

20 July 2025  
(Week 47)

## CORRECTED VERSION

### Discipline<sup>1</sup>

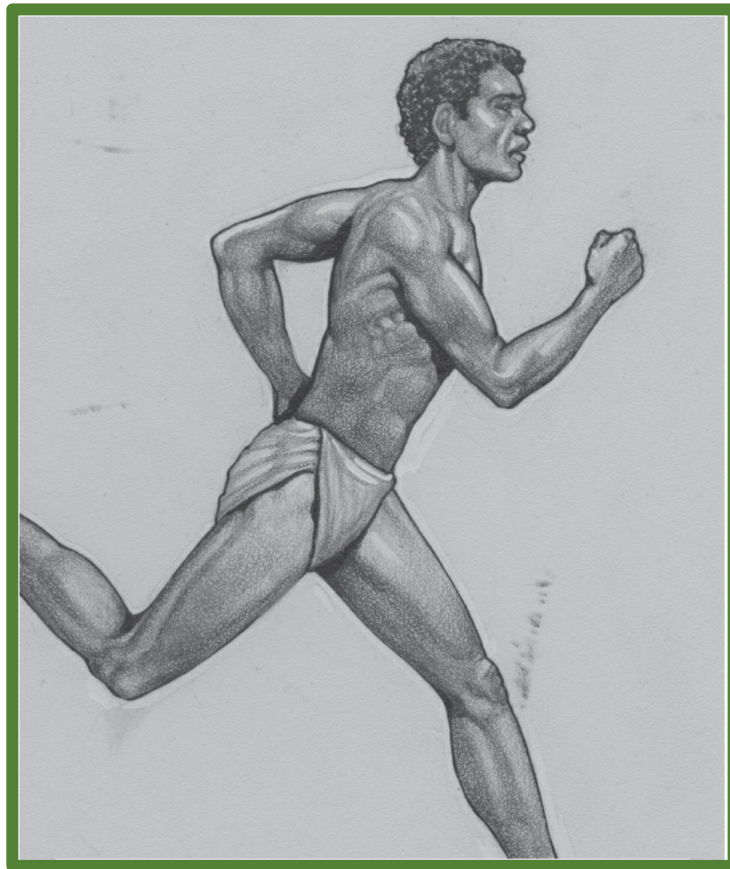
#### The Gift of Discipline for Discipleship

Lesson Text: Hebrews 12:1-13

*Read Black History Article Below Daily Bible Reading*

#### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **DISCUSS** what makes a credible leader; **REFLECT** on what makes Jesus a credible leader; and **COMMIT** to following Jesus' example of godly discipline.



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<sup>1</sup> Bantu, Dr. Vince L. Precepts for Living: Principles for Living in an Unhinged World (2024-2025) UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.).

### **In Focus**

Cheryl, a single mother of two, worked faithfully for the same company for five years. She was well-liked, hardworking, and a team player. A new manager started in the company, who didn't know about Cheryl's track record, so in cost-saving measures, Cheryl was laid off.

So many questions ran through Cheryl's mind as she struggled to understand why the Lord allowed her to lose her job. After all, she has children to support and bills to pay. She was disappointed and couldn't understand why she was undergoing this fiery trial. Her world turned upside down at the news of her layoff.

There were times when she felt like giving up. "What should I do?" she wondered. "How am I going to make it without a job and no money coming in?"

Everyone gave a well-intentioned piece of advice to Cheryl. Her mother told her to find a good husband. Her girlfriends told her to get a roommate. A former coworker suggested Cheryl beg for her old job back.

Finally, Cheryl remembered Romans 8:28. She trusted God for what direction she should take, and her faith began to increase even more. She returned to school and earned her MBA. Upon graduating, she found a higher paying job with better benefits and the ability to work from home.

Now Cheryl looks back on the day she got laid off and calls it a blessing in disguise. Without that test, she would never have had the courage to return to school. The Lord gave her strength in her suffering so she would have the faith and discipline to get her MBA. She discovered her response to this test created an amazing testimony.

*Living a disciplined life takes a lot of faith. In today's lesson, we learn about how God disciplines His children. Jesus set the perfect example of a life of discipline. We are tempted to give in when we experience trials, but Jesus demonstrates those hardships help us. Jesus endured the pain and shame of the Cross to achieve the joy and victory of eternal life with God. Where do you see the fruit of discipline in your life?*

### **Keep In Mind**

*Therefore, seeing we also are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, (Hebrews 12:1, 21<sup>st</sup> CKJV)*

### **Lesson Text**

### **Hebrews 12:1-13**

**1** Therefore, seeing we also are compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

**2** 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**3** For consider Him that endured such contradiction from sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

**4** In striving against sin, ye have not yet resisted unto bloodshed.

**5** And ye have forgotten the exhortation which Speakes unto you as unto children: “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked by Him;

**6** for whom the Lord loveth He chastened, and scourged every son whom He received.”

**7** If ye endure chastening, God dealt with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastened not?

**8** But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then ye are bastards and not sons.

**9** Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not far rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits, and live?

