

0916 L9-Pioneer and Perfecter of Our Faith

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Pioneer and Perfecter of Our Faith

October 30

Bible Study Guide 9

Bible Background • HEBREWS 12:1–13

Printed Text • Hebrews 12:1–13 Devotional Reading • ISAIAH 53:1–6

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: VALUE discipline in the family, in the congregation, and in other human settings; APPRECIATE the help provided by others who have experienced discipline; and SHARE personal struggles that resulted in a victorious and growing faith.

Keep in Mind

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (from Hebrews 12:1–2).

- [Teaching Tips](#)
- [Bible Text](#)
- [Context](#)
- [Explore](#)

Words You Should Know

A. Author (Hebrews 12:2) *archegos* (Gk.)—One who takes the lead and sets the example; one who is first to use or apply something.

B. Perfecter (v. 2) *teleiotes* (Gk.)—One who executes or completes a task successfully.

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Embracing and Overcoming Trials. As adults, we face many struggles in life. As James 1:2–4 indicates, these trials can make us stronger, wiser, and increase our faith. However, it is difficult to weather these storms without the aid of others—people and, more importantly, God. Faith is what sustains us in difficult times.

A. Pray for clarity and application, for you and your students.

B. Study the companion lesson in the *Precepts for Living*® Personal Study Guide thoroughly in advance.

O—Open the Lesson

A. Begin by having students recall a childhood disciplinary action that resulted in an effective change or lesson learned. Recognize that some might have experienced abuse. Emphasize the difference between abuse and loving

discipline.

B. Introduce today's lesson title and Aim for Change. Pray for students to develop a clear understanding of discipline and its presence and usefulness in our lives as adults.

C. Have students read the Keep in Mind verse and In Focus story.

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Have students read the Focal Verses; The People, Places, and Times; and Background.

C. Use In Depth content and Search the Scriptures to facilitate discussion of the Focal Verses.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. Have the class answer the questions in Discuss the Meaning.

B. Read Lesson in Our Society and have students make observations.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Briefly review the lesson, highlighting the Keep in Mind verse.

B. Read Make It Happen and re-read the Aim for Change aloud.

C. Pray with students that they will be able to recognize God's discipline and help others through what they learn.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: Pioneer and Perfecter of Our Faith

Song: "Take My Life"

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 53:1–6

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

I Know Their Suffering
(Exodus 3:7–10)

TUESDAY

Cry for Help Answered
(Psalm 22:1–5)

WEDNESDAY

By His Bruises We Are Healed
(Isaiah 53:1–6)

THURSDAY

Run the Race to Win

(1 Corinthians 9:24–27)

FRIDAY

Endure Discipline, Share in God's Holiness
(Hebrews 10:35–39)

SATURDAY

You Are Blessed for Enduring Suffering
(James 1:12–16)

SUNDAY

Discipline Yields Peaceful Fruit
(Hebrews 12:1–13)

KJV

Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

NLT

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip

off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

3 Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.

4 After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the LORD's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you.

6 For the LORD disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."

7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?

8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness.

11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

12 So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees.

13 Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

The People, Places, and Times

Hebrews. In Genesis 14:13, Abram (Abraham) is the first person to be called a "Hebrew," and his descendants through Isaac would go on to be known as "Hebrews" (also called Israelites and Jews). The origin of the term is debated. Some scholars believe it is derived from the name Eber, one of Abram's ancestors (Genesis 11:14–17). Still others hold that it comes from the term *ha ibhri* from the Hebrew word *abar*, which means "to cross over." This phrase is used in Genesis to describe Abram "crossing over" the river Euphrates. It is believed that the book of Hebrews was written to a largely Jewish audience that had converted to Christianity some time prior to the writing of the epistle.

Cloud of Witnesses. In chapter 11, the writer of Hebrews provides a brief history of people who demonstrated great faith in God, beginning in Genesis with Abel, and continuing with those who "were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free" (Hebrews 11:35, NLT). These people of the faith make up this large multitude of witnesses, people who believed God and testified to His faithfulness and power. The Greek term used for "witnesses" is *martus* (from which we derive "martyr"), which can be translated as "a spectator, witness, or testifier."

