

INTRODUCE

If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, please turn with me to Hebrews chapter 12.

- If you don't have a Bible with you,
- you are welcome to use one of the
- hard-backed black bibles under every chair.
- If you don't have a Bible,
 - or you just want a new one,
- please take that one as a gift from us.
 - Hebrews 12 is on page **1008**.

We're gonna do some flipping in our Bibles today, so get ready.

INTRODUCTION

Well, hey, I know I've said this the last couple weeks,

- But the way we primarily preach here at Fathom
- is straight through books of the Bible
- verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter.

And we will do that starting right after Labor Day.

Our Fall sermon series will be in the book of **SLIDE** **EPHESIANS**

- 13 weeks.
- 6 chapters...
 - I know I misspoke last week and said 5...
 - and I appreciate your correction.

And just so you're aware, Ephesians comes out the gate swinging, cause the first week we'll cover predestination!

- So, if you've ever wondered about the whole
- Free-will vs. predestination debate,
- come back in two weeks,
- and we'll just put that one to bed!

But for two more weeks we're in a quick mini-series called

SLIDE WHAT I LEARNED...

I was on sabbatical this summer, and today I want to tackle another theological topic I feel like I learned about on my sabbatical...and that's

SLIDE DISCIPLESHIP

EXPLAIN: SOMETHING BIG

I started my sabbatical really wanting God to do something big in my life.

- I really wanted him to speak something big to me,
- or grow me deeper in a really tangible way,
- or give me a new word
 - or a new direction
 - or a new passion for Fathom.

I just wanted to have a big, like, mountain top moment.

TRANSITION

And like I told you two-weeks-ago; I didn't really have one of those moments.

- I really WANTED to grow...
 - It wasn't that I was apathetic...
 - or lazy...
 - or unmotivated...
- I really WANTED that moment...but I didn't get it.

And it got me thinking about DISCIPLESHIP.

When we actually desire to be discipled...to grow up in our faith...

- How does God do it?
- How do we mature?
- How do we GO DEEPER?
- How does this stuff work?

Well, I have three observations for us today.

Let's start in Hebrews, chapter 12. We'll look at verses 1 through 2.

HEBREWS 12:1-2

[1] 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, [2] 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, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

EXPLAIN

So, in context, Hebrews 12 is giving us instructions

- on how to continue in discipleship...
- regardless of our circumstances.

In chapter 11 the writer showed examples of faithful followers of God...

And he made the point that:

- In this life of faith, things can go very well for you...
- And in this life of faith, things can go very poorly for you...

And right on the heels of that, the writer says,

THEREFORE, let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

So, the life of discipleship...is a race.

And here's what's so incredible about that verse.

He says,

- there are two things
- that encumber you
- in this discipleship race.
 - Sin...
 - AND weight.
 - And they are separate!

There are sinful things that jack you on this discipleship run...

but then there are also non-sinful things that do the same.

- And he tells us,
 - with both of those things,
- to lay them aside.
- To cast them off.

His message is: Throw off everything that would hold you back!

- So, there are some morally neutral things,
 - not just sins,
- but morally neutral things that we need to cast off,
- so that we can run this race with endurance.

ILLUSTRATION: SWIMMING

It's an athletic illustration here. Training for a race.

Maybe like track or swimming...my mind goes straight to the Olympics.

But there are some sports that I only watch during the Olympics.

- Running.
- Gymnastics.
- Cross-country skiing.
- Curling!
 - Like, I'm never down on a random Tuesday thinking,
 - "Man, I could watch me some curling right about now!"

And swimming is the same way.

- I only care about swimming during the Olympics.

Now, as far as I know,

- in the Olympics, if you want,
- you can swim a race dressed like me:
 - in a pair of denim and boots. Right?
- But can you imagine that?
 - Missy Franklin in a pair of denim?
 - Michael Phelps swimming in boots?

It might be legal, but you've never seen it, right?

No! They strip themselves of everything:

- body fat,
- hair, right,
 - all shaved up naked-mole-rat style?
 - I mean I've seen swimmers shave their eyebrows.
 - That's the reason I'm not a professional swimmer.
 - I like my eyebrows too much!
 - But that's the only reason.
- Descent clothing?
 - I mean, if wearing a Speedo isn't a sin, it should be.

But they're doing all that because it's helpful for the objective.

They don't want anything to slow them down.

