Intro

* + \*transition from *song*…
  + Sd **Fixing Our Hearts on Jeus** ///
  + \*discipline illustration
  + Our passage talks about what it looks like to **Enduring Discipline from Our Heavenly Father**…
    - Sd

Text

* + *Hebrews 12:3-17 –* ***3****For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* ***4****You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;****5****and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him;* ***6****for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”* ***7****It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?****8****But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.****9****Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?****10****For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.****11****All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.* ***12****Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,****13****and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.* ***14****Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.****15****See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;****16****that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.****17****For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.*
  + This text covers a whole lot – it switches between 3 primary metaphors (horticultural, paternal, & athletic), along with several related, yet distinct concepts
    - We could spend hours on this passage and still fail to do it justice
      * So, for the sake of refining our focus, we’ll narrow in on the concept of *discipline*, which covers most of what we read
        + Typically, we walk through a text verse-by-verse to explain its meaning, but we’ll be approaching our portion a bit differently this morning

Looking through the lens of *divine discipline*, we’ll ask several common questions regarding this difficult concept that our text, as a whole, answers

* + - So, from our passage, we see **4 questions to clarify and encourage faithful endurance under your Heavenly Father’s discipline**
      * The first questions our passage answers is…

**I. What Is the Discipline of The Lord?**

* Every time a Christian suffers – is it divine discipline? (NO)
  + There are MANY reasons why a Christian may face hardship or loss
    - Perhaps they are being *persecuted* for their faith (\*explain?)
      * At times, we face *consequences of living in a fallen world* (\*not every sore joint is an act of discipline)
        + Other times, we feel the *natural results of our sin* (laziness will likely lead to a poor grade, gluttony will likely lead to health issues, selfishness will likely lead to broken relationships)

And don’t forget, our battle is not with flesh & blood, but spiritual powers & principalities (\*we face attacks from the enemy)

* + - While each scenario MAY RESULT in the Lord disciplining us, it’s important to remember: suffering does not ALWAYS equal discipline (\*repeat)
      * We’ll talk in a bit about what can go wrong when someone believes all suffering is a result of discipline
  + So how do we know when the Lord is disciplining us?
    - Our text talks about it in some helpful ways – distinctions that help us discern IF we are facing God’s discipline, and if so, how to endure it RIGHTLY
      * First, we see that…
* **A. It is God’s purposeful providence to produce holy character in his children. (vv.9-11)**
  + Passages like 2 Timothy 3 and James 1 teach us that enduring hardship will lead to godly character
    - This is what we could call “indirect discipline,” or God’s use of life’s difficulties to build godly character in His children
      * This is like the parent that uses the unforeseen tragedy as an opportunity to instruct His children
* **Hebrews 12:9-11 – Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**
  + While the first part of that passage is more corrective/instructive (which we’ll talk about in a minute), the latter part speaks about discipline in that broader sense
    - When we face unpleasant seasons of life, it may not be a result of our own sin or folly, but the *indirect discipline* of the Lord can teach us how to grow in our likeness to Jesus
      * When our health fails, or relationships are a mess, or our job is difficult – those are times when God grows those who look to Him
        + Here’s what’s true about hardships: **When we look to Him unceasingly, we look like Him increasingly**

\*explain?

A child that neglects the instruction of his father in trying times will miss an opportunity to learn – so it is with us in the tests of life

* + The next two ways our text talks about discipline are less broad and quite a bit more specific
    - We see that divine discipline…
* **B. It is corrective discipline that involves consequences for sin and foolishness. (vv.5-6)**
  + Unlike the “indirect discipline” that Scripture talks about, this is “direct discipline”
    - In other words, it can be traced back to decisions we made that God is seeking to address
      * More specifically, this type of correction deals with our SIN or FOLLY
* **Hebrews 12:5-6 – … you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”**
  + Let me take a moment to clarify: while all times of hardship can be used to grow in godliness, not all suffering is a result of the *direct discipline* of the Lord
    - This passage is taken from two OT portions, Proverbs 3:11-12, and Job 5:17
      * Here’s what the Job passage says…
  + **Job 5:17-18 – Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal.**
    - What’s significant about Job’s suffering, as recounted in the Book of Job? (\*context + conclusion (friends thought it was from sin & they were wrong))
      * That’s why it’s important to not *automatically assume* that someone’s suffering can be directly tied back to their sin or folly – it may NOT be the case (\*working with a fam who lost their child)
      * This goes to show – not ALL instances of suffering stem from God’s direct discipline
        + …but some seasons of suffering DO!
    - We see this in King David’s life (\*sin with Bathsheba – he *does* lose his son as a result (God tells him) but then, the rest of his reign is hard)
      * So how do I know if I’m facing the direct discipline of the Lord?

