



HEBREWS

Jesus is **GREATER THAN...SO STAND FIRM**

THEREFORE...

STAND FIRM—CHAPTER 12

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

In the last chapter, the author of Hebrews described saving faith and gave concrete examples from history of what it looks like in action. This week's chapter focuses on running the race of faith as that great cloud of witnesses surrounds us. The way we keep going is by looking to Jesus as our true example of faith and endurance. Any discipline we may encounter from God on the way is based on His deep love for us, as He wants to help us grow and carry on.

IMPORTANT: As always, we encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by committing the class and the teaching to God in prayer. After this, we encourage you to dig into not only the specific chapter in Hebrews for this week (Chapter 12), but also the book of Hebrews as a whole and the Scriptures at large. As you move through your readings, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is **ONLY AFTER DOING THESE THINGS** that you should approach this lesson plan and perhaps use it as a guide. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

PRAYER

Begin your time praying that we will remain faithful and endure even when being disciplined.

FOCUS

- Consider how much Jesus had to endure on the cross.
- Discipline from the Father is necessary for growth.
- **WARNING:** Do not defy the One who speaks from heaven!
- Recognize that **JESUS IS GREATER THAN, THEREFORE...STAND FIRM!**

LESSON

Discussion Starters (OPTIONAL)

- Have any of you ever run a race? Why?
- What's the difference between a sprint race and running a marathon?
- Would you say that the Christian race is equivalent to a sprint or a marathon? Explain.
- If you have never run a marathon, it is difficult to describe it. However, when you have run one, you realize that the goal is not finishing first (for most), but simply FINISHING! It is accomplishing something you set out to do while enduring grueling circumstances and the deep desire to want to quit. The Hebrew writer was encouraging his readers to stay in the race, don't give up, and see it to the end!
- Do we like discipline? Why or why not? Is discipline necessary? Explain.
- How do we typically approach God's discipline? How should we approach it?

FROM GOD'S WORD

- 12:1-2
 - Key Points
 - In light of the previous discussion in chapter 11, the author focuses his attention on motivating his readers to run the race like the great cloud of witnesses that went before them and now surrounds them.
 - The Greek word used here is *martyr*, from which we get our word *martyr*. There are two possible meanings here:
 1. The OT heroes (from chapter 11) witnessed to their faith by both words and action (to the point of death for some).
 2. They are now like spectators in an athletic event witnessing our faith-race and cheering us on.
 - a. Although the second meaning is a great picture, it is better to understand this in terms of the first meaning. Why? Nowhere else does the NT indicate that those who have passed on are "watching" us. Instead, because of **their** "witness," we should be encouraged to carry on as they did and push to the end with the endurance of Christ, FOR Christ.
 - As in any race, there are many things that may impede a runner. In the Christian race, sin is a weight that holds us back and obstructs our running. Instead, we need to shed the weight and run with endurance.
 - Paul speaks to this as well: 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8
 - In order to endure, the Christian runner is encouraged to look to Jesus. As He endured the cross for our sake, we are encouraged to endure the race for His sake.
 - Jesus knew why He was enduring what He endured. It was for a future glory for ALL. We need to constantly remember why we are enduring our present and momentary struggles.

- Crucifixion was performed in front of crowds. The one crucified was naked and was laid bare before the spectators. It was for inflicting long-lasting pain and public shame. Although we may never be crucified in that sense, we may endure other forms of “crucifixion” for our faith. Like Jesus, we must endure!
 - For Discussion
 - How does considering our “great cloud of witnesses” give us strength?
 - How does sin impede our progress?
 - Of what value is there to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus?
- 12:3-17
 - Key Points
 - In these verses, the author stresses that earthly trials should be treated as discipline from God. These trials should call the individual to respond with endurance rather than rejection. Instead, one is encouraged to not grow weary, but carry on as these trials develop character.
 - Again, the author references Jesus’ endurance as a source of courage through trials. He then uses a reference from Proverbs 3:11-12 to relate trials to discipline from God with the purpose to help one grow.
 - The discipline here is like that of a parent that intends to instruct, train, and correct. These tests (trials) will prove to be of benefit as they demonstrate sonship to the Father.
 - Read James 1:2-4
 - Trials and temptations often go hand-in-hand (actually, most of the time, the temptation in trials is often to give up). Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 as a source of encouragement here.
 - Why does God discipline us? See 12:10-11. To share His holiness and yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
 - Our response to God’s discipline should be to (see v. 12-13):
 - Lift our drooping hands
 - Strengthen our weak knees
 - Make straight the paths of our feet
 - What does all this mean?
 - The readers are encouraged to not grow weary or bitter and give up their eternal inheritance for a momentary fix (like Esau). Instead they should desire that all obtain the grace of God.
 - For Discussion
 - What is our typical response to discipline? Why do we run from discipline?
 - How should we respond positively to God’s discipline?
 - What are ways in which we might give up our eternal inheritance in order to receive momentary relief?

- 12:18-29
 - Key Points
 - The author focuses the rest of his thought here on comparing the old covenant at Mt. Sinai to the new covenant at Mt. Zion. The old covenant brought great fear and trembling. The Israelites could not even approach the mountain or set foot on it or they would die. The voice of God terrified them so much so that they begged for no further message.
 - Yet, with the new covenant, disciples can approach Mt. Zion with confidence. There they are met by the living God with all His angels, the assembly of heaven, and Jesus. There they are made perfect and the voice is a better voice.
 - The sixth warning is now issued: **Do not refuse the voice speaking from heaven, GOD.** The Israelites refused His voice. We are now encouraged to listen. That voice once shook only the earth. Now, it will shake both the earth and the heavens. Why?
 - So that what can be shaken will be replaced by what cannot be shaken: God's Eternal Kingdom.
 - What should our response be to this? WORSHIP with reverence and awe! GOD IS AN ALL CONSUMING FIRE (Deut. 4:24)!!! There is NO other and in the end ALL will worship Him alone.
 - For Discussion
 - Why should we not refuse the voice of Him who speaks from heaven?
 - All of us are tempted to give up on our faith at times in our life. Why would the warning here in vv. 25-29 cause us to reconsider?

REFLECTION

- Who has been a model of faithful endurance in your life? Explain why.
- What are hindrances and entanglements that get in the way of our Christian race (list some)? Why do these seem to get in our way? What can we do in response to them?
- How has today's lesson affected your view of worship to God? Explain.
- What encouragement can we take away from today's lesson? How can we help others with this encouragement?

PRAYER

LESSON OUTLINE – Here are the lessons we will be studying the weeks to come.

- INTRODUCTION (January 5)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 12)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 19)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...But Still Human–Chapter 2 (January 26)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Moses–Chapter 3 (February 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 4 (February 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 5 (February 16)
- THEREFORE, Don't Fall Away–Chapter 6 (February 23)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Melchizedek–Chapter 7 (March 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Law–Chapter 8 (March 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Tabernacle–Chapter 9 (March 16)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Sacrifices–Chapter 10 (March 23)
- THEREFORE, Have Faith–Chapter 11 (March 30)
- THEREFORE, Stand Firm–Chapter 12 (April 6)
- THEREFORE, Offer Acceptable Sacrifices–Chapter 13 (April 13)
- CONCLUSION (April 27)