

# Intimacy with God

## Lesson #4: Intimacy is Deepened by Discipline

### I. God's work in and through us

Hebrews 12:4-11 (this last section of the epistle focuses on the practical business of living out our Christian faith)

#### A. The text:

Vs. 1-3: "Therefore...consider Him."

Consider what Christ has done for us. Note that His suffering had meaning.

Vs. 4: "The struggle" (similar to the strain of a great athletic game)

It's against those who would like to see you abandon your faith.

Vs. 5-6: "Don't forget..."the previous exhortations (see Prov. 3:11-12, Job 5:17)

The common reaction to suffering:

1. Take it lightly
2. Faint from it

Look at 1 Cor. 10:13, Rom. 8:28 and 2 Cor. 12:9

Vs. 7-11: "Discipline"

From the root meaning "to make disciples"

Notice the links or connections outlined in this section:

Vs. 5:11: Suffering and sonship are linked. "Huios" – adult sons, capable of learning and growing.

*"We are moved by the act of God. Omniscience holds no conference. Infinite authority leaves no room for compromise. Eternal love offers no explanations. The Lord expects to be trusted. He disturbs us at will. Human arrangements are disregarded, family ties ignored, business claims but aside. We are never asked if it is convenient." (Enjoying Intimacy with God, p. 97)*

Vs. 5-6: Chastening and education are linked. God's instructions build upon each other.

Vs. 9-10: The behavior of our earthly fathers is linked to the behavior of our heavenly father.

Vs. 11: The rigors of training are linked with the joy of completion. Discipline yields "the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

## B. The application

### 1. The principle of discipline

- a. Keep the example of Christ in mind
- b. Remember only sons (adult sons) are disciplined
- c. Be aware, discipline hurts

### 2. The practice of discipline

#### a. The discipline of darkness

"Land that knows nothing but sunshine becomes a desert. Clouds, storms and darkness must have their place if there is to be fertility and fruitfulness." (See p. 97) Isa. 45:3, Isa. 42:6

#### b. The discipline of disappointment

We ask: Why me? Why this? Why now?

We should ask: What is God making in me that requires this:

#### c. The discipline of delay

Biblical examples:

- 1) Abraham and his son Ismael      Gen. 15 and 16
- 2) Lazarus and his sisters      John 11

### 3. The product of discipline

Heb. 12:10-11 "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 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."

- 1) That we may "share in His holiness"
- 2) That we might see the "peaceful fruit of righteousness"

## II. So what? Our "work" in and through the Holy Spirit

The path to intimacy using the "stepping stones" of the classic Christian disciplines is best described in Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster.

### A. The corporate disciplines of:

1. Confession
2. Worship
3. Guidance
4. Celebration

B. The inward disciplines of:

1. Meditation
2. Prayers
3. Fasting
4. Study

C. The outward disciplines of:

1. Simplicity
2. Solitude
3. Submission
4. Service

*"Dividing the Disciplines into three movements of the Spirit, Foster shows how each of these areas contribute to a balanced spiritual life. The inward Disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting and study offer avenues of personal examination and change.*

*The outward Disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service help prepare us to make the world a better place.*

*The corporate Disciplines of confession, worship, guidance and celebration bring us nearer to one another and to God."*

(Book review on the website [www.prayerfoundation.org](http://www.prayerfoundation.org))

---

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. When you hear the term "discipline" what is your first thought? Is it positive or negative?
2. Which one of the spiritual disciplines seems to move your spiritual life "forward"? Why do you think so?