


JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

HEBREWS READING GUIDE

WEEK 22



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

WEEK 22
OCTOBER 30, 2023



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

©2023 CHURCH IN THE SQUARE
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.



WEEK 22

HEBREWS 12:1-11

DAY 1
HEBREWS 12:1
LAYING ASIDE SIN
5

DAY 2
HEBREWS 12:2
PUTTING SHAME TO SHAME
7

DAY 3
HEBREWS 12:3-4
CONSIDERING CHRIST'S ENDURANCE
9

DAY 4
HEBREWS 12:5-6
RECEIVING THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE
11

DAY 5
HEBREWS 12:7-11
TRUSTING THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE
13

DAY 1 LAYING ASIDE SIN

First read Hebrews 12:1.

There's some bad news and some good news. The bad news is that sin **"clings so closely"** (v.1b). We've all experienced this, *haven't we?* Destructive behaviors, disordered loves, and shameful ways of thinking are intrusive and sticky—they show up and remain, without invitation. They feel more like powers that overwhelm us rather than decisions we make (see Ephesians 6:12).

In Romans, Paul wrestled with his sinful nature as if it were another being within his being. **"For I do not understand my own actions,"** he protested, **"For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate"** (Romans 7:15). Sin conquers our better impulses to know, do, and love the good God has written on our hearts (see Jeremiah 31:33).

But, remember, there's also good news. You see, though sin clings to us, in Christ we have the power to **"lay aside every weight"** (v.1 a). The writer of Hebrews "recalls the usual preparation of athletes stripping off their clothing for a race so that nothing will impede them" (O'Brien, 451). As runners remove unnecessary layers of clothing for optimal performance, followers of Jesus remove unnecessary habits, loves, and beliefs for their well-being and that of their community.

This **"laying aside"** is possible through the cross. That's because, in his death, Jesus prevails over the power that prevails over us (see 1 Corinthians 15:56-57). While sin clings closely, Jesus clings closer still.

DAY 1 LAYING ASIDE SIN

1. Why do you think God wants us to “lay aside” sin?
2. What sin is clinging closely to you right now? What destructive habit, love, or belief must you lay aside?
3. How does the cross comfort you when you sin? How does the cross help you to defeat sin daily?

Heavenly Father ...

*Thank you for the clarity your Word brings to my sin and my hope. Right now I can't seem to lay aside _____
_____. Forgive me. Help me. Heal me. By your Spirit, empower me to walk in righteousness for your glory and my good and the good of others*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2

PUTTING SHAME TO SHAME

First read Hebrews 12:2.

Crucifixion was a shameful way to die. In the ancient world, it was reserved for the most egregious criminal offenses. A prominent Jewish historian named Josephus called crucifixion "the most wretched of deaths" (*Jewish War*, 7.203). But the shame of dying on a cross wasn't confined to physical pain, social disrepute, and emotional trauma. It was also spiritual.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy when he explains that **"Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"** (Galatians 3:13). When Jesus died on the cross, he felt the full weight of shame. He was physically exposed (John 19:23), socially mocked (Luke 18:32), emotionally undone (John 19:30), and spiritually separated from his Father (Mark 15:34).

Jesus was shamed on the cross. Yet somehow at the very same moment, he was exposing sin.

When **"the founder and perfecter of our faith"** was shamed he despised shame in return (v.2b). Jesus scoffed at the ignominy of the cross. We might say in his crucifixion Jesus was putting shame to shame. His death makes physical healing, social harmony, emotional peace, and spiritual union with the Father possible for sinful humanity. Jesus could say along with Joseph, **"you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today"** (Genesis 50:20). When we look to Jesus we see the one **"seated at the right hand of the throne of God"** (v.2c). We see glory and no more shame. Therefore in our shame, we have the hope of glory.

DAY 2

PUTTING SHAME TO SHAME

1. What does this passage teach us about God?
2. How (or where) does shame show up in your life?
3. How does Jesus' work on the cross bring hope to the ways you feel and experience shame?

Heavenly Father ...

May the hope of the one who "endured the cross" wash away our guilt and shame, and fill us with honor and glory.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3 CONSIDERING CHRIST'S ENDURANCE

First read Hebrews 12:3-4.

Shame hates eye contact. That's why we have a hard time looking at someone (even ourselves) when we feel shame. That's what makes the invitation to **"look to Jesus"** and **"consider him"** so profound (v.2,3a). It's an invitation to not only look but meditate upon Christ amidst our battle with sin. Namely, the writer of Hebrews instructs us to think deeply about Christ's endurance.

While shame seeks isolation from God, the gospel seeks intimacy with God. When we behold Christ we see **"him who endured from sinners such hostility"** (v.3b). We see him who suffered. We see him who struggled. We see him who died. We see someone who went through what we're going through (see Hebrews 4:15). We're invited to consider something in him that is all too familiar to us who endure this **"light and momentary affliction"** (2 Corinthians 4:17). Christ is sympathetic toward us. But his gospel is more than sympathy.