Here are some diagnostic questions that can help:

* + - * + 1) *Can I trace the hardship I’m facing back to my own sin?*

\*hard marriage for the husband caught in sexual sin

\*heart issues for the person given over to anxiety

* + - * + 2) *Can I trace the hardship directly back to my own foolishness?*

\*tired because I stayed up all night playing video games

\*out of resources because I spent them foolishly

Now, you could argue that each of these *could also* be a natural consequence of sin or folly

That’s why it’s important to ask…

* + - * + 3) *Is it paired with the conviction of the Holy Spirit?*

This won’t be present for the illegitimate child

They’ll wonder how to still do what they want to do without facing natural consequences

The child of God under His discipline will be under the conviction of the Holy Spirit – as David was, according to Ps 32 – and have an entirely different mentality

The legitimate child will not wonder how to AVOID the consequences, but will rightly perceive it to be *discipline*, and will *learn from the consequences*

We see this in our own parenting as well!

Especially if you have believing and unbelieving children – those who have the Spirit will (imperfectly) seek to change the behavior that caused the consequences

Those who do not have the Spirit, on the whole, will seek to learn how to avoid the *consequences*

* + - We also see that divine discipline…
* **C. It is instructive, positive training for growth. (vv.5-6)**
  + The passage we just referenced brings about this angle of discipline as well…
* **Hebrews 12:5-6 – … you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”**
  + Again, this mainly relates to the direct discipline of the Lord for those who are caught up in folly
    - Speaking now to the *nature* of divine discipline…
* **D. It is temporarily painful (v.11)**
  + Every man, woman, and child knows this to be the case:
* **Hebrews 12:11 – All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**
  + Here’s a hard truth: no one likes being disciplined, and no one likes being around a child who isn’t…
    - The way Brent & Janet Aucoin have described the nature of discipline has been helpful for me in my own discipline, as well as when I need to discipline my children (\*giving a taste of the road they’ve chosen)
      * Discipline is unpleasant because the course of action we’ve chosen is EVEN MORE unpleasant
        + The child who never receives discipline is never given that taste of the road they’ve chosen

That’s why scripture says…

* + - **Proverbs 13:24 – He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.**
      * When we’re being disciplined, God allows that sorrow into our life *because He loves us*
        + (\*horticultural illustration of *pruning* – c.f., John 15)

What does love feel like?

In the words of Def Leppard, sometimes love bites…

* + The next question our text answers is pretty straightforward, if not difficult…

**II. Who Receives the Discipline of The Lord?**

* + Not everyone on the face of the earth feels the direct discipline of God
    - Just like I never directly discipline a child that is not my own…
* **A. Only genuine believers = true children of God. (vv.5-8)**
  + …receive His discipline
    - I’ve quoted this passage a number of times already, but it goes on to provide the answer to our question:
* **Hebrews 12:5-8 – … you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**
  + It’s actually a *very scary thing* to be without discipline from God
    - If you look back over the last year of life, and cannot point to any time when you’ve received the discipline of the Lord, it can only mean one of 2 things:
      * 1) you’re a child of God who hasn’t sinned or done anything foolish in the past year, or
      * 2) you’re not a child of God…
        + Let me help you out: it’s not #1
  + And I don’t mean to make light of such a heavily implicated state of being – if you’re not a genuine child of God, that’s a HUGE problem – the biggest, in fact
    - But the good news is, that can change today (\*gospel + invitation (God won us into His family by sending His Son – adoption into His family simply looks like accepting the Son))
      * So only genuine children receive discipline, and…
* **B. Receiving the Lord’s discipline means willingly submitting yourself to His discipline. (vv.9-11)**
  + Discipline requires submission
    - Just like MY discipline will only be effective if my children submit to it, we see the same with our heavenly father
* **Hebrews 12:9-11 – Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.**
  + Parents: our discipline is imperfect
    - Our passage says two things about it: it was only for a short time and carried out as it seemed best to us
      * In other words, you and I are limited by TIME and WISDOM
        + God has no such limitations
    - His discipline is described as (1) for our good, and (2) done that we may share His holiness
      * In other words, He’s perfect in *wisdom* (He knows exactly what will benefit us for our good) and perfect in *purpose* (He’s never self-seeking, but makes us more like Him)
        + We can submit to His discipline, because we can perfectly trust Him!
  + So direct discipline of the Lord can be traced back to our own sin/folly and is paired with the conviction of the Spirit
    - And only genuine believers (i.e., those who HAVE the Sirit) receive His discipline
  + The third question our passage addresses is…

**III. What Do We Risk When We Reject the Discipline of The Lord?**

* + We’ve already discussed this implication, but it’s worth repeating
* **A. You prove to be an illegitimate son. (v.8)**
  + …if you never see the discipline of the Lord
* **Hebrews 12:8 – But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.**
  + This is less about the *rejection* of discipline, and more about the *absence* of it
    - But for those who reject the discipline of the Lord, there is a terrifying warning towards the end of our passage…
* **B. You follow in the footsteps of Esau. (vv.15-17)**
  + What was the deal with Esau? (\*twin son of Isaac, favored by Dad, impulsive and impetuous, *not* elected to carry on the promise)
    - Here’s what our passage goes on to say…
* **Hebrews 12:15-17 – See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.**
  + There are a lot of theological implications to this passage—which time doesn’t allow us to exhaustively draw out
    - But let’s look to the implications of those who mishandle the discipline of the Lord
      * According to the end of v 11, what can a person expect who submits to the Lord’s discipline (the peaceful fruit of righteousness)
        + But what can someone who rejects his discipline expect, according to the end of v 15? (root of bitterness)
      * What’s the difference?
        + It’s all about *how* the Lord’s discipline is handled in a person’s heart

