



Message Transcript

The Grace of Discipline

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I was reminded this week that the first Monday after the 4th of July, when I was in high school is when conditioning would start for our football team. Football itself didn't start until the middle of August or early September, but conditioning started in July. I hated conditioning. Everybody hated conditioning. Conditioning was hard. It was so difficult that on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, several of us would gather at my house, eat certain kind of foods, hang out in the air conditioning because in central Illinois that time of year, it's usually close to 100 degrees with about 100% humidity. And at 5:00 PM, practice would start. Practice did not consist of any balls, it did not consist of any plays. It consisted of running drills until you couldn't run anymore with people yelling at you the entire time.

For those who missed the first couple of weeks because they were on vacation, that was okay because when they arrived, nothing changed. We were just able to do even more. And our coaches had no problem letting them take a time out to go to the sideline and throw up and then get back in line and come join all of us. We hated conditioning, we hated the training, we hated the discipline of it, but we endured it. And in my two years playing football, being able to be in the State Championship game and winning one of them, we never thought about conditioning at that point in time. We knew it was a necessity to get to where we needed to go.

Today, I want to talk to you about discipline. God's discipline in our lives. God loves you so much that He sent his only begotten son. He said, "Whoever would believe in Him would not perish, but would have eternal life." God does not want you to die in your sin. God sent Jesus to pay the penalty for it. When he died on the cross, He

took care of it all and He rose from the dead to offer life to all who would repent and believe, to all who would say, "I need Christ in my life and I want His life for me." That's the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter who you are, where you are, God wants to have a relationship with you through the person of his son. And I want to tell you this, no matter where you are, and no matter what you've done, and no matter how far you've strayed, the good news of the gospel of Jesus is that He will welcome you home just as you are.

You don't need to change a thing about yourself for God to say, "Welcome home." But I also want to tell you that God loves you enough to not leave you right where you're at. That God has purpose for you in this life and especially in the life to come. And God loves you enough to put disciplines into your life to help you to grow in the way that you can be most effective for Him and for others both now and for all eternity.

We've been looking at the book of Hebrews in Chapter 11 with these Jewish converts that are ready to quit and say, "This is too hard. How are we going to make it all the way to the finish line?" He tells us about all those heroes in the faith. Men and women who have endured all the way to the end. And then he starts Chapter 12 saying, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its

shame. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." And we hear those passages. I've been preaching on this for about five weeks now and we're all like, "That's great. If they can make it, I can make it too. I want to be a faithful follower of Jesus. Let's go do this." And then Monday comes, and then it gets hard, and then we wonder, "Why are all these challenging circumstances in my life?" And I want to tell you this. It is because God loves you and he's using those things to grow you.

So while we talk about discipline today, today we're talking about the grace of discipline, the favor of discipline, the blessing of discipline, the good news of discipline, the discipline we want to be thankful for. That we have a loving father that loves us enough to welcome us right where we are, but also loves us enough to not leave us right where we're at. So as you open your Bible this morning to Hebrews 12, I want to read through verses four ... 12:4-13. And then we'll unpack it together by taking a look at some truths about the discipline of God and why it's such a grace, a blessing, and a benefit.

He says, "You have not resisted to the point of shedding blood, and you're striving against sin, and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are approved by him. For those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines and He scourges every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline of which you have all become partakers, then you are illegitimate

children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time, it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good so that we may share his holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful. Yet to those who have been trained by it afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak in the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed."

Here in these short verses, we learn about the grace of discipline. The father's discipline for his children that he loves so much and the benefits of what discipline brings in our lives as Christians. And we're going to take a look at four reminders today about God's discipline that we need to remember that this discipline is a grace, it's a blessing, it's a gift and we need to be grateful for it. And the first is this. Remember this about the grace of the discipline of God. Is that it looks different from God's perspective. Discipline looks different from God's perspective than from ours.

For those of you that are parents, you know that discipline looks different now than it did when you were on the receiving end as a child. And notice what He says. He says, "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood and you're striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed against you as sons." Now, let me talk about discipline for just a second. Because when we hear discipline, there's extremes in the church and you probably fall somewhere between these two extremes. But when we talk about discipline, there's a group of people that

are so grace filled that anytime we talk about discipline, they begin to tune out and they say, "What are you talking about? It's all grace, Pastor Jeff. It's by grace we've been saved through faith. And the same grace that saves us is the same grace that forgives us now. So yeah. Perhaps there's some things wrong, perhaps there's some things that God is not liking, but it's grace. Who cares? Let's get on to more important topics. It's just grace." Grace, grace, grace. "Okay. So we sin, but everybody sins. It's grace. So quit talking to me about discipline. I'm not that encouraged by that." And then there's another group of people and those group of people, they like to talk about the Lordship of Christ, and His law, and his demands, and what he requires.