While it's certainly encouraging to see that Christ suffered as we do, the real power of the gospel is that Christ sees us in our suffering. The psalmist celebrated that **"The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man"** (Psalm 33:13). When we consider Christ's endurance we realize that the **"joy that was set before him"** was his Father's glory and our salvation (v.2). He was looking to the Father. He was looking at us. We can endure shame like Christ, not simply because we see him, but much more because he sees us.

DAY 3 CONSIDERING CHRIST'S ENDURANCE

1. When you consider or look to Jesus, what do you see?
2. How does looking to Jesus first change the way you look at your struggles and burdens?
3. Do you believe Jesus sees you? Why or why not?

Heavenly Father ...

Thank you for seeing me. Help me to trust that when you see me, all shall be well.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4 RECEIVING THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE

First read Hebrews 12:5-6.

Who are you?

How you answer that question has far-reaching implications. Maybe your identity is centered on your work. And so, when the Lord withholds a promotion or we lose our job, we get angry and resentful. Perhaps you see yourselves through your money. And so when the Lord doesn't fill your accounts the way you'd like, it's easy to get anxious and bitter. Other times you might believe you're defined by your behavior. And so, when addiction persists, humility seems impossible, or you keep succumbing to sin, you get despondent.

According to the Bible, we are not our work, money, or behaviors—each is merely an expression of God's grace with liberties and limitations. God tells us ***"I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me"*** (2 Corinthians 6:18). You are a child of the Heavenly Father. That's who you are. Seeing our sonship and daughterhood as foundational to our identity helps us understand anything and everything else, especially disappointment and pain.

Hebrews reminds us that the Lord ***"disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives"*** (v.6). In other words, when life isn't going as we please or plan we shouldn't get callous. We should get curious. *What is my Father teaching me? How is my Father shaping me? How is my Father correcting me?* To be sure, not every challenge is divine discipline. But your Heavenly Father does discipline you because, through Christ, you are his loved child.

DAY 4 RECEIVING THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE

1. Do you have a hard time seeing God as Father? Why or why not?
2. Is the Father disciplining you right now? How do you discern the difference between his correction and other forms of difficulty?
3. How does the cross enable us to see the goodness of godly discipline?

Heavenly Father ...

Ground my identity in your Fatherly love. Free me from a false sense of myself so that I can see your gracious lessons, transformation, and correction. Help me to rest as your loved child.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5

TRUSTING THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE

First read Hebrews 12:7-11.

No one likes discipline. In the moment, **“all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant”** (v.11a). But righteous discipline teaches us truth, heals our brokenness, and corrects our disordered loves. Discipline from our loving Heavenly Father **“yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”** (v.11b). When God corrects us he’s freeing us from sin and empowering us to bear the fruit of righteousness.

Theologian Elton Trueblood said that “we are most free when we are most bound” (*The New Man for Our Time*). This, of course, is a paradox. In modern society, we believe we are most free when we are most empowered to make our own choices without moral constriction. This, of course, is a contradiction. After all, to demand that freedom have no moral boundaries is itself a moral boundary. It’s like the elderly prisoner in Disney’s *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. When his cage falls and breaks open, he steps out only to trip on the cage and fall immediately into a pillory. *I’m free! I’m free! Dang it.* Freedom quickly became a new bondage.

This is why Trueblood goes on to say, “not just any way of being bound will suffice; what matters is the character of our binding.” Our bondage must match our design. While a fish is free in the depths of the ocean, it’s suffocated by oxygen. It’s just the opposite for humans.

Spiritually, you and I are only free in our relationship with God—we’re made for and by him. Sin causes us to wander and separate from him and his family, trapping us in death and darkness. Godly discipline then, is the way in which our Heavenly Father keeps us bound to his love and grace. That’s why discipline demonstrates we are legitimate children (v.8).

DAY 5


TRUSTING THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE

1. Do you trust God's discipline? Why or why not?
2. What righteous boundary are you frustrated by or rebelling against right now?
3. How does Jesus' death free us from sin and bind us to righteousness?

Heavenly Father ...

Honestly, I think I know what's best for me. I think I know who I am and what freedom looks like without you. Forgive me. That's foolishness and only causes my sinful condition to worsen. Free me from this lie and destructive pattern. Bind me to your love through your kind discipline.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



JESUS OVER EVERYTHING

To receive updates about this reading guide and discover more gospel resources to help you enjoy the truth and beauty of Jesus, please visit churchinthesquare.com.



CHURCH IN THE **SQUARE**

©2023 CHURCH IN THE SQUARE
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.