

Sermon Outline

“The Father’s Discipline” – Hebrews 12:1-11 – Joshua Harris – July 10, 2011

Main Idea: God disciplines us because he loves us. It hurts, and we must be trained by it.

God Disciplines (verses 1-2)

1. *The right focus during discipline:* In verse 1, the Christian life is described as a race that requires endurance. This race is not a sprint but a marathon in which we face hurdles, challenges and moments of opposition. Success in this race is determined by where our eyes are focused. In verse 2, the author of Hebrews exhorts us to fix our eyes on Jesus, “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.”
2. *The right reason for discipline:* In order to run with endurance, to run in a way that pleases the Lord and to finish well, we must lay aside “every weight, and the sin which clings so closely.” Clinging to sinful patterns or being weighed down by worldly pursuits will only hinder and harm us in the race. The Lord wants us to lay these encumbrances aside.
 - a. But sometimes, we don’t want to let them go. This is where the Lord’s discipline comes in. Through loving discipline or painful circumstances, he helps us to let go of disobedience and idolatry. He forces us to let go of worldliness and to look to Jesus.

Because He Loves Us (verses 5-10)

1. In verses 5-6, the writer of Hebrews quotes Proverbs 3:11-12 to remind the original readers and us that discipline comes from the hand of our loving Father. As his children, God’s discipline IS NOT punishment for our sin. On the cross, Jesus bore the punishment for our sin and drank dry the cup of God’s wrath. Therefore, there remains absolutely no condemnation for our sins (Rom. 8:1).
2. Instead, because we are adopted as the Father’s sons and daughters, God loves and cares for us so deeply that he wants what is good for us: to share in his holiness (v.11). Therefore, he doesn’t let us hide or get away with our sin. Out of the Lord’s kindness and love, he disciplines us so that the sin that so easily entangles and causes us to stumble can be laid aside. His motive for discipline is love for his children. And his love has our best interest at heart: it is for our good that we share in his holiness and run the race with endurance.

It Hurts (verse 11a)

1. As it says in verse 11, the Lord’s discipline is “painful rather than pleasant”. Discipline is the use of painful, negative consequences to turn us back to obedience. The Lord brings pain (through suffering, sickness, trials, enemies, trouble, etc.) to get our attention, to

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draw our hearts back to him and to help us turn away from our idolatry, rebellion and disobedience.

2. The Lord oftentimes uses outside means to discipline us because we can't spank ourselves and make it really hurt. We will not bring consequences serious enough into our own lives to get at the deepest issues of our heart. The Lord knows exactly what we need to let go of our idolatry and sinful patterns. And so God and God alone brings pain into our lives to help us let go of sin.

We Must Be Trained By It (verse 11b)

1. The promise and fruit of discipline is sweet. The Lord will not always reprove or chastise us. There is good fruit on the other side. As it says in verse 11, discipline yields the "peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it."
2. Discipline requires a response. We must embrace it. We must submit to it. We must humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. We must be trained by it. But for all of us, there are some temptations during a season of the Lord's discipline. We can be tempted to:
 - a. "regard it lightly" (v. 5): this is the temptation to not take it seriously, to blow it off, to get back to business as usual as soon as possible.
 - b. "be weary" (v. 5): this temptation is to give up, to wallow in self pity, to run away because this is too hard.
3. Instead of falling into these and other temptations (to justify ourselves, to attack our critics, to make this about one man, etc.) we need to turn the spotlight on ourselves and ask: "Lord, what do you have for me to learn, to repent of, to confess, to grow in, to respond to." In this season as a church, the Lord is disciplining all of us. Let us respond, first, with grace-filled, self examination.

Conclusion

An illustration by Charles Spurgeon that Josh used in his conclusion:

A child had a little garden in which she planted many flowers, but they never grew. She put them in, as she thought tenderly and carefully, but they would not live. She sowed seeds and they sprang up; but very soon they withered away. So she ran to her father's gardener, and when he came to look at it, he said, "I will make it a nice garden for you, that you may grow whatever you want." He fetched a pick, and when the little child saw the terrible pick, she was afraid for her little garden. The gardener struck his tool into the ground and began to make the earth heave and shake for his

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pickaxe had caught the edge of a huge stone which underplayed almost all the little plot of ground. All the little flowers were turned out of their places and the garden spoiled for a season so that the little maid wept much. He told her he would make it a fair garden yet, and so he did, for having removed that stone which had prevented all the plants from striking root he soon filled the ground with flowers which lived and flourished.

Just so, the Lord has come, and has turned up all the soil of your present comfort to get rid of some big stone that was at the bottom of all your spiritual prosperity, and would not let your soul flourish. Do not weep with the child, but be comforted by the blessed results and thank your Father's tender hand! —Charles Spurgeon

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a care group to read Hebrews 12:1-11.
2. Why is it vitally important to fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) while undergoing the Lord's discipline? What happens when we look elsewhere (i.e., our circumstances, our critics, etc.)?
3. In Hebrews 12:1-2 and Hebrews 12:10, what is God's purpose in bringing discipline?
4. In Hebrews 12:5-10, what is God's motive in bringing discipline to his people?
5. How is the Lord's discipline different from the punishment for our sin that Christ bore on the cross? Why is it critical to make this distinction?
6. In Hebrews 12:11, what is the Lord's promise for those who are trained by God's discipline? How has this promise been true in your life?
7. In what ways is the Lord disciplining you? What means (suffering, trials, sickness, enemies, etc.) is the Lord using? How are you responding? What is he teaching you?
8. Take time to pray as a care group for each other and for our church that we would embrace and be trained by the Father's loving discipline.