

A STUDY IN HEBREWS

week 11: Hebrews 12

As we have studied the book of Hebrews, we could come up with a conflicted view of God and His grace. There are moments in the text where God's mercy seems to be magnified. There are other portions of the text that seem harsh and angry. How do we reconcile this? How do we make sense of this? Are these two aspects of God's character, or do we color the Scripture with our own views? Is there a way to live the Christian life that somehow embraces all the aspects we find in the book of Hebrews? This is what we will grapple with this week.

Think back to at least one passage from the book of Hebrews that seemed difficult to grasp or handle. If you are with a group, share it with the group. Take some time to ponder why that text was hard to deal with.

DIGGING INTO THE TEXT:

READ: HEBREWS 12:1-4

The 'great cloud of witnesses' refers to all of the people listed in Hebrews 11- those who set an (imperfect) example of faith. Based on this, what 2 things does the author encourage us to do?

What are some things that hinder us/you?

The text refers to "the sin that so easily entangles" (NIV). Most theologians believe that the author is continuing the point made in chapter 10-that the sin of doubting Jesus is the sin that so easily trips us up in our Christian journey.

How does doubt hinder us from living a life of faith?

What joy was before Jesus that He was willing to endure the pain and shame of the cross (v.2)?

How does considering the persecution Jesus faced help us to persevere?

We all have seasons where we need something to get us going again, to help us persevere, so we don't grow cold in our faith. The author invites us into that in the next part of the passage.

READ: HEBREWS 12:4-7

SCRIPTURE LINK: PROVERBS 12:1, PROVERBS 13:1, JEREMIAH 29:11-14

Why does God discipline his children, and for what purpose?

What does that teach us about the nature of discipline and how we should respond?

Are ALL trials and hardships to be considered discipline?
How do we know whether a specific situation is discipline or not?

*Discipline carries two meanings: it can mean punishment for the purpose of **correction**, but it can also mean training for the purpose of **endurance**. Discipline and hardship hold both current and eternal value for the believer, as they can cause us to draw closer to God, as well as shape us into the people God has created us to be.*

SCRIPTURE LINK: JAMES 1:1-3

How do the words of James resonate with the words of the author of Hebrews?

The idea of perseverance seems to become more crucial the further we get along in our Christian walk. Without this concept of God's discipline leading to a harvest of righteousness, we would easily give up.

The author shares practical ways this can play out, such as living at peace with one another, being holy, and eliminating bitterness. The author then emphasizes that even though God's holiness is so awesome no one can even bear it, that we can approach God without fear, because of Jesus our mediator. We can approach Him with joy, with hope, and with confidence.

READ: HEBREWS 12:25-29

What is the warning here? What is the encouragement?

What does it mean that we are receiving an unshakable kingdom? What are the things that will be shaken away?

What should our response be to this news, according to v.28?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

What are personal implications for how these passages encourage us to live as believers?

What needs to change in your actions, your attitude, your thoughts, your beliefs?

As you move into the rest of your week, think on this:

What does it look like for you to persevere in this particular season of your life?

What prayers might God be inviting you to pray on a regular basis to help you fix your eyes on Jesus?
What do you need to shift or remove in order to make fixing your eyes on Jesus possible?