

**Warm-up**

Have you ever sharpened a tool on a grinder and worn eye protection due to the sparks and particles of airborne metal? Why is it necessary to remove some metal in order to sharpen the tool's blade?

- ▶ God uses struggles and discipline to sharpen me.

**Watch Out!** (v. 1)

*"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,"*

Do you or did you have godly parents or grandparents? Perhaps you can picture them "rooting you on" from the sidelines, or having handed you the baton in a relay race. If so I bet you take encouragement with this thought.

Many fellow believers are watching me and seeing my testimony (the pattern of my choices and actions). This motivates me to keep my focus on the Lord, stay in His word, refuse ungodly choices, and to endure. In fact, we should be encouraged when others are holding us accountable in this way.

When we studied Hebrews 10:22-25 (lesson 7) we talked about how the *pattern* of our lives reflects how God is perfecting us. Paul wrote in Phil. 3:17, *"Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."* And so not only are others watching us, but we should be watching others in order to encourage them to be faithful. In fact, we are to *stimulate* their faith by our faithfulness!

In order to do this we must set aside the things that get in the way or pull us off course. We know ourselves better than anyone else, and yet we may be partially blind to an area of weakness. The enemy is a deceiver and would like to convince us that our choices and responses are "O.K." even if they are questionable or wrong according to the God's word. But check out the wording in Matthew 24:24. *"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."*

Notice the qualifier, "if possible" in this verse. If we stay on our guard, with the Lord and His Spirit going before us (Ps. 16:8), we will NOT be deceived; it will NOT be possible! 1 John 4:4 says, *"You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."*

- ▶ *"...be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness." (2 Peter 3:17) Never consider yourself invincible to sin; stay on guard!*

**Tunnel Vision** (vs. 2-3)

*"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (v. 2)*

Lack of focus can certainly be a problem. Driving a car on a busy freeway is no time to be texting! Sometimes complete focus on a singular task is exactly what is needed to accomplish it well. Consider that a laser is essentially super-focused light, and look what it can do!

Keeping my focus on Christ (Jesus) builds my faith. He's a great example of faithfulness! He did not allow people, circumstances, or suffering to dissuade Him.

A good way to stay focused is to stay in the light, and dim the light on other things. Consider 1 John 1:7, *"but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."* The things we pay attention to get the light.

I'll have "spiritual stamina" when I remember Jesus! *"Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."* (Gal. 6:9)

- ▶ *Psalms 36:9b says, "In Your light we see light". So, we need to stay in His light!*

**Tough Love** (vs. 4-6)

*"For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." (v. 6)*

My struggles are small compared to God's power in me! God has enough strength available to me to meet every demand I face. Submit to God; be willing to sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). My focus should be first on MY sin, not others (see Psalm 51:3-4, *"I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me...."*).

God loves me enough to discipline me; this is how endurance grows. It is also what marks me as a child of God. But I don't need to fear God's discipline! *"There is no fear in love, because perfect love casts out fear, because fear involved punishment...." (1 John 4:18).*

*"Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name."* (Ps. 91:14) From this concept in Psalm 91 it is apparent that God knows those who are His (2 Tim. 2:19), and reserves the right to work in their life in this way. Only a loving father is qualified to discipline.

*"After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."* (1 Peter 5:10).

► *Dull instruments must submit to grinding to become useful once again.*

### **No Pain No Gain** (vs. 7-8)

*"It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"* (v. 8)

If a person refuses God's discipline he is also rejecting Him as his father. Paul writes in 2 Tim. 2:4 that a soldier disciplines himself so that *"he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."* When we commit our lives to Jesus Christ we, by definition, expect and accept His discipline. We depend on it to keep us on His path. Actually, God's faithfulness *requires* Him to discipline us.

<sup>5</sup> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.*

<sup>6</sup> *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6)*

*"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word."* (Ps. 119:67)

*"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes."* (Ps. 119:71)

*"I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me."* (Ps. 119:75)

This truth, this analogy is underscored by stating that if we are unwilling to yield to God (accept discipline) we are not his true child. Salvation in Christ Jesus REQUIRES sacrifice and discipline. They are part and parcel of the relationship. Heb. 6:7-9 speaks of *"ground that drinks the rain...producing (useful) vegetation"*, resulting in a blessing from God. It refers to *"things that accompany salvation"* (v. 9). Discipline is one of those things, because God loves us.

► *Confidence in God can only be validated when trials present the question, "Who will you trust now?" "Trust is the channel through which God's peace flows into you." (Sarah Young). In turn, faith is sharpened.*

### **Sharpening the Saw** (vs. 9-11)

*"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."* (v. 11)

Submitting to God produces His LIFE in me. *"For me to live is Christ..."* (Phil. 1:21). *"For your life is hidden with Christ in God"* (Col. 3:3). *"If any man is in Christ he is a new creature..."* (2 Cor. 5:17). Given this, I must be willing to submit to God when I'm being tested (or disciplined).

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts;*

*And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way."* (Ps. 129:23-24)

God disciplines us for our good, at just the right time. A father who "overdoes" discipline (too much, too long, or wrong method) will exasperate his children or "provoke them to anger" (see Eph. 6:4). But God knows exactly what type and amount of discipline to apply, and what it will take to grow and mature us in Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

A special peace results from being trained by God's discipline. It is the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11) that cannot be produced any other way. I've learned that "pain purifies", boiling away thoughts and attitudes and priorities that I once considered important.

*"And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).*

► *Are you enrolled in God's discipline training class? Cheer up! You'll graduate looking sharp and "useful to the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21).*

### **Group Discussion**

1. Is there something in your life right now that tends to "trip you up" and pull you off course? What's the remedy?
2. What have you learned works for you to "keep you in the light" regularly? (vs. 2-3)
3. What has God used in the past to produce a "harvest of godliness and peace" in your life? (vs. 9-11)

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**NEXT TIME: Lesson 12: FAITH / Reminders – Hebrews 12:12-17**