

Hebrews 12:12-17

by Don McClure

The book of Hebrews teaches us the importance of discipline in the Christian life, and how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Duration: 44:37

Scripture: Hebrews 12:12

Topics: "Discipline", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

Don McClure emphasizes the importance of discipline in the Christian life, using the metaphor of a marathon runner to illustrate the need for perseverance and focus on Jesus as the ultimate goal. He discusses how undisciplined living leads to chaos and broken relationships, while a disciplined life fosters maturity and stability. McClure encourages believers to strengthen their faith, pursue peace and holiness, and support one another in their spiritual journeys. He highlights that true success in life comes from enduring through challenges and maintaining a steadfast commitment to God. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper relationship with God, one that is cultivated through discipline and a focus on His presence.

Transcript

I don't know if you ever heard the story of the fellow. He went back to his college alumni, I mean back to his college, his university for their big homecoming game that they always had every year and as he came back to the homecoming football game, though he didn't have a ticket and by the time he got a ticket, seemed to have the worst seat in the entire stadium. He was down in the far end of the end zone, up in the nosebleed section and really terrible seats and he's looking through his binoculars trying to follow his football game and just terrible seats at the end but he found himself looking around and he noticed on the 50 yard line that there was this seat that nobody was sitting in.

Right, the best seat seemingly in the house all through first quarter, nobody's there. Second quarter, nobody shows up and he just thinks, I wonder if somebody didn't come and so he just kinda decides at halftime, he goes down and he works his way around and he comes and he finds the seat and he goes over and he asks, well, he says, anybody sitting here? And the guy says, no, he says, you can have it. And he says, actually, it's my wife's seat but we fell in love, met here in school and got married and all through the years we've had season tickets, came to every game for the last 40 years and he says, but well, my wife died.

And he said, so you're welcome to the seat. And he said, well, thanks. But he's kinda, you know, grasping for some words to think and just he's so touched by this and he turns to the fellow and he said, well, he said, well, thanks so much.

He said, but he says, you know, with, he says, a seat like this, don't you have like other friends or relatives or brothers or sisters or your children that, you know, would like to be at the game here with you, you know, for this, you know, and that they didn't come and he says, well, as a matter of fact, I asked all of them if they'd like to but they all chose to go to my wife's funeral instead. And, but, you know, it's interesting in life on how so many times we have these commitments, we have these relationships that get a little distorted sometimes. The priorities, the disciplines of life can get us messed up and people tend to look at us and we ought to look at ourself and say, you know, something's out of whack.

Something is not right here. And the disciplines, the priorities of our life, the way they ought to be, something's gotta be worked on. And, you know, that's what the book of Hebrews is very, very much about.

It's wanting to teach us the disciplines, the priorities, the responsibilities of a life. And it seems like today we live in a world that is entirely undisciplined. It's something that's happened so gradually, I don't know that we ever notice it but those of us that have been around more than a generation, you look back and when we were kids and growing up, I mean, it was an entirely different world but today it's almost, you turn on the TV and you can get a little idea of what's, how weird the world is.

You see these, I haven't seen it but I've seen little clips of it. Like this, I think it's called Nanny 911 or something where they've got this nanny for hire who goes into these bizarre homes where the kids are in absolute calamity and rebellion and doing these crazy things and the whole world's watching. You know, how do I discipline my children? What do I do? What's wrong with my home? You know, this is my house, you know, we all seem to know families like that and we're just inundated with all of these things, these programs, I mean, Jerry Springer, you know, these things of bringing on relationships and having people, we need to help you guys work out your relationships while they're cussing each other out, throwing chairs at each other on the set, you know, entirely bizarre, crazy lives and we've got Oprah and we've got Dr. Laura and we got Dr. Phil and we got all of these people helping people work out their relationships in life.

It's like the whole world today is in therapy. The whole world seems to be somehow or another looking for counseling today, trying to find somebody, give us direction, give us some counsel. How do we work out all these unresolved relationships and problems in our life? And we're so crazy today.

It seems like today's success in this world almost, when you've raised your children, if you're successful at raising your children, your children are now independent enough they can afford their own counselor, their own psychiatrist, you know, or something, wow, my kids finally got to the place they can afford their own, you know, because our lives are so undisciplined. It's crazy. And yet this is the world in which we seem to live in.

