

## Will You Follow Him?: Enduring As Training part 1

Steve Watson, November 18, 2018

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*We must become like a mature person, growing until we become like Christ and have his perfection.* -Ephesians 4:13b NCV

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As we have been considering over the past several weeks, the call to discipleship can be understood as a call to become more and more like Jesus in three areas:

- a deepening relationship with the Lord that is active and *personal* in the fullest sense of
- a heart that is being continually transformed to be more and more like Jesus
- increasing effectiveness in collaborating with the Lord and others in the activity of the kingdom

*This three-part vision is the first of a three step process that is essential for effective discipleship. The three steps, which are progressive in nature, are:*

- a vision that has, at least to some degree, captured the heart
- a 'yes' that is firm and resolute, even in the face of the unknown
- actions that are within our power and will help our maturing

Over the past several weeks our focus has been on understanding *vision* and a *'yes' that is firm and resolute*, which lead naturally to actions that will move us toward fulfilling the vision. In this sermon we begin to focus on what form those actions take. They can be most easily be understood in two categories:

- endure the challenges of everyday life as God's training
  - This has to do with how we respond to challenges.
- arrange your life for spiritual transformation
  - This has to do with activities that we initiate.

*Working together, these two types of activities are what make...*

- a disciplined life
- a disciple's lifestyle

The specific focus of the remainder of this, and the following, sermon is *endure the challenges of everyday life as God's training*. The importance of this aspect of discipleship is well established in the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments. An effective place to begin the study of this important concept is Hebrews 12:7:

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*Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?* CSB

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- The word rendered *discipline* is the Greek word paideia, which most literally means *to train* and was originally used of training children.

- This detail is important because of our cultural tendency to think of punishment when we hear the word *discipline*.
- *Suffering* is not actually part of the original Greek text but has been added for clarification by the CSB translators. Other translations use *trials* or *hardships* or similar words.
- The word rendered *endure* is the Greek word hupomeno, which means *to remain under* or *to continue to bear up under trials, hardships or suffering.... or anything else that might be considered a challenge*.
- Considering these details, the verse could be translated:

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*Endure as training: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not train?*

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***Training in our culture is used in three primary ways:***

- a process aimed at forming a child's character and values
- a process aimed at teaching a person or animal a particular skill or type of behavior
- a process aimed at improving a person's capacity, productivity and performance

***Training from a New Testament discipleship perspective can be understood this way:***

- a process aimed at forming a disciple's character, values and spiritual sensitivity

***As disciples of Jesus, we are called to endure (whatever life challenge we might be presented with) as a process that God will use to form our character, values and spiritual sensitivity. This enduring can be a response to any type of life challenge. Some examples are:***

- physical suffering
- suffering due to loss
- parental suffering
- empathetic suffering
- unjust treatment
- financial hardship
- relationship challenges
- difficult seasons of life

***The list could go on and on, but the critical point is this: Whatever life challenge we may face, whether it is simply the result of living in a fallen world, fallout from our own poor choices, or spiritual warfare, we are called to endure... with an awareness that God will use it as part of our training.***

***That last statement - with an awareness that God will use it as part of our training - is important because our cooperation with the Lord in the training process will certainly make the training more effective. Two alternative responses are possible:***

- Bearing up under the challenge, but with the total focus being on getting out of the circumstances as soon as you possibly can or on simply surviving.
- Becoming resentful toward God because he has allowed painful circumstances in your life.