Background

The book of Hebrews has a few unknowns. Origen, a Christian interpreter from the third century, engages in a

debate regarding whether Paul wrote Hebrews. He determines that the style is different but that Paul's theology certainly influenced Hebrews strongly enough to include it in the tradition of Paul, even if only God knows whether or not Paul wrote the document. The first readers are unknown, although it is surmised from the epistle that they were persecuted Jewish Christians. The recipients appear to be familiar with the Old Testament, as it is quoted throughout the letter. They also were likely acquainted with Jewish teachings and rituals, perhaps tempted or coerced to elevate them above faith in Christ. The writer sets forth to establish the supremacy of Christ—speaking of His incarnation, death, priesthood, and His elevation above the angels, Moses, Joshua, and high priests. He then focuses on faith, providing its definition as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, KJV), and goes on to list those from Jewish history who are in the Great Hall of Faith. In so doing, he reminds readers of the necessity of faith in Christ, how “without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (11:6, NIV), and how faith supersedes rituals and sacrifices.

In Depth

1. Be Faithful (Hebrews 12:1–4)

The writer of Hebrews uses an illustration of a race, a common athletic event during Greco-Roman times. There are runners and witnesses. These “witnesses” are examples, though they were not “made perfect” (11:40). They trusted God and lived for Him to the end. Their testimonies encourage others to do the same. The writer exhorts his audience (runners) to “strip off” (i.e., take off excess clothing or weights while running) anything that hinders living faithfully, particularly sin (12:1). Instead of being sidetracked and encumbered, believers should run with endurance by focusing on Christ, the One who founded the Christian faith (v. 2) and created a path forward for those to come. He not only started it but He is the ultimate example—the One who demonstrates how perfect faith looks, and equips us. When the temptation arises to be overwhelmed in the face of trials, the writer encourages believers to not become weary and give up (v. 3), as one would be toward the end of a race. Instead, believers should be motivated by remembering how Christ endured a humiliating and excruciatingly painful death to overcome sin and restore our relationship with God. That was the joy set before Him (v. 2).

2. Be Disciplined (vv. 5–11)

The main focus of this passage is “discipline,” from the Greek word *paideia*, which means “education, training, or correction.” Winning a physical race involves disciplining one's body, abstaining from unhealthy practices, and intentionally engaging in healthy ones. The process is often painful, but necessary. The same is true of spiritual discipline. In this case, the writer reminds these persecuted believers that many trials that may tempt them to give up are actually tools in God's hand to lovingly correct. He quotes Proverbs 3:11–12 to remind them that while such discipline is unpleasant, it is a sign of God's love and indicative of a true relationship as His children. Only loving fathers take the time and effort to educate and train children. Training, correcting, educating, and rebuking are expected of earthly fathers, and they are respected for it. If earthly fathers discipline, how much more discipline should be expected from the heavenly Father whose desire is that we be wholly righteous (living as we ought to live) and experience peace.

3. Be Strong (vv. 12–13)

Because of the examples set forth by the “cloud of witnesses” and Christ, who not only began the faith but perfects it, and the realization that many trials are allowed to make believers more like God, readers are then encouraged to stand firm and be strengthened. Those who continue to believe and trust God in the midst of trials are approved by Him. Again, physical imagery is used of one overcoming weakness to get a firm grasp and footing. However, the purpose of gaining strength and marking out a straight path is not only for the individual's benefit, but also it eventually serves as an example for those who follow after.

Search the Scriptures

1. How can we determine the weights in our lives and the sin that so easily besets us (Hebrews 12:1)?
2. How do we develop an appropriate response to experiencing discipline from God (vv. 4–7)?

Discuss the Meaning

Very rarely is discipline viewed in the context of faith and growth. However Hebrews 12:10 says that God’s discipline is “for our profit.” Create a timeline of your own experiences of God’s discipline. Share with the class how they affected your faith? Your character? Your growth? What lessons can others learn from your example?

Lesson in Our Society

Many people talk about needing to “exercise discipline” or “be disciplined.” However, few people understand or appreciate the process. Discipline involves training, educating, and correcting, and it is accomplished in various ways. It requires effort, love, time, consistency, sacrifice, pain, and a degree of difficulty, but it is necessary in order to experience growth. Our society tends to think in terms of punishment and retaliation—not discipline and redemption. Suffering occurs for various reasons: sometimes it is punitive, sometimes simply because we live in a fallen world, and other times because God wants us to grow. This is good. His example should be followed with our children as well. How does this affect your view and approach to discipline?

Make It Happen

This lesson causes us to re-examine our view of suffering and discipline. Joseph’s tumultuous journey ended with him being second-in-command in Egypt. The faith of Daniel’s friends grew as they experienced God’s deliverance in the furnace and Daniel’s faith grew as he was delivered from the lion’s den. Suffering is painful. But good can come from it. How are you challenged to change your view of suffering? What trials do you have now? Is there anything that needs to change in how you approach discipline in your life? Your children? Pray that God will give you the ability to see what He is doing and faith to endure.

