

God is Treating You as Sons

SPEAKER Matt Ryniker

DATE Sunday, June 2, 2024

PASSAGES Hebrews 12; Proverbs 9; Proverbs 17; Ephesians 5; Haggai 2

MESSAGE Begins at 1:09:20 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

God's discipline is not his anger and it is not his absence. It is the evidence that he has claimed you as a son and is forming Christ in you — and formation hurts the way all real growth hurts. The pain is not the promise failing; it is the promise doing its work.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Discipline is not punishment. Punishment answers what you did; discipline forms who you are becoming. A father who hands his kid the lawnmower is not always settling a score.
- ◆ If the good life means ease, God's discipline will feel like betrayal. Hebrews is written to people already tempted to quit for exactly that reason.
- ◆ "Why is this specific thing happening to me?" is usually unanswerable. The better question is what you do now — fix your eyes on Jesus and keep running.
- ◆ Earthly parents discipline "as it seemed best to them." God gets no such qualifier. He is never too harsh, never too soft, and never confused about the target.
- ◆ You can endure discipline without being trained by it. The peaceful fruit of righteousness goes to those who let themselves be trained.
- ◆ Sexual integrity and the shape of a marriage are part of God's formation program, not the church's own campaign. Headship, rightly understood, is a race to the bottom.
- ◆ Hebrews moves the church from a mountain no one could touch to a festal gathering. Hard seasons are not the hammer finally falling — there is no condemnation for those in Christ.

► 1:09:20

Matt likes preaching straight through books because it drops him into passages he would otherwise walk past, and the back half of Hebrews 12 is one of those. It only makes sense, he said, once you have given up a particular idea of what life is for.

1. What you think life is for decides how this passage sounds

If life is designed for revelry, pleasure and relaxing — if the goal is to avoid painful experience and enjoy yourself — then a God who deliberately takes his children through hard things is incoherent. “If he’s our buddy and God is love and we hate pain,” Matt said, then his discipline “doesn’t make any sense at all.” Best of all would be growth in a pill, since there is less exertion that way.

► 1:11:22

The church has embraced a different aim: that the best thing you can grow into is Christlikeness. Accept that, and God’s nurture looking sometimes like painful experience stops being a contradiction.

2. A cloud of witnesses with one testimony

► 1:12:26

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.”

HEBREWS 12:1-2 ↗

The long roster of chapter 11 is a strange crowd — you would want to be like some of them and not others — but their witness is unified: God is trustworthy, and entrusting yourself to him is worth it. Matt read the image as a courtroom as much as a stadium. They are not spectators watching you buy bananas and do laundry; they are witnesses taking the stand.

► 1:14:33

The best testimony is Christ’s own.

Consider him who endured such hostility from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. That is not passive aggression, Matt insisted — not “oh, you’re suffering a little, that’s cute.” The joy set before Jesus included the bride he was purchasing, which is to say it included you. And the repeated

warnings not to walk away tell you something about the readers: they were tempted to, because following Christ was costing them.

3. Discipline is not punishment

► 1:16:54

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

HEBREWS 12:5-6 ↗

► 1:17:56

Every household knows the difference. Extra dishes because you lied about a test is one thing. Yard work and chores when nobody is in trouble at all is another — that is character being built, and the kid asking to mow the lawn on a Saturday morning is not a common sight. Good fathers discipline. You have a good Father. So it stands to reason.

► 1:18:31

The real question is whether you trust his judgment, because the same correction sorts people out: reprove a scoffer and he will hate you; reprove a wise man and he will love you. Those without root wither under the cares of this life. Those who stay in the program get strengthened by it.

► 1:19:41

“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”

HEBREWS 12:7-8 ↗

Being outside that group is the thing to fear, not the sting.

“A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.” Cooperating is simply cheaper: if the Lord means for you to learn something, he will get you.

4. The wrong question, and a better one

► 1:21:23

People get granular with the why — why this, why now, why my toothpaste got recalled — and the answer usually does not come. “The point is not why this specific thing is happening to me,” Matt said. “What’s better is: okay, that is happening to you. What are you going to do about it?” Is someone walking out their weakness on you, or aiming at you on purpose, or is this a freak of nature? He does not know. He does know this: fix your eyes on Jesus and keep running.

5. On target, every time

► 1:23:08

“For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

HEBREWS 12:10–11 ↗

Matt did not defend the fathers who got it wrong, and he said plainly that for some in the room it was a disaster. His point was the qualifier. Parents correct as it *seems* best to them — too harsh, then too soft, then a walk around the block to try the conversation again, and the kid still has not got the picture. “I know my kids are going to need therapy for something. I don’t know what yet.” God gets no qualifier. He is not confused and he is not a fool; he knows exactly where to hit and exactly when.

► 1:24:49

Then the line worth taking home: you can be disciplined without being *trained* by it. Kicking, resisting at every turn, shouting back — the season still passes, and it leaves nothing behind. The fruit is promised to those trained by it.