In the book of Hebrews, is one there, if you were with us for the last study, basically it's telling us that the only hope in life is discipline. The doorway between immaturity and maturity is the door of discipline. The doorway that goes between carnality and spirituality, the doorway seemingly that is gonna take us anywhere in this life at all is gonna be the doorway, you know, of discipline.

How do I grow? How do I get my priorities right? How do I stabilize a relationship? How do I live in a way that's gonna succeed? And the key word, the doorway through which all of these happen are discipline. That's why in our previous study, you may recall that the writer of Hebrews told us that the responsibility of a father is to discipline his children. He says, otherwise you're illegitimate children.

You have no father at all. And he says, and God is going to discipline us or else we aren't really his children. And there has to be something where a Christian comes to grips with the fact, if I am going to be mature, if I wanna be solid, if I wanna have a long-term abiding relationships that will succeed, the key to it is something has happened where I have learned discipline.

I have learned there through the issues of life. I wanted to go from immaturity to maturity. I wanna go from selfishness to care and love and having better priorities in life.

And it is something there where somebody has got to learn the word discipline. And it's a long-term sort of a thing. You see, the Christian life, as far as the Bible is concerned, of course, it's not a hundred yard dash.

It's not a sprint. It's not just something you just kind of do now and give it your all. And then sit down and go do something else.

Essentially, the Christian life, it's a walk. It's a race. It's a marathon.

It is something that goes on all the way through our life entirely within our life. It is something there that somebody comes to the place that they realize that in this life, from now until the Lord comes for me, until I breathe my last breath, I'm gonna go through all sorts of terrain in the race, in the walk, in the marathon of the Christian life and wanting to grow in it. There's gonna be valleys.

There's gonna be mountains. There'll be the occasional wonderful, beautiful green pasture, and there's still waters in the running rivers, but there's gonna be daytime, and there's gonna be nighttime, and there's gonna be scorching heat and valleys that'll sap every bit of strength out of me. There's gonna be the cool, refreshing waters.

There'll be sometimes the absolute freezing, cold, white-out snow storms where I don't even know where I'm at and can hardly feel my own senses. There'll be times within my life where I'll feel absolutely alone and in a barren and an empty place, and there'll be times where I'm almost claustrophobic with people around, but the issue in the Christian life is the disciplines. How do I handle every one of the experiences of life, every one of the places of life, every one of the burdens and the struggles of life? We've got to realize there that the person is going to succeed.

The person is gonna have a life that one day they'll look back at the journey. They will have found the presence of Christ in virtually every one of these. They'll have found him in his presence in his refreshing life.

He can refresh a soul in a dry and parched land. They'll find there that he can take us up and we can mount up with wings of eagles when we've got a mountain to climb that is way beyond our ability to endure it. All the struggles and the burdens, all the dryness, all the heat, all the coldness, all the emptiness, but in each experience of life, as the journey goes on, we have learned to live and to walk with him, and we found him sufficient in all of these things.

So often we have this tendency, we want the beautiful mountains of Mount Hermon where the dew in the morning dew and one of the most beautiful places that there were around the land of Israel there which is in the cedars of Lebanon or someplace that were so beautiful and so wonderful, and we wanna park there, we wanna live there, but the whole issue of life is, Lord, I wanna find you in every environment, every place, it's a race, it's a run, it's a marathon. That's the person that when they begin to long for that, when they begin to realize there that it's a journey, it's a life, and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. I don't wanna know any one individual part.

I wanna experience it all. I wanna have been and found your sufficiency in and through all of the events and the struggles and the burdens and the heartaches of life. And here is the, I believe the writer of Hebrews would want us to know when he's telling us here the disciplines that there are of life and the issues that there are in life, of learning, all of them.

It's interesting, back in Isaiah, Isaiah writes in chapter 40 in a verse that many people know well, but he says, hast thou not known, hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, he fainteth not, neither is weary. There is no searching of his understandings. He gives power to the strength and to them that have no might, he increases strength.

For even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall renew their strength. They'll mount up with wings as eagles. They'll run and not be weary.

They will walk and not faint. And here Isaiah says, through the issues of life, when there is that mountain that you've got to climb, there is that dash that you've got to run, there is the difficulty there, he'll give you that for the moment that you need there, the mount up with wings as eagles. He'll give you that ability when there's something you just got to endure that you just run through, you just grit your teeth and God help me, lead me through this time in this phase in my life.

He'll give you there that you won't be weary. But the ultimate thing in the Christian life, I suppose, is when somebody can just walk. That's one of the hardest things.

