



## NG Study Guide: Hebrews 12:1-17 :: “Jesus is A Greater Faith” [1.14.24]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Regularly review the notes at the bottom.*

### The Study

**Thesis:** The goal of the gospel (and of life) is to commit to Jesus, follow Him with growing faith, and become like Him. Thus a gospel-centered life is a life focused on becoming like Jesus.

**Subject:** Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith

**Object:** Be gospel-centered

**Context:** “Hebrews” is written to 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Christians scorned for following Jesus. The letter is written to encourage them to not only continue in the faith, but to thrive in their faith, because of the greatness of Jesus.

#### A. Contemplation of Christ (1-4)

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. <sup>4</sup> You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.*

#### 1. Live for Christ not the flesh or this world (1)

*Therefore* refers to the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter and the icons of the faith who were an example, or *great a cloud of witnesses* to encourage believers in every age. *Let us lay aside every weight* and the *sin which so easily ensnares us*. Sin relates to attitudes and actions contrary to God’s commands. *Every weight* implies living for the flesh or this world, things that impede our relationship with Jesus. These things *ensnare* or catch us in a trap. A community of faith, needs to repent of attitudes and actions contrary to Jesus, grow in Christ, and make Him the master passion of our lives. Think about your life, what might be slowing you down, or ensnaring you? What is the first thing that God brings to mind?

#### 2. Run our race with endurance (1)

*Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us* (1). Again, we see “us” twice. Running implies a pace that is distinct from walking or crawling. Even though some of us run faster or slower, we need to run. We are running a common race of faith (2Timothy 4:7). Each of us has a unique course and challenges (Acts 20:24), but we are all called to have *enduring* faith, and be growing in our relationship with Jesus. The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint.

#### 3. Focus on Jesus (2-4)

*Looking unto Jesus* (2) is the idea of staying focused on Jesus. Consider a marathon where you have started by removing extra weight that would slow you down, and anything that would keep you from finishing well. To avoid pitfalls, hazards, dangerous detours, distractions and discouragement that might tempt you to stop, you need to stay focused on Jesus. Jesus is *the author and finisher of our faith* (2). He is not merely the example for us to

follow, but He is the source of our faith. The work of transforming us to be like Him is completed by Him (Philippians 1:6). Jesus faithfully endured hardship unimaginable to us at the cross for the joy that resulted (2-4). Staying focused on Jesus is the antidote for weary and discouraged souls, and the way to endure like He did (3). Don't give up until the finish line!

## **B. Correction by Christ (5-11)**

*<sup>5</sup> And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; <sup>6</sup> For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." <sup>7</sup> If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? <sup>8</sup> But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. <sup>11</sup> Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

### **1. Be encouraged by God's correction**

Remember the benefits of correction. Part of the reason for discouragement, and resentment is perspective. They had *forgotten* God's purpose of correction to educate and disciple (5, Proverbs 3:11-12). So, rather than *despising* or being *discouraged* by God's correction we should be encouraged or strengthened (5).

The Greek term translated *chastening*, which appears seven times in this section, refers to instruction, correction of mistakes and the training of children and athletes. It can be seen of hardships generally, consequences of rebellion, but also the correction from God's word and Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 16:8). In this case, it could be a reference to the scorn they were experiencing from the unbelieving Jewish culture around them, or perhaps this letter that was correcting them for contemplating departing from Jesus. Why should believers be encouraged in the midst of God's correction?

#### **a. Proves God loves you (6)**

*For whom the LORD loves He chastens.* God loves and cares enough about you that He won't neglect to correct.

#### **b. Proves you're his child (7-8)**

Since you experience God's correction you know you are His child. Every child receives discipline, *for what son is there whom a father does not chasten* (7). *All have become partakers* (8) of God's correction. All of God's sons and daughters, except Jesus, are corrected by Him. God's correction is not condemnation, but a sense of conviction of something wrong in us that needs to be right with God. Those who don't experience God's correction are not His children (8).

#### **c. Produces beauty: holiness and righteousness (9-11)**

Earthly parents correct and their children respect, how much more should we yield to our loving God's correction (9).

