



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
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Good Shepherd Church - February 12, 2012

Sermon Title: An Aspect of Love and Care

Sermon Text: Hebrews 12.4-11

Related Texts: Proverbs 3.1-12; 2 Samuel 12.1-10

## I. Start It – Connecting With One Another

In what ways did your parent(s) discipline you as a child? If you are or have been a parent, have you disciplined your children this same way?

## II. Introduction

The writer of Hebrews expresses a true pastor's heart as effort is made to encourage the Hebrew Christians to whom it is addressed. These followers of Jesus have been struggling in the face of opposition, have grown weary and discouraged, and are ready to give up on the journey of faith they are on. The encouragement begins with the call to "run with perseverance the race marked out for you" (Hebrews 12.1-3), stripping off everything that would hinder and focusing on Jesus who endured tremendous opposition, who endured the cross. The writer/pastor is aware that there will be even greater opposition and persecution ahead and now deals with the value of God's discipline. That discipline is shown to be an aspect of God's great love and care.

## III. Study the Text – Read Through Hebrews 12.4-11

- 1) Remember that the immediate context for his passage is the admonition to "run with perseverance the race marked out for you..." and doing so by considering "him who endured opposition from sinful people." When we come to verse 4 the author continues the admonition to persevere.
  - a. "In your struggle against sin..." What "sin" do you think this refers to? Is it apostasy or unfaithfulness or some other sin?
  - b. What is suggested by the phrase "you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood?" Is there more severe suffering to come at a later date or is it the degree to which they have struggled that is in view here?
- 2) Verses 5 and 6 develop a "word of encouragement that addresses you as sons." The author quotes Proverbs 3.11-12.

a. How does the Lord's discipline serve as encouragement? How is being a child of God ("sons" should be seen as meaning sons and daughters or children) related to being disciplined by God? How is the discipline of God related to the love of God?

b. Verse 6 can be confusing because of the word "punishes" found in the second phrase.

Literally the Greek word translates "beat with a whip." The NIV translates it "punishes."

So, does God blatantly punish his children or does God prod us on - as we would say "whip us into shape"?

Note: These verses speak of God's love and discipline which is an aspect of that love. There is no denying God disciplines us through events and interactions with others. Such discipline stems from God's love and care that seek to strengthen our faith, shape us into the likeness of Jesus, and enable us to live by faith. For the Hebrews who were soon to experience even greater persecution, such discipline would equip them to stand firm - even to the point of shedding of blood. It is inconsistent with all we know about God to think that God deliberately punishes his children.

3) Read through 2 Samuel 12.1-10.

a. How did God use Nathan to rebuke and discipline David?

b. What qualities about Nathan do you see that made him an effective "rebuker"?

c. How does Nathan reflect God's love?

4) Look through Hebrews 11.7-10. What is the author's argument here?

a. How is God's discipline compared to that of a human parent?

b. How is God's discipline unlike that of a human parent?

c. According to verses 10 and 11, what is the result of God's discipline in our lives?

#### IV. Apply It – Reflect and Respond

1) Reflect on the ways God has "disciplined" you through other people, the words of scripture, the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, and various events in your life. How have these things corrected you? Shaped you? Transformed you? Encouraged you?

2) In difficulty, discouraging events, direct rebukes, corrections, even heartache, God is more concerned about our being faithful and shaped into Christ-likeness than merely happy and comfortable. Do you agree with this?

- 3) Human parents are far from perfect - ours and our children's. Reflect on God being your heavenly parent. How are you encouraged by knowing God's discipline is perfect and that God's love for you is boundless?

It may come as a shock to many Christians to discover that there lies ahead of them a life in which God, precisely because he is treating us as sons and daughters, will refuse to spoil us or ignore us, will refuse to let us get away for ever with rebellion or folly, with sin or stupidity. God has his ways of alerting his children to the fact that they should either pause and think again, or turn around and go in the opposite direction, or get down on their knees and repent. ...when we find ourselves thwarted or disappointed, opposed or vilified, or even subject to physical abuse and violence, we may in faith be able to hear the gentle voice of the Father urging us to follow him more closely, to trust him more fully, to love him more deeply.

N. T. Wright