There's a momentary thrill of this and getting through this. But the ultimate thing is when somebody can just walk and not faint. For the most, the greater part of the Christian life is just the pure stamina of day after day after day, doing the walk, keeping the pace, going on with whatever it is that God has.

There's the thrill of the mountains and there's the bringing us through these things. But when somebody just day by day, teach me Lord to stay on course. There's where the discipline comes in.

Many people can find the momentary thing when crisis comes and all the pressure is on and it's do or die somehow or another. Okay, they can mount up for a moment. They can do something for a time.

They can fly off with the like the wings of an eagle in a sense. They can sing and they can dance and they can preach and they can share. But can they walk and not faint? Can they just do what put one foot in another and do what it is that God would have them to do.

And this is what he's the phase and when he gets here in this portion of Hebrews, he says, I want to teach you the discipline of somebody that can walk. Somebody there that can get into the marathon essentially and stay in it. For here in verse 12, he tells us he says, therefore, after the previous study that we're in, the discipline, will you be disciplined? Will you receive the disciplines of life? Do you wanna be disciplined? Do

you wanna have these relationships that would live and be strong? Your relationship with God, your relationships with one another and do you receive the discipline that'll help you grow and handle and mature into these? And we say, yes.

And if we truly say that, he says, all right, here's the discipline you got to learn. For in verse 12, he says, therefore, strengthen the hands which hang down on the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet. So that which is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed.

He says the first thing, the first aspect of essentially learning discipline, they're wanting just to have somebody that's gonna be in it for the marathon, gonna stay in it. As here he comes along and he gives us, here's some exhortation, the first and very one of them all, he says, strengthen the hands that hang down in the feeble knees. And here is something is this is just simply a metaphor from a race, a metaphor essentially from a marathon runner, not a sprint.

Somebody there that's running the hundred yard dash or running the 440. They don't have these things to where their hands are hanging down and their knees are feeble. Somebody running the short race, it's just all out everything you got for that hundred yards and you're really, you're exhausted in one cent, but yet your body hasn't been strained at all, ultimately.

But the marathon runner, one of the characteristics that happens to somebody that's in it for the endurance, the discipline that they will learn is that they'll learn there to strengthen the hands which hang down in the feeble knees after you've run. I used to be a runner, believe it or not, I used to do a lot of it. I could go, I'd run and I'd love to, I'd go for miles and miles and miles.

When I was in college, oftentimes at the end of the day, I'd go out and I'd run eight miles at the end of the day and sleep like a baby. But I just, I loved running. I just got into it.

And for years and years, I continued running. But one of the things that happens when you're a runner is that after you've run for a while, you know, in the wearing and the exhaustion begins to come in, just keeping your hands up. Your hands, if you've ever watched like a marathon, you see these runners that come in, they can't even hold their hands up.

They're just kind of, you know, going through the last motions when everything's been sapped down out of them. And one of the things about a runner is that if you've ever run, one of the key things about running is literally being able to keep your hands up because there's something about a runner and keeping his hands up that when he's running, for one thing, having their hands up helps you maintain rhythm. It helps you keep stride.

And there's also something that your upper body actually helps your lower body because when your hands are going back and forth, they actually help throw your body into the next step. It's like the whole rest of the body is helping the legs in a sense by one of them's lifting up and coming back and they're going back and they're going forward. What is occurring is that the body is helping the rest of its parts in a sense.

He says, you've got to strengthen those hands that tend to lie, that tend to tire, tend to get down. And he says, the next thing that also happens there if you're a runner is not only your hands get tired, but your knees get feeble. Your knees, I mean, they're great things, but after you've run with them a while, they just start wiggling.

They just start wobbling. You ever see a runner coming in at the end and it's like he's some sort of a wobbly thing, as he's just, his knees are just, where are they going? They're wobbling all over because it's just been pushed to the hilt. And here he tells us that one of the great keys to a runner, there is somebody that's going to be disciplined is that they're realizing one of the things, there will be times in my life I'm going to be pushed to the hilt.

There are going to be times in my life where it's going to require everything that is in me to stay in the race. And they realize that. That's part of the thing.

That's part of the program. That's part of the cost. But the key to it as well, one of the things about anybody that's a runner, one of the things that you always do, particularly if you're a distance runner, is you're looking for a goal constantly.

That's why earlier in the chapter, he tells us, he says, one of the great keys, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, all the way through Jesus's life. He had a goal in mind. He was looking there.

