

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “The Pain and Gain of Discipline” from the “Anchored” sermon series

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-12

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of the Book of Hebrews, we explore the importance of enduring hardships and how God’s discipline proves His love for us. We can find encouragement for enduring in our faith from the example of Jesus.
- Chapter 12 begins with a metaphor of our faith being like a “race”. We see words and phrases such as “throw off everything that hinders” and “let us run with perseverance the race” to help us understand the endurance required to keep the faith.
- In verses 1-3, the Hebrews author tells us that we are “...surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith...” This “huge crowd of witnesses” harkens back to last week’s lesson on the great list of saints who have exemplified faith. Their faith is both an example and an encouragement to us in our journey through life. Their example, as well as the example of Christ motivates and encourages each of us to not “...become weary and give up.” Also, verse 2 speaks of “...fixing our eyes on Jesus...” as a way to stay focused on the goal, as we would in a race or competition to help us endure.
- In verses 4-12, the focus shifts to God’s purpose for our hardships. Specifically, we are to remain obedient to God, even through suffering and hardship. This is the means by which we, as children of God, are perfected. Verse 7 tells us to “Endure hardship as a discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?” It goes on to explain that we are not even considered “legitimate” or true sons and daughters of God if we do not undergo discipline from God.
- Verse 10 says, “They (referring to our parents) disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.” Verse 11 explains that “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- In today's Scripture text, the lesson compares the life of faith to a foot race. The kind of race described is that of a marathon...one of *endurance*.
- The faith journey, according to the author of Hebrews, is a marathon. To compete in a marathon, you have to learn to run with pain. In this case, the early Christians were experiencing great pain and anguish due to their faith.
- If you are going to start a journey...you need to finish! If you finish, you will likely experience pain and discomfort. We must learn to run with pain!
- "Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory." – William Barclay. What cannot be cured must be *endured*!
- Remember from last week, whenever we see a *therefore* in Scripture, it is a call to action!
 - "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...let us run with perseverance the race set before us...looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:1-2)
- Home Field Advantage: playing to a friendly crowd gives us a competitive advantage. Similarly, in the text, we are given images of a great stadium while we run a great race. We must endure the race to win! The stadium is filled with the great saints who are cheering us on in our faith journey. Those surrounding us are there to lift us up!
- If we are going to endure our faith, we must travel light! (See v. 1) Get rid of your distractions, as this is "dead weight" to us in our endurance.
- Endurance also means having laser-focus: "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, *looking to Jesus*." Fix your eyes on Jesus!
- Mental imaging: keeping your mind's eye on the goal! When we begin to second guess our decisions during a difficult time, it is important to think to our goal! This cultivates *discipline*. When we commit ourselves to something, don't quit or give up!
- The heart of endurance, which is a gift of grace, comes to us from God. You can run with pain, when you know that you are surrounded by those "cheering" you on. You can run with pain, when you know you have "homefield advantage". When you throw off the dead weight from the sin that entangles us and fix our eyes on Jesus, you can run with endurance...He is our anchor.
- Our witness will enable someone else to persevere too! We are the spiritual "*therefore*"!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- How can the faith of Jesus help us to endure in our faith?
- In what ways can we maintain, even strengthen, our faith during times of hardship and suffering?
- Read 1 Peter 1:6, 1 Peter 4; and James 1. How do these stories relate to today's Scripture?
- What distractions do you deal with in your life? How will you overcome this?
- How can we "fix our eyes on Jesus" in order to cultivate the focus necessary to endure in our faith?

