

Hebrews 12:1-17

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly
the discipline of the Lord,
nor be weary when reproved by him.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are

illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; ¹⁶ that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.



PRAY Pray that we would would “live by faith” (10:38)

READ Read the next passage carefully a couple of times.

Use the **Linking Words Tool** to consider the “therefore” at the start of the passage. How does the exhortation in v1 connect with the mini-biographies of chapter 11? How do they motivate us? What specifically about their example helps?

Use the **Author’s Purpose Tool** to consider v2-3. Jesus is mentioned at many times and in many ways in Hebrews, but why does the preacher mention him *here*? In what different ways does what he did connect with what we must do?

Use the **Vocabulary Tool**. The Greek word translated as “discipline” (v5, v6, v7, v8, v9, v10, v11) doesn’t always carry the negative connotations that the English word can – it’s not necessarily about a telling off, but can just mean that God uses difficult experiences to shape our character.

- Use the **Context Tool** to remind yourself of 5:8. How does this help us to understand what positive role God’s discipline might play?

Look closely at the last eight words of v11. They tell us that discipline doesn’t have a positive effect on everyone, but only on those who are “trained by it”. What’s the *other* possible response to hardship in vv12-17?

Use the **Quotation/Allusion Tool** to look up the meaning of the “root of bitterness” in Deuteronomy 29:16-28. What is the preacher to the Hebrews saying about how one person’s sin can affect others?

Use the **Quotation/Allusion Tool** to look up the story of Esau in Genesis 25:29-34 and 27:35-38. Why has the preacher to the Hebrews joined these two bits of the story together (eclipsing the underhanded actions of Jacob)? What is his warning to a potential Esau?

Author’s Purpose Tool

The biggest question we can ever ask of a passage in the Bible is simply, ‘Why did the author write this?’

Context Tool

Words come within sentences, sentences in paragraphs, paragraphs in chapters, chapters in sections... If you take a text out of context you’re left with a con!

Structure Tool

How has the author broken down his material into sections? How do these sections fit together?

Linking Words Tool

Whenever you see a ‘therefore’ ask what it’s there for! And the same goes for words like ‘because’, ‘so that’, ‘for’ etc.

Parallels Tool

Bible poetry doesn’t tend to rhyme, but says a similar thing twice in different words. Look for how the second phrase builds on the first; pay attention to how the latter develops the former by going a bit further.

Narrator’s Comment Tool

Sometimes the author breaks into his narrative to explain what’s going on (a kind of ‘Pssst, reader, make sure you understand this...’).

Vocabulary Tool

Bible words have Bible meanings. Be alert in case the author is using a familiar word in an unusual way.

Translations Tool

Read the passage in more than one translation, just in case there is a nuance one version has missed.

Tone and Feel Tool

Pay attention to how the point is being made. Is it happy? Frightening? Tragic? How does the author want you to feel about what he is saying?

Repetition Tool

Sometimes the author says something more than once to make sure we don’t miss it. Sometimes the author says something more than once to make sure we don’t miss it.

Quotation/Allusion Tool

When the author quotes or alludes to another part of the Bible, we should look it up in its original context to see what ideas he is picking up on.

Genre Tool

There are many genres in the Bible – e.g. song, historical narrative, genealogy, law. Identifying the genre is important to how we interpret a passage.

Copycat Tool

Is the author holding up one of his characters as someone we should imitate or whose likeness we should avoid?

Bible Timeline Tool

Where is this passage on the Bible timeline? Where am I on the Bible timeline? How do I read this in the light of what has happened in between (e.g. the other side of Jesus)?

The ‘Who am I?’ Tool

Whose shoes in the passage are we supposed to step into? If any!

‘So What?’ Tool

What implications does this have for me? For my church? For an unbeliever?