And there's somebody there that is, as I am looking unto Jesus Christ, I'm looking at somebody, he despised the shame. I mean, he's somebody that despised the shame. He didn't care about anything.

All he saw was the end result, dying on the cross, giving himself for us, pouring out his blood, redeeming us, forgiving our sins, and then going home and setting down in heaven. He had an objective. And so also a person that you end up, when you go through the Bible and you see these characters that we looked at in Hebrews 11, the ones that finished well, the ones that ended up where their lives were lived and they were victorious.

They ran the race and they lived a life that was a glorious human experience. They all had a goal. They all had something that they looked at that there when everything else, where they just, that they could despise the shame and set aside this and not care about all the trials and difficulties.

They just simply look, this is what God has for me. And he says, that's something there that when you have that goal, it encourages you. When you have something you set your eyes on.

And I was a kid not far from our home, there was this place we'd go down to periodically and rent horses and go horseback riding. And it was interesting, these horses, they were so used, just rented, they always went out. They had these same basic paths that they would kind of go and you'd rent the horse, pay whatever it was per hour that you do and to get them going, leaving the barn, you're beating them, kicking them, come on baby, doing anything you could and they just kind of, no strength.

You think, this thing's dead. You know, why did he give me a dead horse, you know, or something. And it would just, you couldn't get the thing moving.

Couldn't, horse after horse, you know, sort of. Then though, you get out and it's time to go home. You're about, you know, you rented the horse for two hours and so you go out for one hour and in one hour, okay, time to turn around to go back.

And as soon as you turn the horse around and it realizes, I'm going back to the barn. The next thing you know, in five minutes, I mean, you are on a champion Kentucky Derby horse. It's flying home.

It sees the barn. It was just crazy on how you, when they're going one thing and all they know is, I'm just going away. I don't want to go.

But as soon as they realized, you turned me to the barn. We're going home. They had a vision.

They're refreshed. They had energy. Where is it? Where did all of this come from? Because they had something.

And when somebody has, they're one of the great keys there to somebody that's going to be able to have their hands strengthened, to have their feeble knees strengthened, that's going to keep stride and keep going, is that they've got something they have set their eyes upon. Jesus Christ. They're looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of their faith, who with a joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and then he set out.

The work is finished. And when there's somebody who says that's the same key, the same discipline he had, is one there that when you watch God's great saints, they had a call. They had an objective.

Isaiah, actually, the metaphor that's used here, even in Hebrews, he actually appears to have gotten from the book of Isaiah. Back in Isaiah in chapter 35, the children of Israel, they had evil kings. They had a series of false prophets.

They were generally disobedient. They were rebellious people, and they were going through terrible times. They were stubborn and stiff-necked people by this time, and it seemed as if their powerful enemies just always kept them down, and they could never get out of trouble.

And they're down to where they're just getting so discouraged, and they're so despondent. And Isaiah comes along to them, and he knows how to talk to them. But he tells them there, in Isaiah 35, he says, the wilderness and the desert will be glad, and they that see the glory of the Lord and the majesty of our God, he looks at them, he says, you want to know how to get out of your despondency? How to get out of your discouragement? Don't look at the kings.

Don't look at the prophets. Don't look at the people. Don't look at the enemies.

He said, see the glory of the Lord. See His kingdom is coming. And then he goes on in the next verse, verses three and four of chapter 35.

He says, encourage the exhausted. Strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, take courage, fear not.

Behold your God. He tells you, he says, when you're down and you want to learn the disciplines of life, look to the Lord. Have something happen in your heart and your life where you realize, God, I need to see you.

I need a fresh vision of who you are. That's one of the great keys to a person that ever goes from immaturity to maturity. From instability to stability.

When you see somebody there that can go through a valley and not be parched and dried up through the desert heat. When you can see somebody that can climb a mountain and keep on climbing and not be exhausted. They've got a discipline within them where they've got a strength that they can draw on.

And the reason that their arms can keep swinging and their knees is that they see something fresh. They say, there's the goal. They don't look around at anything and everybody else around them, they simply see the Lord.

And it's also something here so wonderfully, you know, that he tells us and as well, he says, make straight your paths. He tells us as well here in this section. He says that in verse 13, he says, and make straight paths for your feet.

He looks there and another thing about a disciplined person, another person about who's gonna finish the race, it's gonna do well. Not only are they somebody there that they see a goal and that they set their eyes on it, but they make a straight path. They make their path straight.