More Light on the Text

Hebrews 12:1–13

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

In this verse, “so great a cloud of witnesses” refers to the people mentioned in chapter 11. Here, the writer is saying that those who have gone before are examples to others of living the life of faith. God has confirmed their faithfulness, and they can be seen as examples of those who endured. Therefore, in light of our inspiring audience, we must rid ourselves of “every weight” and “run with patience.” The Greek word for “patience” is *hupomone* (**hoo-po-mo-NAY**), which is derived from two Greek words: *hupo* (**hoo-PO**), meaning “under,” and *meno* (**MEN-oh**), meaning “to remain.” This paints the picture that by remaining under some trial, we may be molded to fit God’s purposes.

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

To run the race, a person must stay focused on Jesus, as implied here by the use of the Greek word *aphorao* (**ah-foe-RAH-oh**), translated as “looking.” *Aphorao* means “to focus attention, to see something clearly”—namely Jesus. We do so because Jesus is the “author” (Gk. *archegos*, **ar-khay-GOSS**), meaning chief leader. This term was used

for heroes and founders of philosophical schools, as well as those who paved the way for others and were exalted for their efforts. So Jesus is the “pioneer” and the “finisher” (Gk. *teleiotes*, **teh-lay-oh-TACE**), which means “completer” of faith. In other words, His life and death make faith complete. The word “endured” comes from *hupomeno* (Gk. **hoo-poe-MEN-oh**), meaning “to remain or tarry.” Jesus chose to remain on the Cross and bear the shame of crucifixion to save humanity. He focused on the future and finished the work of our redemption, bringing many to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Here, the readers are reminded that although they may have suffered great persecution (Hebrews 10:32–34), none of them has shed blood and died like Jesus did. None had yet become a martyr because of their confession of Jesus as their Messiah or Savior.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son he receiveth.

In verses 5 and 6, the author quotes Proverbs 3:11–12. In these verses, the reader is reminded of the parent-child relationship. Undisciplined children are unloved children. In this instance, the use of the Greek word *paideia* (**pie-DAY-ah**) means “nurturing” or “giving instruction.” The writer is saying that one should not make light of God’s instruction but welcome it as a means of spiritual growth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Christians should view trials as a form of divine discipline. Just as a parent would discipline a child, God deals with the sinner. No wise father or mother would allow his or her children to continue bad behavior without correcting it. Therefore, receiving discipline can be viewed as a sign of God’s fatherly love.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Here, God is called “the Father of spirits” (an expression in the New Testament which occurs only here)—in contrast to the human “fathers of our flesh.” The writer makes a comparison between an earthly father and the heavenly Father—the argument being, if earthly parents discipline us and we respect them for it in the long run, then we should respect our heavenly Father even more.

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Verse 10 points out the difference between human discipline and heaven’s discipline. Our earthly parents discipline us “for a few days,” whereas God’s discipline gives us an eternal benefit. Human discipline is often inconsistent and usually provides a temporary benefit. However, the long-range goal in God’s discipline is that we might be “partakers” of His holiness. Nothing pleases God more than children who grow to emulate Him.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Present discipline seems painful because it is! The purpose of our pain is to produce Christ-like behavior. Sometimes we have to endure painful discipline. The Greek word for “exercised” is *gumnazo* (**goom-NAHD-zoh**), and as used here, it implies exercise of the mind in order to endure persecution. The word is usually used for going to the gym to work out, much as we would today. This physical training was a key part of the *paideia* (**PIE-ee-dee-**

uh) or education a young person was expected to undergo. Here, the author states it is also a key part of the discipline that God has His children undergo, exercising the mind in order to endure persecution so that they can later enjoy the “fruit of righteousness.”

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

These two verses encourage the Hebrew Christians to become strong, and by becoming stronger, they will be able to help even the weakest among them. In the race of faith, they are called to lift up their weak hands and knees. This is likely an allusion to Isaiah 35:3, a prophecy to Israel regarding the inaugurated kingdom of God. Through this, the writer implies that now Jesus’ followers have experienced the inbreaking of the coming kingdom. This inbreaking, which is signified by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is the basis for the believer’s strengthened faith in the present as well as in the future.

The wording of verse 13 might have Proverbs 4:26 in mind. This verse is an exhortation to not stray away from the godly path. The writer of Hebrews says that by following the correct path, those who are already lame may become healed. They will avoid further suffering and spiritual disability.

Say It Correctly

Exhortation. eks-**ZOR**-tay-shun.

Chasteneth. **CHAY**-sen-ith