**10** For verily they chastened us for a few days according to their own pleasure, but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

**11** Now no chastening for the present seemed to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby.

**12 Therefore, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees,**

**13** and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed.

### **The People, Places, and Times**

**Rome:** As the capital city of Italy, it was the center of commerce, culture, and religion. A myriad of religions dotted the social landscape at the time this letter to the Hebrews was circulated. Rome was known to tolerate a plethora of religions. Judaism and Christianity were allowed to coexist here with other religions in a cornucopia of religious expression.

**Believers in Rome:** It was not easy or politically correct to be a Christian during this time. Christians in Rome had to deal with the threat of persecution by the Roman authorities, although none of them had become martyrs like Jesus, Stephen, and others. Because they were still alive, the writer encouraged them to continue to run their race and not give up. He reminded them that Jesus never gave up and neither should they.

### **Background**

The letter to the Hebrews was written in response to the threat believers might renounce Christianity and revert to Judaism. The writer wanted to inform his vacillating readers that Jesus Christ, the object of God's final revelation, is superior to the greatest of Judaism's heroes.

The writer also wanted to highlight and remind his audience of the efficacy of Jesus' power of salvation. He reminded them that whereas the Jewish legal sacrificial system was powerless to remit sins, Jesus, the eternal High Priest, "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lived to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Furthermore, the writer explains the need for patient endurance amid the persecution and sufferings to which the heirs of eternal salvation are inevitably exposed.

He suggests that all Christians emulate Jesus' suffering and patience if they anticipate an eternal reward.

### **In Depth**

**1. Believers Must Run the Race (Hebrews 12:1–2)** The writer encourages Christian readers to continue to run their race of discipleship no matter what tries to hinder them. He tells them to “lay aside every weight.

Being a Christian was not an easy thing back then, and it still isn't today. It is a lifelong commitment that involves peaks and valleys, good times and bad times, and sunshine and rain. Christian discipleship is not a sprint; it is a marathon. That is why the author tells his audience to run with “perseverance” (v. 1, NIV).

Perseverance is an inner quality that allows one to continue in some course of action despite difficulty or opposition. To persevere is to be steadfast in a particular purpose.

Disciples of Jesus Christ must always look to Jesus as the ultimate model of perseverance. In His ministry, He suffered insults and attempts on His life. He persisted even though His hometown and relatives rejected Him. He overcame the obstinacy of His followers and betrayal by one of His own. He never faltered during the unjust criminal trial that accused Him of sedition and heresy—or the beating by the Roman police force. Finally, He did not waver on the Cross at Calvary. He did all that not only so future generations of believers would have access to a spiritual power potent enough to change the world, but also to set an example of the perfect leader who was tempted but did not give in.

As we continue to live as ambassadors of Christ, let us persevere on our jobs, in our homes, and in our communities. God demands our best in this life. No matter what hardships we go through, our history is peppered with credible leaders who have overcome greater hardships than we have ever had to imagine. We can learn from them. If they made it, surely, we can make it. With God on our side and “a great cloud of witnesses” cheering us on, we can get through any adverse situation we face.

**2. Believers Must Develop Endurance (Hebrews 12: 3–6):** The writer of Hebrews encouraged the Christians in Rome to consider Jesus’ life when they began to complain about the adversity they had to face. He supported his argument by testifying that they had not faced persecution to the degree that they had shed their own blood. He also let them know that trials suffered for righteousness’ sake could be viewed as the “chastening of the Lord” (v. 5). The Lord’s chastening is not arbitrary or without direction—it always has a purpose. The writer suggests that trials could be disciplinary correction and a part of God’s overall plan to edify His children. Corrective discipline is always a good thing and a symbol of love. When an earthly father exercises discipline on his child, it is beneficial to the child so the same wrong actions will not be repeated. Our heavenly Father operates in the same way. Because God loves us, He disciplines us so we will not commit the same sins or something worse.

**3. Believers Must Learn to Enjoy the Discipline of the Lord (Hebrews 12:7–11)** The writer of Hebrews presents yet another reason that believers should cheerfully bear affliction when it comes. Christians are encouraged to endure the discipline of the Lord because it is the mark of sonship as well as the way to become more holy and righteous. The Bible is clear that those who suffer for righteousness’ sake glorify God: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12–13). Second Timothy 2:12 says, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” The writers insist that we must look on all the hardships of life as the discipline of God—sent to work, not for our harm, but for our ultimate and highest good.

Consider the failure to discipline a child who is disobedient. It is not a mark of trustworthiness or love, but of apathy and unconcern. Likewise, God’s willingness to discipline us is a mark of our sonship. It is never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but His discipline is a sign of His deep love for us. When God corrects you, see it as proof of His love and His ability to lead you in the right direction, and ask Him what He is working to teach you.

#### **4. Believers Must Increase Their Discipleship and Become an Example**

**(Hebrews 12: 12–13)** Since we know that hardship, trials, and suffering are a part of the Christian journey, we should face them with courage. To accept Christ into our lives is to allow the prospect of facing hardship. Jesus told His disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). We are to be an example for future generations.