And it's by the fact, you know, and again, the same way you keep a straight path is the same way that you just keep your eyes on the Lord. And you, the farmers, you know, that one of the keys that they would always have, anybody, whether you had a oxen that you're behind, you know, plowing a field or you're even the old days when they, you know, when they, tractors without all the GPS systems and things to where they just keep a thing straight, the great key to when somebody wanted, you see these fields are plowed, you're in here, they're straight furrow, one after another, after another, and they just seem to go endlessly. How does a guy keep it so straight? There when he's just following, you know, his, you know, his ox with his plow in the ground, and the key to it always is you're never looking around there to see, well, I'm gonna look behind.

Is it straight? Will it look like it's straight going that way or look at the side? They would always look at one thing in the horizon. They would set their eyes on that and they would never take their eyes off of it. The key to have a straight path is that you have something that your eyes are set for.

They're not looking over here at the side. They're not looking at somebody else. I want this, I want that.

I want this short-term goal here, I've got that. They always, the key to a disciplined life is God, you're not only the one that is gonna strengthen me now, keep me disciplined now, encourage my life now, but you are the destiny that I'm looking for, that you are the one whose image I want to be. My eyes are straight, set upon you.

And another thing about keeping a straight path in a disciplined life is the fact that one of the things in runners, any of you ever seen races? You know that whether chalk marks or whatever else they would do through the years, every runner has got his path. He's got, here's your path, and you stay in your path. If a runner's running and he goes into somebody else's path, he disqualifies himself as well as maybe trips up the other guy.

But he looks there and he says, the key, one of the keys to a disciplined life is that somebody merely looks and says, God, what do you have for me? What is my path? That's somebody else's path. I'm not looking at this runner here. I'm not looking at this runner here.

I'm not, hey, he's over on my side. He crossed over my line. Hey, but he comes pushing there or whatever else, arguing, fighting with everybody else.

In the race, you're just merely looking at your own path and you want to stay on it. You want to keep your heart. You want to keep your mind.

You want to keep the center of who you are. God, write based on who he is. Proverbs 4.25 says, let your eyes look straight ahead and your eyelids look right before you.

Ponder the path of your feet and let all of your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left. Remove your foot from evil.

And here he says there, he says, keep your eyes ahead. Keep your eyelids focused on the thing. Ponder the fact I'm on my path.

Make sure my feet are there and I'm not going off into evil. I'm not going into anybody else's path. Have you ever noticed with undisciplined people, maybe sometimes they can mount up with wings as eagles.

They can do these great spurts to where they do wonderful for a moment. They're on fire. They do great.

They can mount up with wings as eagles. For a moment, they can seemingly run and not be weary. But during the race, during the walk, you give them time and some runner, something will happen in another path around them.

Somebody will nudge him. Somebody will look at him funny. Somebody will say to him, ha ha, you're a terrible runner or something.

And all of a sudden, they're over there. Oh, you think I am? Watch this, you know, and kick them, you know, and they're off in their path. They're tripping them up.

And there's somebody there that they get off focused. People disrupt them. Events disrupt them.

They get them hostile. They get them angry. Instead of somebody there that is just simply, all I know is I have a path to run.

I have a road that is given. I have a plan of God that he wants to discipline and equip me for. Who else is running the race, whether they're running back and forth in circles or across lines and doing that, it's none of my business.

We'll see it is a little bit in a few moments, but primarily, my business is to keep my eyes on what God wants for me. That's a disciplined person. Somebody there that doesn't get off track.

The last couple of days, Gene and I flew back. We were back in New York for a couples conference they had to go share at, and a bunch of churches got together, and one of the pastors was with him. He has three boys, and these boys, they're all wrestlers, and they're all like state-type wrestlers.

I mean, through the, you know, the competition. And you look at these boys, all of them, they're a few years apart, but every one of them, they looked exactly the same. They're, I mean, they're just the greatest young men.

They had a great time with them, but one of the things about them, you could just talk to them, and you would realize, and you spend any time, you realize, here were boys that ended up doing very, very well in their selected sport because absolutely, they were disciplined in it. How anybody else lived, how all the other kids in school were, what anybody else was, what their path was, what it was, I wanna be state champion in wrestling, in my weight class, in my, you know, high school, or my whatever it was that the competition was, and there was something for that. It's gonna determine what I eat, what I sleep, when I

go to bed, when I get up, how I'm gonna exercise, what I'm gonna do, every single thing, my path.