It can either produce a root of bitterness or the fruit of righteousness

* + - Let me state it in the broadest of terms: when we go through the discipline of the Lord, we can have one of two mentalities (\*explain while clicking through):
      * **1) God loves me, how can I grow in ways He wants?**
        + **Produces: the fruit of righteousness**
      * **2) God hates me, how can I get what I want?**
        + **Produces: a root of bitterness**

\*if time: example of John Mark

\*if time: expound on example of Esau

Two may face the same set of circumstances, but HOW they navigate through a trial will make all the difference

* + - And far more serious than a root of bitterness – when you reject divine discipline…
* **C. You won’t see the Lord. (v.14)**
  + Verse 14 describes those who are legitimate children of the Lord
* **Hebrews 12:14 – Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.**
  + Simply put: sanctification is the Father’s process of making us look more like His Son
    - One of the tools in His toolbox to accomplish this end is *divine discipline*
      * Once again, if that’s not present in your life (i.e., you’re not looking more like Jesus), then there’s good reason to believe you’re not a part of His family
        + But if you are, then pursue peace, which is the Preacher’s way of saying “get along with all your siblings!”
    - And that ties into the final question our passage answers regarding divine discipline:

**IV. What Does It Look Like to be Subject to the discipline of The Lord?**

* + Those who are determined to look to God in discipline will also…
* **A. Encourage each other and strengthen each other to endure under discipline. (vv.12-14)**
  + There are a lot of imperatives in this passage (\*if time, explain: (1-11: 4 (ref) & 5 (auth) | 12:3-17: 2 (ref) & 4 (auth) + 1 participle functioning as an imperative (ἐπισκοποῦντες))
    - When we get to vv 12-14, those imperatives are plural – in other words, it ties in with the “one anothers” of Scripture…
* **Hebrews 12:12-14 – Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.**
  + Here, the preacher revisits the athletic illustration that began the chapter (\*12:1-2)
    - So picture each of us as runners in the arena of this race of faith
      * Our primary goal is to run the race with eyes set on Jesus, casting aside encumbrances and sin
        + But we are ALSO called to run together and help one another – this includes helping other navigate divine discipline
    - Imagine you’re a track and field trainer, and you’re working with a sprinter
      * \*develop illustration w/ poor running habit (feet land on balls/toes) that will cause injury if persistent vs. the hard work of *correcting* a running form (feet landing midfoot)
        + Our spiritual walk can be like this

God may be disciplining a brother or sister regarding a pattern of sin/folly, and the Lord taps you in as a “trainer”

You have the privilege of walking alongside him/her, mapping a straight path so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed

* + - * And there’s two sides to that coin – will you be a selfless trainer, AND will you be a humble athlete? (\*explain?)
        + Verse 4 intensifies the matter –
    - **Hebrews 12:4 – You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin…** 
      * How hard are we expected to labor in the discipline of the Lord
        + AT LEAST as hard as Christ did
  + Because this entire passage begins with the most important context – we’re called to…
* **B. Consider Jesus’ endurance (v.3)**
  + We cannot grow in Christlikeness without knowing Christ
* **Hebrews 12:3 – For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**
  + Christ shed His blood for us – and why did He have to do this? (b/c of our sin)
    - While the text is *certainly* not calling for us to harm ourselves in any way (which is the practice of the godless pagans in the OT) – it IS carrying on the athletic metaphor through a gospel lens
      * If Jesus was willing to suffer for sins that were not His own, why would we not suffer in striving *against* sins that ARE our own?
    - But it’s important to understand the endurance of Christ in a *finished* sense, rather than as attainable standard
      * You and I need a Savior, and Jesus *alone* was able to accomplish the work of salvation
        + When we understand this point, the endurance of Christ allows us to “not grow weary and lose heart”

Even in our own striving against sin while under the discipline of the Lord – Christ is our primary Encourager (\*explain further)

* + - And remember – when we are subjuct to the discipline of the Lord…
* **C. It produces holy character and a peaceful fruit of righteousness. (vv.10-11,14)**
* **Hebrews 12:10-11, 14 – For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. ... Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.**
  + I recognize this has been a harder message
    - But I hope genuine brothers and sisters are encouraged – God intends to make us look more like Him through hardship!
      * Nothing is wasted in His family
        + He poured out all wrath that was due us upon His Son on the cross – therefore, no hardship is punishment, but *purposeful*
    - Sometimes it’s indirect discipline – God training us in a way that’s not related to our own sin or foolishness – other times, it IS direct discipline
  + Either way, we can share His holiness and grow in the peaceful fruit of righteousness

Conclusion

* + \*tie back into illustration