APPLICATION

This is what the writer is saying. As Christians,

- IT IS about what I HAVE TO give up because it is sin...
- But it's ALSO about what I CAN give up that's slowing me down

So, in your discipleship...

- are there some sins you still need to put to death?
- What about some non-sinful stuff that is slowing you down?

Part of discipleship is throwing off hindering things.

ILLUSTRATION: MAF

But another thought struck me.

- Now, I've told you, I run.
 - And I always want to make the point
 - that I am not a runner...
- I run.
 - Some of y'all are runners,
 - and you put me to shame...
- but I run.

And one of the books I read this sabbatical was a book about running.

It's by this running coach who has pioneered a training method,

- called the MAF method,
- and it's somewhat controversial in the running world,
- but this guy has trained some of the winningest...
 - distance runners
 - and tri-athletes
 - in the world
 - again and again.

Now, I'll oversimplify this method for our purposes today:

- his method is that you should train
- at a low heart rate.
 - In exercise, heart rates are measured in two categories:
 - aerobic and anaerobic:

- Aerobic heart rates are best for long distance or endurance exercise,
- while anaerobic are better for high energy, short bursts of speed.

And the MAF method proposes that...

- if you almost EXCLUSIVELY train at an aerobic,
 - or slower heartrate...
- you will actually get much faster over the long-haul, and he's having some pretty convincing success with his method.

POINT

You have to run slow...to run fast.

Y'all, this is my first observation about discipleship. Discipleship is...

SLIDE SLOW not FAST

I wanted God to do something FAST during my sabbatical.

- But I've been a Christian for more than 20 years now,
- and MOST of my growth has been SLOW...
- like, sometimes it feels excruciatingly SLOW!
 - Anyone else?

This is why the writer of Hebrews says to run with endurance.

You have to run slow...to run fast.

- We don't serve a microwave God.
 - He doesn't have Hot Pocket dreams for your life.
- God requires much more of a crock pot type of faith...
- a slow cooker...

- and that's gonna take time.
- That's gonna take marinating.
- That's gonna be SLOW not FAST.

BLANK SLIDE

TRANSITION

Now, even when we REALLY want to grow or mature or be discipled...

AND we recognize that it's gonna be a marathon, not a sprint...

- we still often miss it...
- we often fail to recognize it.

Let me point this out to you...turn to Mark chapter 4.

- Mark 4 is to the left of Hebrews,
- and it's on page 839 in those black bibles.

So, there are a few parables in Mark 4 that are really interesting,

- but the first one,
 - and probably the most famous one,
- is found in Mark 4, starting in verse 2:

MARK 4:2-8

[2] And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: [3] "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

[5] Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. [6] And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. [7]

Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. [8] And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

EXPLAIN

So, this parable means that there are different ways to receive God’s Word.

- The seed is God’s Word.
- The sower plants the word in different soils.
- And the soils are different people,
 - specifically,
 - how the people receive the seed
 - and produce a yield.

So, I’ve preached on this passage before...

but I want you to notice something here...

- four different soils...
- four different ways to receive the word...
- four different results...
- and even different yields depending on the soil.

But there is only one common denominator in this parable.

The one common denominator is the seed.

POINT

The reason, I think, that most of us miss what God is doing in our lives,

- is because it comes in a form...
 - that we aren't expecting,
 - or looking for,
 - or, frankly, even wanting.

And it's my second observation for this morning.

Discipleship is most often **SLIDE SMALL not BIG**

You see, we expect big and impressive.

When God shows up in our life,

- we expect big,
- monumental,
- life altering change.

And in some ways, it is that!

But it can also be disorienting when it shows up in seed form.

The work of God almost always begins smaller than expected.

- **So, we can miss out on what God is trying to do in our lives,**
- **because we aren't expecting it to look like seed.**
 - **We ask for growth...God gives us seed.**
 - **We ask for fruit...God gives us seed.**
 - **We want to become a tree...**
 - **an oak of righteousness!**
 - **God says, "that big ole tree only comes from a tiny seed."**

EXODUS

You wanna do some Old Testament? We've got time! Let's do this.

- Turn all the way back to the second book of the Bible...
- Exodus 16.
- Exodus 16 is on page **58**.

So, back in Exodus, after the Israelites get out of Egypt, remember?

- Let my people go...
- plagues...
- walking on dry ground...

All that stuff happens in Exodus chapters 1 through 15...

- but in chapter 16,
- the text says that the people of Israel grumble against Moses.
 - Why?
- They got hungry.
 - Not even that...they got hangry, ok?
 - They want some bread!