You know, anybody else around, what is that guy doing all that stuff for? Who needs to eat like that, sleep like that, exercise like that? But it was something there you could see, these kids did well because of the fact that you could just look at them, and you saw something as you're just with them. Discipline, and the Apostle Paul says, you know, we look at people in the physical life. We look at how men will run for an earthly crown, you know, something that's wood, hay, and stubble, and it'll burn up.

They'll discipline themselves. How much more should we, as Christians, long to be disciplined, long to have our lives say, God, you determine who I am, and through the issues of life, you see, the person I convince that's gonna find themselves going through and have the greatest relationship with God, and the greatest in their marriage, and the greatest experiences in life is somebody that looks there and says, I want it. And I've got a path, and that God has given to me, and I'm gonna keep that path, and I'm not gonna take my foot off in evil.

I'm not gonna have an excuse, and I'm not gonna be distracted by these other things. This is why I'm alive. This is why I exist.

You look at all these ones in the book of Hebrews that we went through, and you look at them, and you realize this wonderful thing called discipline. And this is what God says, I'd love to be able to put this in the heart of one after another after another. And he says, the sad thing is, here as he says there in verse 13, he says, make straight paths for your feet so that that which is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

In other words, he says, Paul here, the writer, whoever the Hebrews is, he says, realize that when you're running the race, there are others younger, weaker than you, lame as they're called here, but it means weaker. And he says, others that are following, and they see your path, and if your path wanders off here, and this is how you handle that, and you've got this undisciplined behavior, and you've got this that you say, oh, it's all right. God's merciful, God's graceful, who cares? He says, you'll end up dislocating the legs.

They will lose their focus. They'll lose their location, where they're going when they're trying to follow you. But a disciplined person looks, and he realizes these things, and he longs to have, you know, God teach them things, and grow strong.

You see, undisciplined, inconsistent Christians, we'll stumble other people as well. But then he goes on, another great key to the disciplined life, as he says in verse 14, he says, pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Here he looks now, and he says, another key, that he keeps his hands up, he keeps his eyes focused, his feeble knees are strengthened.

He's got a path, and he's determined, I'm gonna stay on it, the discipline. This is my path, this is my road, this is my course. I'm going to keep it.

And in the process of it, he also, another discipline he's learning is he pursues peace. And that is, he tirelessly works for peace. When somebody is pursuing, this means a diligent pursuit of, a diligent work for peace.

There is something that, you know, when you live in this life, in this world, we live in a world of chaos. There can be great tensions when there's somebody there that wants a great home, or marriage, or

family. There's a great, you know, there can be great trials, and great temptations, and great tests.

But in a world in which we live, there's all sorts of things you can get so upset by, so derailed by, so angered by, so frustrated by. Why did you do that? Why did that happen? You know, sometimes I'll see somebody, and we all do, you see somebody that really wants to do well, they set their eyes on the Lord, they're running, they got a course, they're doing it, and then somebody else is there while they're doing it, somebody comes along and bumps them. What'd you bump me for? You know, and all of a sudden, they're angry.

I was doing fine until they came over to my side, and now you're mad. And now you're angry, and now you're bitter. He hit me, you know, and you're nudging them.

And all of a sudden, your eyes are off the goal, and instead they're, you know, the writer of Hebrews says, discipline. There's somebody now that they also, they pursue peace diligently. They're willing to go to no end.

Somebody, you ever see people there that they can be doing fine in the slightest thing? Somebody can look at them funny. Just look at them funny. You call yourself a Christian, huh? You know, and all of a sudden, yes, I do.

You know, and boom, they're, you know, who needs you? You're an idiot, and next thing you know, all the discipline's out the window. All the whole, everything's gone. Marriage is gone.

They're angry, they're bitter, and they have every justification for it. All they needed was somebody just to get in their lane, just nudge them, say a funny thing to them, and the next thing you know, they're out of the race. Who needs it? But rather than that, the person that is going through, that's running the marathon, that's going to succeed in life, that's gonna one day, you know, end up with the right priorities and bring in through all the hills and dales and nooks and crannies and valleys and deserts of life, and they will have succeeded in them, is a person there that he's learned through all the environments to pursue diligently the way of peace.

And not only that, he says, pursue peace and holiness, without which no man shall see God. Now, some people look at this as a holiness in the sense that if everybody is, if you're not holy, you'll never see heaven. You'll never see God.

