

Week 22: FORMED Series

Keep Shuffling

Hebrews 12:1-13

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

⁴ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

⁵ 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,
⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."

⁷ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ 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! ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

¹² Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ¹³ "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

From this week's sermon:

In the message this week, Rod encouraged us to:

Throw off everything that hinders, keep your eyes on Jesus, allow the father to train you and form you and let's run the race marked out for us TOGETHER...

Scholarly Insight:

Grindheim's Introduction:¹

Having previously introduced the twin themes of faith and endurance (10:38, 39, and 10:32, 36, respectively), the author now proceeds to endurance. His exhortation builds on the encomium of faith, which serves as the motivation. The forerunners (11:1–40) are portrayed as witnesses

¹ Grindheim, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, (Eerdmans, 2023), "The need for endurance in suffering".

providing inspiration (12:1), but the chief motivation comes from Jesus, "the originator and finisher of faith" (12:2). This subsection may be divided in three parts. In the first (12:2–3) and the last (12:12–13), the dominant metaphor is that of a footrace, requiring endurance. This image is reinforced by the structure, employing the terms "running" (trechōmen) and "paths" (trochias) as near-matching bookends (vv. 1, 13).⁴⁷⁰ The second part (12:4–11) is devoted to the metaphor of sonship, centered around a quotation from Prov 3:11–12. It explains that suffering is the Father's means of molding his children.

Guthrie's Commentary:²

In verses 1–2 he begins the chapter with the image of a race in order to exhort his hearers to "run with perseverance," laying aside impediments to endurance and keeping a focus on Jesus as the pacesetter. This metaphor of a race resumes briefly in verses 12–13, emphasizing especially the disciplined endurance required of a long-distance runner. An analogy to another form of discipline, that offered by a parent, forms the core of 12:3–11, where the author expounds Proverbs 3:11–12. He uses this Old Testament text to weave a tight-knit argument why believers should embrace their hardships as an expression of God's love and acceptance. Just as an earthly parent uses what the child perceives to be unpleasant circumstances to bring about a desired end, so God, who deserves even more respect than an earthly parent, disciplines his true children to bring about holiness.

For Reflection:

In the sermon, Rod asked us to reflect:

- *What is slowing you down in your walk with Jesus?*
- *What are you carrying that God never asked you to carry?*
- *What could you THROW OFF this week that will help you to travel freer and lighter as you run your race?*
- *What is it, that gets tangled around your feet and trips you up? What sin do you need to bring into the light and repent of today?*

For Discussion:

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-13 aloud together. As you read, which parts (if any) did the Holy Spirit highlight to you? Which challenge or inspire you?
2. Verse 1 names two separate things to throw off: "everything that hinders" and "the sin that so easily entangles." What's the difference? Can you think of a good thing that quietly became a weight in your life?
3. Verses 2-3 say Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before him." What changes when you see Jesus as someone who ran this race himself, and not only as the one cheering from the finish line?
4. Verse 5 warns against two errors: making light of the Lord's discipline, and losing heart when he rebukes you. Are you prone to either one of these?

² George Guthrie, Hebrews, (Zondervan Academic, 2009), p. 396.

5. Verses 7-10 say discipline is a sign we're loved as sons and daughters, not a sign we're being punished. How has your experience of parents or authority shaped the way you hear that?
6. Verse 11 admits that discipline is "painful" at the time but later "produces a harvest of righteousness and peace." Can you think of a hard season in your life that later produced fruit?
7. Verses 12-13 turn outward: strengthen feeble arms and weak knees, and make level paths so the lame "may be healed." Is there anyone around you that has tired arms right now? What would it look like for you / your community to level a path for them this week?
8. Rod's phrase was "keep shuffling." Hebrews was written to weary people, so no one is expected to sprint. What does one small, honest step forward look like for you this week?

Pray for each other:

Father, thank You for loving us and for continuing to shape and form us. Help us to let go of whatever is weighing us down, keep our eyes on Jesus, and trust You even when the journey is hard.

Give us strength to take the next step, to keep shuffling, and to encourage one another along the way. Help us run this race together, knowing that You are with us every step.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Formation Practice:

As we explore being Formed by Jesus this series; we want to encourage you to do this simple exercise every day for the next 2 months. It can take 5 minutes or more, whatever you are able to achieve (and as you do it more and more, you'll likely find it easier to spend longer listening and reflecting).

"Draw Near Daily" Rhythm (5-10 minutes)

- ***Come:*** Quiet yourself before God.
- ***Confess:*** Be honest about sin/struggle.
- ***Receive:*** Remember what Christ has done.
- ***Respond:*** Take one step of obedience.