This group of people thinks not only is everything a sin, but everything is punitive. And no matter what you do, you need to know this. God is up in heaven. He's watching you, He's seen your every move, and He's ready to beat you every single time you do something wrong. "And Pastor Jeff, you need to be teaching more about sin. You need to get people scared because God is righteous, and He's holy, and He's true. And if these people don't understand what they're doing wrong, they're never going to change." "Well, what about grace?" "That was to come to Christ. Now they know better." But what we find in the gospel is a healthy balance of both. Not 50-50, but 100-100. That Jesus Christ dispense all grace on the cross.

Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. And He satisfied all justice on the cross when He took all the wrath of His heavenly Father. And where we meet at the cross, as we fix our eyes upon the cross and what Jesus did on the cross, we see that God has a standard and that we can't meet it apart from his grace. And what

good preaching does, and good Bible study does, and the Lord does in our life is to show us there's a standard He wants us to meet that we're not quite meeting, but He wants to dispense grace to us so that we can meet that standard. That's what God's discipline does for us in our life. And we read about this in the word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16. And we see what the word of God ... Some of the things that the word of God is good for. And it says this, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training and righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." He talks about four types of discipline, teaching, reproof, correcting, and training. Reproof means this. Reproof is a rebuke. Sometimes the word of God rebukes us. Sometimes the word of a God says, "That's wrong. That's dead wrong." Alert, alert, alert. That's reproof.

Teaching is the truth. Teaching is telling you everything that you need to know about a certain topic. This is what God's standard is. Here's how it works. Here's how it plays out. That's teaching. Teaching is all the truth. Rebuke or reproof is, you're wrong in that. Then there's correction. Correction is like a course correction. Like, "You're going kind of the right way, but you need to tweak that just a little bit. I see what you're doing. You're walking right. Just kind of move over into that lane to get there." Teaching, reproof, correcting, and then there's training. This word training is the same word we're going to see that's translated discipline in Hebrews 12. Training is the long-term plan to help you understand what you need to do to succeed. Training is the long-term plan to help you understand what you need to succeed. See, discipline does not necessarily result in punitive actions. There's all sorts of parts of discipline.

There is a punitive part of that. We'll talk about that today, but there is also a teaching part, there is a reproof part, there's a correcting part, there's a training part.

Think about it as you're learning to drive a car. There's a classroom section. There's a teaching part. You need to learn all the rules of the road. You need to learn that if you're going to drive in America, we drive on the right-hand side of the road, not the left-hand side. You're going to need to learn what that stop sign looks like and what it means. You're going to need to know what the yellow light actually means. Not just by watching your parents, but it actually means take caution, look around, slow down. You're going to need to learn what a yield sign is, you're going to need to learn what a roundabout looks like. We're teaching you all the things that you're ever going to encounter, but it's just in the classroom. And just because you learn something in the classroom doesn't mean you know how to apply it.

So once you get behind the wheel, then there's this thing called reproof. When you're driving with somebody, perhaps a parent or a Drivers Ed instructor and they're, "No, no, no, no, no, no. Don't do that. Stop. If you keep doing that, you're not ... I'm going to take your keys away. You're not going to have that anymore." That's reproof. That's alert. Then there's correction. Of course, correction. "Hey, you're doing a really good job, but kind of move the vehicle a little bit over. You're too far to the right side. Too far. You need to get a little comfortable over here, but you're doing well. Oh, when you turn, you need to get a little further out in the intersection before you go. Good job though. You're doing a good job." It's correction. And then this whole thing is discipline,

this whole thing is training. Why? Because Drivers Ed done right is setting that student up to drive without anybody else in the car wanting them to have success on the road, wanting them to be aware of all their surroundings, wanting them to get safe from point A to point B, wanting you ... You want other people to be trained well in Drivers Ed because if they're not, then it affects you too.

So that's what God does through His word. He gives us his word. It's not always punitive. Sometimes it's a course correction, sometimes it's a long term training, sometimes it's a truth about a character that He is so that we can grow in it over time. And if we're all grace or we're all Lordship, we're wrong. Where those two meet at the cross is what it's all like. And God wants us to know that His discipline comes out of His love. His discipline comes out of his love. God does not discipline us because He's angry. We're His children. God disciplines us because He loves us. There's two challenges in this because sometimes when we experience God's discipline, it looks different from our perspective than from His perspective. So we need to understand what God's perspective is. And in these first two verses I see two of the challenges we have in the church now that they had back then. Notice what he says. "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood and you're striving against sin." The authors just told them, inspired by the Holy Spirit, get rid of all hindrances and get rid of all sin in your life. It's serious. Sin kills you, sin keeps you from being your best, sin angers God. Get rid of it all.