But this is, we're talking here about a disciplined life. We're not talking about eternal things here so much. As we're looking there that somebody, they realize, Lord, I am looking there.

I'm looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith. I want you and I want you above all else. And we find ourselves as we're striving and we're running and we're keeping the focus.

And in the process, I'm staying in my path and I'm pursuing peace. But above all else, as I'm doing it, I am working towards diligently. I am pursuing holiness.

There's a longing within my life, God, what I really want more than anything. Yes, I want you to help the other relationships. I want you to make me a loving person, a kind person, a peaceful person, a person there that's being conformed into your image, a person there that's mature and stable and has much to offer to the world around.

But also, above all else, holiness. All holiness means holy, holiness, sanctified. Same Greek word, just means set apart and belonging to God.

When somebody's just saying, I am pursuing peace, I'm diligently working that, and holiness. And then that desire for holiness, as we started, I want to be looking to Jesus, that will keep me looking. That'll keep my eyes on him, keep me desiring him, keep me longing for him.

And how God, I believe, would just love us to be ones that just say, Lord, that's it. Discipline is not a, you know, it's not a hard thing. I think if you would have asked these three boys I was just with for the last couple days, has discipline been hard for you? I mean, you look for one thing, these boys are in shape.

I mean, they didn't have two ounces of body fat on them, it didn't seem, I mean, and their energy system, their endurance, their life, you know, and the vitality of it, the experience of it, and then you can maybe look over to the other people that just think, oh man, that discipline, who needs it? You know, while they're sitting there out of shape, you know, and go up a flight of steps and have to sit down and take a break, you know, and they can't keep themselves going, and these guys can go and go and go, and you said, you know, is discipline a hard thing? And they said, well, I don't know. All I know is I love the results. I love what it's given to me, that's why I'm alive, and I feel alive because of it, and to the degree that you and I are disciplined is the degree, and how we ought to be ones that we're in this life that we just, the Lord says, follow holiness, follow your whole life, long for your whole life to have the deepest relationship with God you could possibly have.

Why else shouldn't we? It's like getting married. Why get married if you don't want to have a deep relationship with somebody? Can you imagine, I wonder how many of us get married. I, John, take thee married to be, to hang out with, kind of be a buddy with.

If we get along far out, if we don't, well, you know, we'll ignore each other, you know, and as long as things are fun or fine, or else if I, and I'm not having a great time with you, I'll go hang out with the guys. I mean, if we just made our vows like this, I don't really want anything real deep or profound. I don't want to have something where, you know, on the 50 years when you die, I'm going to the football game instead of your funeral.

There's a lot of people that may want to do that after I'm married. Almost, boy, that woman took so long to die, I can't believe it. I mean, what a miserable marriage to have, and how many people that, why, if you're not gonna give it your all, if you don't want to have the deepest, most wonderful thing, don't do it.

And how we ought to be ones that do the same thing with God. Why be a Christian if I'm not somebody, God, take me everywhere with you we can go. I want the deepest and richest experience with you I can know.

Let's go through the hills, let's go through the valleys, let's go through the deserts, let's go, you know, through the desert places, and let's go through the freezing cold. Let's be absolutely alone together and deprived and turned against. Let's be right in the midst of all the people in the world.

I want to find you're sufficient in everything in life. Because that's the person at the end they can sit there and realize, Lord, what a life we've shared. What we found with each other, it's wonderful.

And I think that when there's two people, the same thing, one day when they're looking at each other after decades together and say, I can't believe I got to spend these years with you. It isn't because you just had

two wonderful people. They were just happy people, nice people, good people.

No, yes, I just picked the right person. They would never have any tests, never have any trials. We've just grown and we've never had to even be disciplined.

We never had to keep a focus. We never had to find ways to get energy to stay the course and to fight with everything within us to keep this marriage or to keep this home or to keep this life because we wanted it with all of our heart. No, it just happened.

Just grew up out of the ground. We're just two wonderful people that just happened to meet. No, the people that end up having something are ones that are able to look and said, we have what we have because God disciplined us and he taught us how to be quiet and he taught us to pursue peace and he taught us to pursue holiness and he taught us the disciplines and he's rewarded us with a love for him, a love for each other, a blessing in this life.

And here, and lastly, the great key to a disciplined life in verse 15, he says, 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. Here he says now, when he says looking carefully in verse 15, it means there in a sense to look at others with great care.

