

## Hebrews 12:4-11

*Hebrews 12:4 (NIV) In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son.” <sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. <sup>11</sup> No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

Hebrews 12 begins with an exhortation: “Let us run with endurance the race set before us” (12:1). God has placed before each of His children a unique race to run, a unique role in His plan to play. Since this race is a marathon, we shall need endurance (used 5 times in 12:1-13). And endurance is the result of much training – which is what the word “discipline” (used 10 times in this passage) means.

We usually think of discipline as reactive correction, but the Greek word (*paideia*) – though it includes correction – refers primarily to proactive training. A trainer subjects an athlete to a variety of rigorous exercises, which are designed to make him effective in his sport. A parent subjects his child to a variety of life-lessons, which are designed



to enable him to succeed in life. In like manner, God subjects His children to a variety of hardships so that we will develop the endurance that is necessary to finish our races. “Tribulations bring about perseverance,” says Paul in Romans 5:3. Only God knows how long and steep our race is. He is training us accordingly through hardships so we will be able to persevere to the finish line.

Because God is all-wise, He knows how much endurance we will need, and He knows what hardships will best develop this endurance. Because God is sovereign, He can train us even through hardships that He did not initiate. Thus, Joseph could say to his abusive brothers: “You meant it (i.e., selling him into slavery) as evil, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). The recipients of this letter were experiencing persecution for their faith in Jesus (see 12:3,4; see also 10:32-36) – certainly not something that God inflicted upon them. Yet the author insists that God is working through this persecution to train them to run with endurance. Thus he says: “Endure (every) hardship as discipline” (12:7). Likewise, all of our hardships – even those inflicted on us unjustly by evil people and Satan – are allowed and used by God to train us to fulfill His purpose for our lives.

Many years ago I went through a series of very painful hardships. Each time these hardships seemed about to go away, they resumed with even greater intensity. When my wife phoned me to tell me that another hardship had been prolonged, I protested: “It feels like God acts like He is helping me to my feet – only to sucker-kick me again. I don’t know what I’m supposed to be learning.” There was a long silence, and then she said: “What if God is getting you ready for even more difficult hardships that you’ll need to endure in the future?” I was speechless – and disappointed – by her question. Yet her words rung in my ears long after I hung up. I knew she had spoken a truth that I needed to hear. And I have lived to be grateful for the endurance that this period of special training developed.



The author notes that his audience has “completely forgotten” this aspect of God’s fatherly love (12:4). Likewise, when we face even moderate hardship, we easily forget this precious truth! God knows what training we need, and He loves us enough to administer it. Yet how easily we question His wisdom, accuse Him of not caring about us, and threaten to quit running unless He removes the very training we need. He takes no joy in our suffering, but He encourages us to remember that His discipline is a profound proof of His love.

We will be helped to submit to God’s training if we focus on the promises He makes in connection with it:

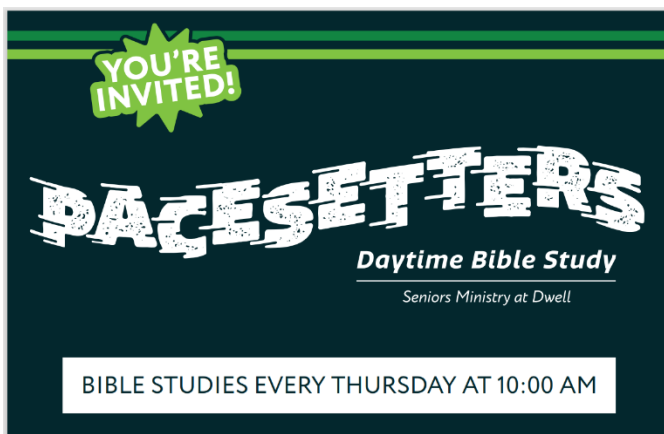
- *“We have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!”* The contrast here is between our earthly parents (literally, “fathers of our flesh”) and God (“the Father of our spirits”). If we respected our parents’ effort to train us in rudimentary life-skills, certainly we should respect God’s wise training which enables us to flourish as spiritual beings. What this flourishing looks like is described in the next two verses.
- *“They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness.”* God’s holiness here refers to His moral character. God is loving, kind, upright and wise. Since He created us in His image, we were designed (like prisms) to make the beauty of His character visible in this world. His discipline is thus always aimed at securing our good, our true happiness.
- *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”* The benefits of God’s discipline are cumulative. No one has ever regretted cooperating with His training, because it always leads to eventual flourishing



that far outweighs its painfulness at the time. Therefore, we do not focus on the present pain; we focus on the future harvest!

*Lord Jesus, thank You for submitting to much painful discipline so that You could qualify to be our Savior. Although You despised the shame inflicted upon You by evil people, You looked forward to the joy of securing many children for Your Father. Teach me to trust in His wisdom and goodness as He trains me to run my race with endurance.*

**Come visit our Pacesetters Daytime Bible Study!  
10AM Thursdays at Dwell Main Campus**

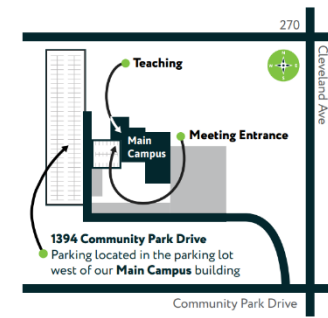


**YOU'RE INVITED!**

# PACESETTERS

**Daytime Bible Study**  
Seniors Ministry at Dwell

**BIBLE STUDIES EVERY THURSDAY AT 10:00 AM**



270  
Cleveland Ave

Teaching

Main Campus

Meeting Entrance

1394 Community Park Drive  
Parking located in the parking lot west of our Main Campus building

Community Park Drive

**Potlucks after Teaching**  
2nd Thursday of each month

We focus on quality Bible teaching, fellowship, service, and fun. We host a large weekday daytime Bible study, as well as small groups in homes. At the heart of our ministry is a community of dedicated people who meet practical and spiritual needs and spur one another toward spiritual maturity.

For more information and printable devotionals visit:  
[dwellcc.org/pacesetters/resources](http://dwellcc.org/pacesetters/resources)

**Contact us: [dwellcc.org/pacesetters](http://dwellcc.org/pacesetters)  
[Pacesetters@dwellcc.org](mailto:Pacesetters@dwellcc.org) • (614) 823-6510 x 1777**