Earthly parents correct the best they know how, but your heavenly Father corrects *for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness* (10), or being set-apart to God. God's correction isn't fun or joyful at the time (11), but the by-product *afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it* (11). The terms "holiness" and "righteousness" are daunting by the implication of moral excellence. It may be helpful to contemplate the concepts as "beauty." Everything that is beautiful about Jesus' attitudes and actions is what God wants to produce in us; and he often needs to correct us to get us on course or back on course.

## **C. Course of Christ (12-17)**

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. <sup>14</sup> Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: <sup>15</sup> looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest*

*any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; <sup>16</sup> lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. <sup>17</sup> For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

### **1. Be strengthened (12)**

*Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.*

Jesus' followers should respond to God's correction by getting back on the course of Christ. The imagery is of an athlete who is weary, the arms and legs are no longer in motion. Progress, if any, is imperceptible.

### **2. Be restored (13)**

*and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed (13, Proverbs 4:26).*

The idea is to remove obstacles, *make straight paths* so that people in a community of faith, and the parts of all of our lives that need to be restored rather than getting worse, *lame may not be dislocated*, are healed or restored.

### **3. Pursue peace and holiness (14)**

*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*

Holiness is a right attitude and actions in relationship with God, and is a description of what God considers beauty in a spiritual sense. Without *which no one will see the Lord*. God will continue to reveal more of Himself to those who seek to be right with Him. Jesus declared in the beginning of the Sermon on The Mount, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). We are also to *pursue peace with all people*. Our attitudes and actions towards others should reflect God's beauty. In context, these 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Christians were being scorned by the unbelieving Jewish culture that was the majority culture they occupied. They were to engage them not as enemies to be hated, but as people to be loved so that they too could see the beauty of God. Similarly, in a post-modern, post-Christian culture, Jesus followers are to engage and creates bridges for people to see God and His beauty.

### **4. Live gospel-centered (15-17)**

These are three warnings as seen by the word *lest* signaling something to be prevented, but as positives they are:

#### **a. Gospel-centered lives receive the grace of God (15)**

*Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God (15).*

Look after each other so that no one fails to receive the grace of God. The grace of God is the essence of the gospel, or good news: you are made right with God through faith in Jesus and what He accomplished on the cross. You receive God's forgiveness by faith in Christ's performance not our own morality. You are accepted and loved by God not because of your moral perfection or superiority, but through faith in Jesus, and His perfection and greatness.

**b. Gospel-centered lives prevent bitterness (15)** *lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled (15).* People who have received God's forgiveness and grace should be forgiving and gracious towards others (Ephesians 4:32). Bitterness is a result of unresolved anger and frustration. Pent-up bitterness will ultimately *spring-up, cause trouble*, and many will be *defiled* or harmed. A bitter root produces bitter fruit that no one wants.

#### **c. Gospel-centered lives value God's grace (16-17)**

*Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. <sup>17</sup> For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

*Fornication* is a reference to sexual immorality, and *profane person* is referring to godlessness not profane speech per se. Esau is cited as an example of a profane person. Esau was Abraham's grandson, and Isaac's firstborn which gave him a special inheritance, but he traded his birthright for a bowl of stew (16, Genesis 25:28-34). Later, when he wanted the blessing he could not change what he had done. God will accept us, and forgive us in Christ, but our decisions have consequences. The grace of God is not a license to sin. If you value God's grace, and the gospel

truth that you are forgiven and made alive to God through faith in Christ, you want to be transformed to be like Jesus.

### Study Guide Qs

**Q1 Contemplate something you recently learned or rediscovered about Jesus that positively impacted your spiritual growth. What was it, where in the Bible do you find it, and how did it impact your life?**

**Q2. Imagine your life was more gospel-centered. What might some of the benefits be?**

**Q3. What might be some correction/changes in your life that Jesus may be leading?**

**Q4. What might be some intentional steps to move forward in becoming more gospel-centered?**

#### **“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. As you contemplate the sin and weight that so easily ensnares (v.1) in your own life what did God reveal?**

**2. Are there some additional intentional steps to move forward in becoming more gospel-centered? Who can you work with to move forward?**

#### **Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:**

**1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**

**2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

#### **Disciples who make disciples:**

**1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?**

**2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:**

**Consider attending the School of Discipleship (SoD) or encouraging someone you know to do so.**

#### **Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

#### **Notes:**

**1. Preparation and participation:** Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

**2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?**

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

**3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

**4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better.** As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

**5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples.** Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.