6. We travel as a company

► 1:25:34

“Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet” — imagery Matt traced back to [Isaiah 35](#). Picture a worn-out company on the move. The fast wait for the slow. The strong cut the path. Those who know the way scout ahead; someone watches the rear; the ones liable to trip get watched over. That is what “strive for peace with everyone... see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God” looks like in the real world rather than the metaphor.

► 1:26:41

Bitterness gets named as a root for a reason: taking off the visible part leaves the thing alive. It is not something to play around with. And the uprooting is grace's own work — the grace that trains us to renounce ungodliness, the mercy that leads us to repentance. It is grace all the way down, and grace is what says no.

7. Esau, purity, and a race to the bottom

► 1:27:57

"See to it that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal." Unholy here means treating something set apart as ordinary — and that, Matt said, is exactly the confusion in our struggle with sin: the special things of God handled as regular, not worth fighting for.

► 1:28:30

He was blunt about the reputation this earns the church. "I know that some people feel like we fixate on it, but honestly we were told to." Keeping sexual life inside marriage is not the church's own crusade; it is part of the Father's formation program, and it is for our benefit. Behind it sits Paul's claim that a marriage is acting out a drama about Christ and the church — which is also why fathers are told not to exasperate their children, a word he cheerfully mangled twice.

► 1:31:16

And headship gets turned upside down. Jesus mocked the men who wanted the special greetings in the market and the good seats at parties, then washed feet — at the time a job you paid someone else to do. "We fellas as heads of our house ought to be serving so embarrassingly that if our wives don't submit to us, people on the outside are going to be like, dude, what is wrong with you." Matt's summary: the world races for the top; in the church we race for the bottom. That, too, is painful. That, too, is discipline.

8. Two mountains

► 1:33:25

Israel came to a mountain of blazing fire, darkness, gloom, tempest and a voice — so holy that a beast touching it was to be stoned, so terrifying that the people begged God to stop speaking and send Moses in their place. Even Moses said he trembled with fear. Matt admitted he would have loved to be there, and that every indication is he would have hated it.

► 1:35:08

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.”

HEBREWS 12:22-24 ↗

Still holy, but less freak-out and more party — a Father inviting cleansed children in. Which settles the question that hard seasons raise. Is he finally bringing the hammer? No: there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. He may let you endure. He is not condemning you. And in union with him you are already touching the city with foundations that Abraham was looking for.

9. A kingdom that cannot be shaken

► 1:37:27

“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens” — Haggai’s line (Haggai 2:6) quoted to make a point about targeting. God removes what can be removed so that what cannot be shaken remains, and he knows precisely what he is aiming at: a kingdom full of people who look like his Son.

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”

HEBREWS 12:28-29 ↗

“He is out to destroy parts of you, maybe,” Matt said, “but to preserve and nurture and strengthen you. There are parts of you he wants to die, and death’s usually painful — but with his perspective, you’d be grateful. Thank you for taking that out of my life.”

10. He is not passive-aggressive

► 1:39:31

Two traps close the message. If you have not grasped that God’s character and grace are trustworthy, you will read his discipline as condemnation and assume he is angry — as though anger were the only reason a father ever corrects a child. And if your idea of love has no room for challenge or rebuke, resentment is only a matter of time. Many fall away for exactly that reason: love was not supposed to hurt.

► 1:41:18

So look at Jesus — mocked, called demon-possessed and crazy, lied about, antagonized through his own friends and family, beaten before he was crucified. Matt named the internet joke where a bloodied Jim Caviezel listens to someone explain their day, and then refused it. Jesus is not making a comparison. Having gone through it, he has compassion for you and for problems he does not consider small. Which leaves the same instruction the chapter opened with: keep running, eyes fixed on him, with a joy set before you too.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Hebrews 12:1–2](#)
- [Hebrews 12:3–4](#)
- [Hebrews 12:5–6](#)
- [Proverbs 9:8](#)
- [Hebrews 12:7–8](#)
- [Proverbs 17:10](#)
- [Hebrews 12:10–11](#)
- [Hebrews 12:12–13](#)
- [Isaiah 35:3–4](#)
- [Hebrews 12:14–15](#)
- [Titus 2:11–12](#)
- [Romans 2:4](#)
- [Hebrews 12:16–17](#)
- [Ephesians 5:31–32](#)
- [Ephesians 6:4](#)
- [Hebrews 12:18–21](#)
- [Hebrews 12:22–24](#)
- [Romans 8:1](#)
- [Hebrews 11:10](#)
- [Hebrews 12:25–27](#)
- [Haggai 2:6](#)
- [Hebrews 12:28–29](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Be honest about your working definition of the good life. Where does it quietly assume that God's job is to keep you comfortable?
2. Matt separated punishment from discipline. Which of the two do you instinctively hear when a hard season arrives, and where did you learn to hear it that way?
3. Hebrews says the fruit goes to those "trained by" discipline, not merely those who survive it. What would being trained by your current hard thing actually involve?
4. In the traveling company — the ones cutting the path, scouting ahead, watching the rear, watching over the ones liable to trip — which are you at the moment, and which do you need someone to be for you?
5. Name one thing the consuming fire is burning out of you right now. What is one specific way you will stop resisting it this week?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3bLTCVmhjw&t=4160s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.