ILLUSTRATION: OLIVE GARDEN

It's like when you get to the Olive Garden...

- come on now, we live in the burbs!
- It's like Italian Chilis!

But they seat you, and your waitress comes over to you and says,

- *"Hey, I'm Jessica and I'll be taking care of you..."*
- *Can I get you some drinks started?*
- *Would you like to hear the specials?"*

And you're like,

- "Of course you can..."
 - Jessica...
- right after you bring us a basket
- of those garlicky and buttery breadsticks!"

Right?

- "Get back there,
- get me some bread,
- and then we can talk about everything else..."
 - Jessica!"

That's what's going on here.

- They hungry.
- And they complain to Moses,
- so he goes to God,
- and God's gonna provide them with bread from heaven, right?

Manna. Or as it's known in my house...Chipotle.

But check out this verse from Exodus 16. Verse 31.

EXODUS 16:31

[31] Now the house of Israel called its name manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

Now hold on a minute...seed? It was like coriander seed.

- "Wait, God, we prayed for bread!"

They thought it was going to be fully formed bread...

but what they got was not what they expected.

Actually, look back to Exodus 16:15

EXODUS 16:15

[15] When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?"

For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat."

APPLICATION

Now, all you Bible scholars...

- if you look at your text close,
- there's a little number next to the phrase "What is it?"
- And if you look at your footnote,
- what does that mean? Manna.

They saw it, and they said to one another, "Manna." What is it?

- God I asked you for bread...what is this?
- God I asked you for growth...what is this?
- God I asked you for what I desired...what is this?
- God I asked you to bring me to the right school...what is this?
- God I asked you for the right job...what is this?
- God I asked you for a spouse...what is this?

Some of you are wondering what God is up to in your life...

Some of you are wondering why you aren't growing...

Some of you are wondering why it seems like God isn't moving...

- But maybe God's giving you seed,
- and you're missing it by looking for bread!

And you throw your hands up in the air, and say, "*what is this!?!*"

And God would say to you,

- "*I gave you the seed...*
 - *you've gotta plant it*
 - *and you've gotta water it*
 - *and you've gotta nourish it*
- *and I'll make it grow...*
 - *but I don't give bread...*
 - *I don't give fruit...*
 - *I don't give trees...*
 - *I give seeds.*"

TRANSITION

Discipleship is

- SLOW not FAST.
- It's SMALL not BIG.

One more.

BLANK SLIDE

Turn to Galatians chapter 2. Galatians 2 is on page **972**.

Last scripture of the morning. Good job on all this Bible work, y'all!

AGAIN?

So, once you're saved...once you become a Christian...

- there will come moments in your Christian journey,
 - where yet again,
- you're confronted by the reality
- that you're not quite what you thought you were.

Where you realize that you're still...kinda...a mess.

- And it's like, *"Really?!?"*
 - There are few things as painful as that moment.

I call it the AGAIN moment.

- You thought you were better than that,
- or stronger than that,
- or beyond that...
- only, you find yourself there AGAIN!

You ever said,

- *"God, I promise to never do this again!"*
- *"God, I'll never look at that stuff again..."*
- *God I'll never drink that much again...*
- *God I'll never yell at her like that again...*
- *God, I'll never do that again!"*

Only to fall back into that same thing.

And you're like, *"AGAIN!?!?"*

Anyone feel me here?

Oh, just me?

Is this a safe place to admit this?

- I still have those things in my life!
- And you do to!

We all have compulsions that we still hate.

- You know why?
- CAUSE DISCIPLESHIP IS SLOW!

Now, if you are saved, when you get to those AGAIN moments,

- you will be there NOT with your salvation on the line...
 - cause that cannot be snatched from you...
- but you WILL be there with fullness of life on the line.

And the temptation is to succumb to the shame of those moments.

ILLUSTRATION: COLORADO SPRINGS

On sabbatical we did a quick little road trip down to the sand dunes.

And on the way back we drove through Colorado Springs,

- now that's where I'm from...
- that's where I grew up.

And as I was driving north on I-25 through my hometown this summer,

- I felt some incredible pangs of nostalgia.
 - Shame over things I did back in the day.
 - Guilt over people that I hurt.

You see, I got saved at the end of High School...

so, I can remember what happened when I first got saved!

Overnight I was in love with Jesus.

- Excited,
- passionate,
- all in!

But overnight, my REAL-LIFE CHANGE wasn't that drastic.

