

## IS DISCIPLINE TRAINING OR PUNISHMENT?

When I was in high school I willingly endured torturous training and discipline. Everyday for about 3 hours I would run up down stadium steps, lift weights, run wind sprints, do suicide and fourth quarter drills until I was exhausted. I hated it - and yet I loved being able to play into the 3<sup>rd</sup> overtime



during a game and not be tired. Our coach was a man who believed in discipline - and he was deadly serious about it. And anyone who was not serious about the discipline necessary to play ball for him did not make the team. As I was reading in Hebrews 12 the thought that God disciplines His children came through clearly.

**Hebrews 12:5-7** (NET) And have you forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons? "My son, do not scorn the Lord's DISCIPLINE or give up when He CORRECTS you. [6] "For the Lord DISCIPLINES the one he loves and CHASTISES every son he accepts." [7] Endure your SUFFERING as DISCIPLINE; God is treating you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not DISCIPLINE?

I think that in the past I have interpreted these verses through the eyes of a child who has been disobedient and is suffering punishment. Certainly punishment for wrongdoing can be part of God's discipline. The word chastise (vs. 6) means to punish. Verse seven reminds us that many times discipline comes in some form of suffering. So in God's Word discipline also means to correct and instruct. There are times when God is not punishing rather He is shaping and molding us through His discipline.

Speaking of human parents the writer to the Hebrews says...

**Hebrews 12:10-11** (NET) ...they DISCIPLINED us for a little while as seemed good to them, but HE does so for OUR benefit, that we may share His holiness. [11] Now ALL DISCIPLINE seems painful at the time, not joyful. But later it PRODUCES the fruit of peace and righteousness for those TRAINED by it.

Good parents do their best to discipline their children, but God like the perfect parent -OR- coach brings DISCIPLINE into our lives SO THAT there will be a harvest of godliness in our lives. Once I started seeing the things God brought into my life as an incentive for growth rather than punishment it changed my perspective. I was much more willing to embrace those hard things because they were for MY GOOD. The discipline my coach forced on me trained me so that I could play at full speed all the way to the end of the game. God TRAINS us through the discipline of painful things SO THAT we will be able to FINISH the race which He has place before us WELL. (Heb. 12.1-2)

**PRAYER:** Lord God, please help me to remember that all the things You are doing in my life is for my benefit and good. You want me to bring You honor and glory by the way I think, speak, and act. Lord, I long to finish each day well - in a way that really does honor You. Help me to see the hard things that come along as part of your discipline in MY LIFE to strengthen me and encourage me. Thank You.