

#### TEXT SUMMARY

A survivor of the Holocaust once observed that we can endure any "what" so long as there is a "why." In our text, <u>Hebrews 12:4-11</u>, the writer uses two comparisons to help his readers frame their suffering: he compares it with the sufferings of Christ and with the suffering of a child disciplined by her father.

## INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

- 1. The writer compares the suffering of his readers (v. 4) to the suffering of Christ (v. 1-3). How was the suffering of Christ different (and deeper)?
- 2. The writer compares the suffering of his readers to the suffering they endured from their parents. What two limitations are built-in to the way earthly fathers discipline their children? (See v. 10.)
- 3. Not everyone always benefits from suffering. What qualifying phrase appears at the end of v. 11?

#### **DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):**

CS Lewis once observed that love is sterner than mere kindness. We all know from our own childhood (and many of us know from raising our own children) that parental love is more discerning and more complex than simple affection: sometimes the parent must inflict suffering to help the child grow in character.

This is a theme that NT writers explore elsewhere. What are some of the benefits that suffering can bring to God's people?

- Rom 5:3-5
- James 1:2-4, 12

# **DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE**



### SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

- The Book of Job provides important context in this matter of how we can respond to suffering and how we can comfort the suffering.
  - Job's initial response on the worst day of his life reveals a deep faith.
    - How did he respond to the news that his beloved sons and daughters had all died? (See Job 1:20-21.)
    - This benediction was not a theology he could have manufactured in the moment; doubtless, he had meditated on the goodness and wisdom of God for many years. In your own experience of suffering, what truths about God have come to mind to steady your faith?
  - Job's friends did the right thing for seven days Someone who is grieving doesn't need to hear an explanation. What did Job's friends do right before they opened their mouths to attempt an explanation? (See Job 2:11-13.)
  - In your own periods of deep suffering, what have been the most comforting words and actions of people who came to comfort you? What are some of the words that were intended as comfort but had the opposite effect?
- 2. Our text stipulates that the benefits of suffering accrue "to those who have been trained by it" (v. 11). Can you think of a time when you were unwilling to "be trained" by your suffering and so wasted the opportunity God had provided?