- I still was enslaved to lust and porn.
- The crew I ran with partied pretty hard,
 - and the desire to smoke pot and drink
 - didn't just disappear.
- Pride in my abilities was there.
- Selfishness in wanting life to go my way was still there.
- Anger and sadness and fear were deeply rooted in my heart

And all that didn't just disappear when I accepted Jesus as Lord.

So, as I'm driving that road, recalling the person I was in High School,

- there's this insidious little voice of the enemy
- that speaks to me in those moments,
 - telling me that I'm not loved by Christ.
 - Telling me that I'm not lovely in his sight.
 - How could he love me when I've broken so much...
 - when I've messed so much up.

And then the voice says,

- how come you still struggle...
- with some of the same things...
- you did when you were 16?

Listen, some of these things I've found victory in.

Over 20 years of following him,

- I'm not enslaved to porn...
- I'm not jonesing for a joint anymore...
 - But that pride...
 - that selfishness...
 - that fear and anger...

They still rear their ugly faces...

- and I hate it!
- And the enemy uses it against me!

And in those moments, I have to remember Galatians 2:20

GALATIANS 2:20

[20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

APPLICATION

So, when my enemy brings up the failures of my past...

OR when I'm wracked with shame because I fail AGAIN...

- *"I should be further along than this!*
- *I'm a pastor for goodness sake!*
- *What is wrong with me?"*

The truth I cover myself with, is this verse.

I have been crucified.

- That Chris...who did all those things...is dead.
- He was crucified with Christ.
 - Every sin,
 - past,
 - present,
 - and even future sins,
 - were nailed up onto the cross with Christ.

And now, I am striving more and more to let Christ live through me.

Now, I try to live by faith. Day by day.

POINT

So, discipleship is SLOW not FAST.

It's SMALL not BIG.

And finally, discipleship is **SLIDE STEP-BY-STEP** not **ALL-AT-ONCE**

ILLUSTRATION: CARFAX

And I always use the Carfax illustration, ok? But I just think it's so helpful.

See, some of us think

- in those painful nostalgia moments,
- or when we have an AGAIN moment,
- we think that God has some sort of buyers' remorse.

Like he's up in heaven going,

- *"Gosh, had I known she was going to do that..."*
- *Spirit, get over here...are you seeing this!?!"*

But that's simply not what the Bible teaches.

While we were STILL sinners, Christ died for us.

So, it's like God ran a Carfax on you.

And it told him everything you've done, and everything you will do.

- And the report said:
 - broken...
 - too many miles...
 - leaks oil...
 - rusty body...
 - sketchy suspension...
 - DO NOT BUY THIS CAR.

And God goes, *"I'll take it."*

But this is where it connects to discipleship.

Because, hear me,

- he doesn't just buy you,
 - and put you in the garage.
- Nor does he snap his fingers
 - and magically restore you ALL-AT-ONCE.

No!

- God begins a full restoration process on you
- that will go STEP-BY-STEP for the rest of your life.

We call that progressive sanctification.

God making you into the man or woman you are supposed to be.

TRANSITION

So, if you are in Christ...

- you AREN'T the wreck that you used to be.
- You ARE being transformed.
- You ARE changing.
 - It's just that's messier
 - and grimier
 - and takes way longer
 - than anyone wants to be honest about.

It's STEP-BY-STEP!

- But when we ARE honest about that,
- and we BELIEVE the truth about us...
 - that we have been crucified with Christ...
- then we can run TO HIME,
 - not FROM HIM in shame,
- when those insidious whispers start up.

CONCLUSION **BLANK SLIDE WITH PADS**

So, this is what I learned on Sabbatical.

Man, I wanted a mountain top experience.

But God kindly reminded me about

- SLOW,
- SMALL,
- STEP-BY-STEP discipleship.

And he reminded me, once again, who he is...and who I am.

So, I ask you this:

- Do you know him?
- Do you know him?
- Do you have any desire to submit to him?

Remember the start of this sermon...you've gotta want him to grow you...

- So, is there any objective evidence in your life to shows that?

If not, I just want to invite you into a slow, small, step-by-step journey.

- Take that seed today
- and plant it,
- and start the journey to see it grow up.

And if you DO love him,

- but you're frustrated
- or worried
- or tired
- or ashamed...

If you're at the AGAIN moment...

- remember who you are.

You have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer you who lives,

but Christ who lives in you.

Let's pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Chandler, Matt. *Justification*.
- Chavez, Jabin. *Multiply*.