We are to be guides and role models for our children, who are standing on our shoulders. If we shrink during painful trials, what kind of example will we set for them? We must not live with only our own survival in mind. Others will follow our example, and we have a responsibility to them if we are living for Christ. We also have a responsibility to support weaker Christians who may get discouraged by the Lord’s discipline. We are to bear the burdens of the weak, for this is what Christ did. Suffering brings us into higher levels of compassion. As a people, where would we be without enduring struggles?

Frederick Douglass once said, “Without struggle there can be no progress.” The great Civil Rights martyr, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said, “If a man has not found a cause worth dying for, then he is not fit to live.” Any cause worth giving your life for will involve suffering for righteousness’ sake. But we have an eternal promise from Jesus. He told His disciples to be of good cheer because He had overcome the world (John 16:33).

Therefore, no matter what comes against us in the world, whether rumors of war, the fear of terrorist attacks, the elimination of affirmative action, job layoffs, or trouble in our marriages, we know that God is our refuge and a very present help in the time of trouble (cf. Psalm 46:1; 91:1–9). We cannot shrink amid painful trials. If we believe that our God will deliver us, then we cannot live in fear or anger when we face fiery trials.

*Does your behavior during a trial make it easier for others to believe in and follow Christ, and to mature in Him? Or would those who follow you end up on the wrong path, lost and confused?*

### **Liberating Lesson**

Before a professional sports team takes the field, it goes through training camp. Training camp is a fiery trial that most players hate. However, veterans and rookies alike must endure training camp to learn new plays, to get into shape, and, most important, to learn how to become a disciplined and victorious team. If we Christians are going to be victorious, we must go through our own version of training camp. God, our coach (leader), wants to turn us into a well-coached, well-trained, and well-disciplined body of believers. To do that, God allows some adversity into our lives. Christians are like tea bags. For our rich and robust flavor to come out, we must be placed in some hot water.

### **Application for Activation**

Many great biblical and historical characters had to endure much suffering for the causes they supported, whether it was for the spread of Christianity or in the fight for civil rights. Remember that life is a marathon, not a sprint. If we are going to be successful, individually and collectively, we must keep our eyes on the prize. Individually, that prize is the likeness of Jesus Christ; collectively, the prize is to make the kingdom of God a reality in our midst.

Commit to following Jesus' example of godly discipline. Continue working toward the goals that you have, never giving up, and keep your eyes on the prize. Anything worth having is worth all the suffering, trials, and tribulations that come along on the journey. Therefore, embrace the struggle because it will bring discipline to your life; and once you achieve your goals, you can give God the glory for the marvelous things He has done.

### **Take Aways**

### **Closing Prayer**



**Daily Bible Reading**  
**Christian Season:**  
**Regular**  
**Season Color: Green**



**Monday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:17-34, 12:1-31; Proverbs 1

**Tuesday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:1-13, 14:1-40; Proverbs 2

**Wednesday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:1-49; Proverbs 3

**Thursday:** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:50-58, 16:1-24; Proverbs 4

**Friday:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:1-24, 2:1-17; Proverbs 5

**Saturday:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3-5; Proverbs 6

**Sunday:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6-7; Proverbs 7

**NOT PART OF THE LESSON**  
**Information Purposes Only**  
**Black History Began in Africa**  
**Lemba Tribe**



**Lemba tribe in southern Africa has Jewish roots, genetic tests reveal<sup>2</sup>**

The Lemba people, a Bantu-speaking group in southern Africa, have a long-standing oral tradition claiming Jewish ancestry. Genetic studies have provided evidence supporting this claim, particularly regarding the male lineage. Specifically, studies have identified a genetic marker known as the Cohen modal haplotype, which is associated with the Jewish priestly lineage, in a significant portion of Lemba males.

Genetic tests carried out by British scientists have revealed many of the Lemba tribesmen in southern Africa have Jewish origins, according to a report by the BBC. The Lemba, a tribe of 70,000 to 80,000 members who live in central Zimbabwe and northern South Africa, have similar Jewish customs: Lemba refrain foods forbidden by the Torah, wear yarmulke-like caps, conduct ritual animal sacrifice, have a sabbath, and place a Star of David on gravestones. The Lemba discouraged marriage to non-Lembas.

Their sacred prayer language is a mixture of Hebrew and Arabic. Their religious artifact is a replica of the Biblical Ark of the Covenant known as the 'ngoma lungundu', meaning "*the drum that thunders*." The object went on display recently at a museum in Harare, Zimbabwe, and has instilled pride in many of the Lemba.

Members of the priestly clan of the Lemba, the Buba – which is one of 12 clans – have a genetic element also found among the Jewish priestly line, known as Kohanim. "This was amazing," Professor Tudor Parfitt from the University of London told the BBC. "It looks as if the Jewish priesthood continued in the West by people called Cohen, and in the same way it was continued by the priestly clan of the Lemba."

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/news/lemba-tribe-in-southern-africa-has-jewish-roots-genetic-tests-reveal>