing will hinder<sup>1</sup> them when they run. In the same way, Christians need to run the race unencumbered, and the biggest weight that will hinder the race is unaddressed sin.

The instruction is simple: throw off everything that hinders! It's interesting to note that the original Greek text does not have the direct article *"the"* before sin, so it's literally, *"throw off everything that hinders and sin that so easily entangles."* (Emphasis added) God wants us to be intentional about dealing with sin in our lives, and he wants us to never be content to allow sin to take root, but to be constantly fighting against the desires of the flesh, which dominate us and weigh us down. Additionally, we're instructed to stay focused, and as **Hebrews 12:2** says, we're to *"fix our eyes on Jesus."*

This message centers on God's discipline for those who don't run as free and as focused as they should. In this study we'll learn that when God disciplines us, he's attempting to get us back on track, and that while we're in the process of learning,

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<sup>1</sup> The act of impeding or restraining motion. 1. Impediment; that which stops progression or advance; obstruction. <http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word/hinder>

we'll see that he loves us, and accepts us as his children. The writer refers to God's discipline ten times in [Hebrews 12:4-11](#), and the interesting thing is that in the midst of his rebuke, punishment and discipline, we need to remember that this subject is supposed to be an encouragement! ([Hebrews 12:5-6](#)) Finally, we'll learn that it's God's purpose in discipline to make us more holy and more fruitful.

### God Loves Us

1. Many people have a tendency to think only of the comforting God, the tender God and the forgiving God, but there are times when God loves us enough to bring correction and discipline.
2. Sometimes the pathway to holiness is marked by God's loving, but uncomfortable correction.
3. If God allowed us to go astray and did nothing, that would be unloving.

### God Accepts Us As His Children

4. In [Hebrews 12:6-8](#), the parent/child relationship is mentioned a number of times. (Son 6x - children 1x - father 4x)
5. A parent only disciplines his own children, so the fact that God disciplines you means that you are his child.
6. God's discipline is the evidence of the relationship, and indicates that you are a child whom he loves.

### We Have Something To Learn

7. The Greek word for discipline<sup>2</sup> is *paideuo*, which means to teach, train, instruct and educate.
8. The very word, by definition, indicates that God wants us to learn something.

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<sup>2</sup> 1. To instruct or educate; to inform the mind; to prepare by instructing in correct principles and habits; as, to discipline youth for a profession, or for future usefulness. 2. To instruct and govern; to teach rules and practice, and accustom to order and subordination; as, to discipline troops or an army. 3. To correct; to chastise; to punish. 4. To execute the laws of the church on offenders, with a view to bring them to repentance and reformation of life. 5. To advance and prepare by instruction.  
<http://1828.mshaffer.com/d/search/word,discipline>

## We Will Become More Holy And More Fruitful

9. **Proverbs 13:18** – *“He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored.”*
10. **Proverbs 15:10** – *“Stern discipline awaits him who leaves the path; he who hates correction will die.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Hebrews 12:1-12** to provide an overview for this study.
3. To jump-start the conversation, spend time talking about experiences with corporal punishment when you were young.
  - a. Did you have a flashback moment when you saw the wooden spoon, belt, fly swatter and ruler?
  - b. What do you remember about the age-old statement you may have heard from your parent(s) – “This is going to hurt me, more than it’s going to hurt you”?
4. What is it that holds you back from really living for the Lord?
5. What weight(s) are you trying to run the race with?
6. Is there one thing in your life that causes you to think, “If I just had victory over this one thing in my life, I’d really live for the Lord”?
7. It’s true that we are not *sinless*, but has it been your experience that the longer you walk with the Lord you *sin less*?
8. Read and discuss **Genesis 4:7**.
  - a. Share examples of times when the Holy Spirit helped you “master” sin in your life?
9. Read and discuss **Psalms 119:133**.
10. Provide an overview of the statistics Pastor Gary mentioned regarding distracted drivers and the number of car crashes<sup>3</sup> they are involved in.<sup>4-5-6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> While the common term may be “accident,” they are anything but accidental.

- a. Spend time talking about some of the things that create a lack of focus, which takes Christians' eyes off of Jesus.
  - b. Allow the people in your group to share personal examples of things that distract them from really following the Lord.
  - c. Do you sense that you have a singleness of vision and purpose?
11. Read and discuss [Proverbs 13:18](#) and [Proverbs 15:10](#).
12. What form does God's discipline take?
  - a. Share examples of God's discipline in your life.
13. How can you tell the difference between the discipline of God and, to borrow part of the title of a well-known children's book, just a "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day"?<sup>7</sup>
14. Has it been your experience that the Lord comes privately to you concerning your sin?
15. Has the Lord brought your sin out in the open and made it public knowledge?
16. Close your time with prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to help each person: (select someone in advance to read [Psalm 119:133](#) and pray this Scripture); (select someone in advance to read [1 John 1:9](#)) bring all unconfessed sin before the Lord to receive forgiveness, which will enable them to run the race (the Christian life) unhindered from sin and focused on Jesus; know that the pathway to holiness is marked by God's loving, but uncomfortable correction.

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<sup>4</sup> The National Safety Council estimates that at least 28% percent of all traffic crashes, or at least 1.6 million crashes each year, are caused by drivers using cell phones or texting. <http://www.nsc.org/pages/nscestimates16millioncrashescausedbydriversusingcellphonesandtexting.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> When you factor in other distractions like eating, drinking, shaving, reading and putting on make-up, 80% of traffic crashes are attributed to distracted drivers. <http://www.edgarsnyder.com/car-accident/cell-phone/statistics.html>

<sup>6</sup> In 2008, almost 6,000 people were killed and 500,000 were injured in crashes related to driver distraction. <http://www.edgarsnyder.com/car-accident/cell-phone/statistics.html>

<sup>7</sup> Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day By Judith Viorst.