

## **Discipline and Developing Priorities**

### **Hebrews 12:12-17**

Introduction:

- **God's discipline is to be met with a spirit of joy. (12:12)**
- **God's discipline should enhance our influence. (12:13)**

The cover of a recent Our Daily Bread pictures a leaf-strewn road through the mountains of Vermont. Those who use the road can enjoy a smooth and beautiful ride over difficult terrain. To make this possible, others had to work hard to chart the route, clear the trees, and level the rough spots.

In a way, all Christians are road builders. We are paving the way of faith for the next generation. The faithfulness of our lives may determine how difficult their journey will be. Will they have to repair the damage we have done to the road? Will they be able to build new roads for others to find the way to God?

To be good road builders, we must heed the advice found in God's Word. The author of Hebrews instructed us to live in peace and be holy (12:14), to make sure no one misses the grace of God, and not to permit a root of bitterness to grow and cause trouble (v.15).

Those of us who have come to Jesus owe gratitude to those who have made "straight paths" for our walk of faith (v.13). In turn, we must remember those who will follow us and make straight paths for them. Let us practice our faith in a way that makes it easy for others to come to Jesus and to follow Him. What kind of road builder are you?

—Julie Ackerman Link

Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful.  
May the fire of our devotion light their way.  
May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe,  
And the lives we live inspire them to obey. —Mohr  
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**A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.**

1. **God's Discipline Helps Us to Understand the Things We Should Pursue. (12:14)**
  - **We should pursue peace with all men. (12:14a)**

- **We should pursue a life of holiness. (12:14b)**
  - **Positional Holiness – Salvation**
  - **Practical Holiness – Sanctification in Progress**

## **2. God's Discipline Helps Us to Understand What We Should Avoid. (12:15-17)**

- **We must be diligent to avoid abandoning the grace of God.**
  
- **We must avoid an attitude of bitterness.**

Bitterness is a poison, and if not purged out by prayer, confession, and forgiveness, it does great emotional damage and destroys relationships. A little grudge that festers can become a devastating malignancy of soul. That is why the advice in Hebrews must be diligently heeded. Have you been holding fast to the memory of some insult, some event, some criticism? As Paul put it in Ephesians 4:26, "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." Take the proper steps to resolve the problem right away. Holding a grudge poisons our spiritual lives. With the Holy Spirit's help, let us uproot any bitterness right now. It is amazing how joyful our lives will be when we allow God to purge out the poison of bitterness. --VCG

- **We must avoid all forms of sexual immorality.**
  
- **We must avoid adopting the secular world's lifestyle and materialism.**

**Esau's Example: One whose priorities were terribly misplaced.**

- **Esau made foolish and irrational decisions.**
  
- He sold his birthright for a bowl of soup**

- **Esau's decisions ensured future rejection.**

**--his blessing was denied**

- **Esau's decisions ended in fruitless regret.**

**--he was outside of God's blessings and grace (no repentance)**

Conclusion:

**What are you pursuing this morning?**

**Are you avoiding the things that keep you from pursuing peace and holiness?**

**What decisions do you need to make right now that will last a lifetime?**