The word actually is a Greek word that in other places in the Bible is translated overseer or bishop or elder. In other words, he looks at everybody now that's disciplined and he says, if you are a person that your life, I wanna be looking, I wanna be focused, I want my hands up, I want my knees strong, I wanna keep the focus on where I'm going, I wanna stay in my path, I wanna pursue peace and work at it, I wanna pursue a holy and a surrendered life to God. And in the process, now they look around as a member of the body of Christ corporately and I'm also an overseer of others in the relationship.

It means there to look carefully at others around you. And that word carefully means to be caring, like an overseer, like an elder would be over the body of Christ looking. And in a sense, he's saying all of us, we are each other's brother's keeper.

We are every one of us when we see somebody that they're tired and they're down and they're depressed. And the world is caving in on them. And that there's something that begins to say, I need to go help them.

That's a discipline. That's somebody there that, you know, it's like in the Old Testament, Moses. In the Exodus 17, it says, then came Amalek and fought with Israel and repented and Moses spoke unto Aaron and her and her unto Joshua.

And he said, Aaron and her and I, we will go up in the mountain of God with the rod of God in my hand and you will go down in the valley and fight with Amalek. It says when Moses and Aaron and her went up in the mountain and they fought with Amalek, it says when Moses held the rod of God high, Israel prevailed. But when the rod was down and Moses tired and he couldn't hold it up, it says Amalek prevailed.

And here they realized the battle wasn't really fought down in the valley. The real battle was fought up in the mountain as Moses could lift up his life and trust and surrender to God. And yet here in his exhaustion, his ability just to keep the course and stay the case, and he couldn't hold up the rod.

Defeat was happening. But Aaron and her, it says one got on one side and the other on the other side and they stayed up his hands. They held his hands until the battle was run.

And so often, I mean, there's two people that are carefully looking at people around him. I don't know how many times in my life you can get tired, you can get weary, you're at the course just seems to, you're looking there and I don't know if I can go on. You're trying to keep the hand up, trying to keep the knee from getting feeble.

And how wonderful it is somebody comes along and one of you, somebody, whether my parents or my wife or some friend or in-law or somebody comes along or sister or brother or some comes, don't let me hold up your hands. You're tired, you're weary, you're arms down. I can see it.

Yes, I am. And let's feed you. Great.

How about Ruth Chris Steakhouse? You know, or something. I've done that. I wouldn't pay for it myself, but I'll let them.

But anyway, but on how something there, that where somebody comes and there's just that word of encouragement. There's just that somebody that just lifts you up. And you're the writer of Hebrews says, be that.

Be somebody, a disciplined person, one that finished the course. And one day they can look back like Paul and says, I have run the race. I have finished the course and there is laid up for me a crown of life.

Paul could look there and he says, God has a reward for me. And it wasn't his pride, it was just there. I've just set my eyes.

I found him. I've grown up. I've matured.

And Paul had to mature the same way every one of us. Discipline. Take the discipline of God.

And when the Lord looks at us and he says, you put your eyes on me. And we say, but God, do you see what my wife did? Do you see what my kids did? Do you see what they did? You know, and then we're just out of control. God says, well, a little child will have to wait until you wanna grow up.

Because when you grow up, you hear my voice in it only. And you don't let the others distract you. And when they are around and are making a noise or whatever it may be with everything is in you, you are diligently working for peace and for holiness.

Longing that your life would be set apart, your course would be set. That's the difference between an immature and a mature person. Anybody can, when the heat gets on, say, who needs it? I'm out of here.

You're an idiot. You did this, you did that. And out they go.

God says, well, we'll wait. You're not ready yet to handle the disciplines of life. But when somebody says, God, I want to.

And I want a course and I realize if I want it, there'll be times I'll be stretched. I'll be pushed beyond measure. I'll be there to where I say, I can't go another inch.

And he says, yes, you can. And yes, you will. You'll push yourself into my love.

You'll push yourself into my strength. You'll cry out to me. Every aching muscle, every burning fiber and nerve that's at the end and pain, God, strengthen me.

Strengthen me. Strengthen me. And you'll live.

And one day, look, people say, man, you're something. I say, no, I've just been pushed and pushed and went the course. And may the Lord give us in this undisciplined world, that's paying terrible prices for its lack of discipline.

May he discipline us. May we look and say, Jesus, make me this kind of a man, this kind of a woman of God that sees the goal, that puts my eyes upon you and refuses to take them off, no matter what. Amen.

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