Most of us think, "I'm working on it. I'm doing a pretty good job. How come God is not helping me?" Here's what the author is saying, "You aren't working on it nearly

as hard as you think you are. You haven't shed your blood." In other words, you haven't been martyred because you're so serious about your sin. You're still breathing. Nobody has killed you because you're so serious about your sin. Jesus was killed because he was so serious about sin. We always think that we're working harder on our sin than we actually are. Now we like other people to work on their sin harder. We want our boyfriend, or girlfriend, or our spouse, or our kids, we need them to deal with their stuff. But when it comes to us, we don't nearly work on it as hard as we think. We're not nearly as serious about reading sin in ourselves. We have workshops, we have group chats, we have accountability, but oftentimes we refuse to repent.

Sometimes all the religious activity we do is just to keep us in our sin and make us feel good because we're telling other people about it. Guys, listen to me. Some of you don't struggle with porn. You're just unrepentant about the porn in your life. And you'd rather go to an accountability group for the next year so that you feel a little better by telling other people, "I struggle with porn." Yeah. I get it. When are you going to repent and tell God it's immoral and ask him to change you? That's the problem that we have. We like to talk about all the things that aren't so good or I struggle with this, I struggle with that, but oftentimes we refuse to let God show us why we need to repent. Repentance is an understanding that change needs to happen and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to make that change in my life to best honor God and to be the most helpful to other people.

Notice what Paul writes to the Corinthians. They had shares of their own problems for sure. They were immoral like any other churches for sure. And Paul said

this to them. In 2 Corinthians 7:10, he says, "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." I learned it in the NIV. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, but worldly sorrow leads to death. Godly sorrow is this. God has shown me I'm wrong and I know I'm wrong and I'm willing to do whatever God says and tells me to do to get right with God. I don't care who knows about it, I don't care who hears about it, it's wrong and I don't want that sin in my life anymore. That's Godly sorrow. That leads to repentance, that grows your salvation. It leads to Christ and it leads you going, continuing in Christ.

Worldly sorrow is this. "Yeah. I probably shouldn't do that anymore. Yeah. God got me. My small group called me out on that. I feel bad and I'm going to talk about it some more." I have no desire to change at all. I just got caught. You know what it's like in your children when they've been caught doing something wrong. You know the ones that are genuinely contrite and the ones that are genuinely not repentant at all in the moment. They're just mad you caught them.

The same is true of us as believers in Christ. We're not working nearly as hard to get rid of sin in our lives. God sets a standard for us of perfection. And no matter how hard we think we're working, we can't get there on our own. But yet we say, "I'm working pretty hard. How come God's not helping me? If God really wants to do something, I know he'll do it." No. Hey, listen. You're not struggling with your sin to the point that you've been martyred. You're not working on it that hard. You're not really wanting to repent that much. And then the second problem is this, "I'm working too

hard at this. It's too difficult. I'm trying too hard." Problem two is, "Where is God in all this? How come He's not helping? If God really wanted me to change, how come He's not helping me?" That's verse five. And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons. And he quotes Proverbs 3:11 and 12 and here's what it reads. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him, for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges every son whom He receives."

It means this. God is using all the circumstances in your life to grow you into Christ's likeness. God has either authored or allowed everything that's going on in your life. In other words, there's nothing that has happened to you or currently going on in your life that has caught God by surprise, where he would say, "I'm sorry. I don't know why that's going on for you. I didn't know that was going to happen. I drop the ball on that one. It's never happened." It means he's either authored it or he is allowing it because there is something that is going to come through that situation that is going to ready you for something down the road in this life and in the life to come. And God loves you enough that he's working on you big time. You say, "Well, how much does God care about sin?"

Well, think about this. God the Father sent His son to be the savior of the world to rescue you and let Jesus be the Lord of your life. Then He gave us His written word inspired by the spirit so you would know God's standard, then He gave the deposit of His spirit to walk through your life so that you would have a God consciousness to

know what's right and wrong. And we even read in the book of Hebrews what Jesus spend his day doing, interceding for every single one of the saints. So Jesus is up in heaven praying for your holiness right now. Does God care about it? Oh, He cares about it. We're the ones that tune out God. God is not tuning us out. God loves us. We're just not aware of all that God is doing in our life.

See, everything we read about in the Bible with God's perfect standard is demanded by the Father, it's been modeled by the Son, and it's made possible by the Holy Spirit because apart from Christ and apart from His spirit in us, we cannot accomplish anything in this book. How do you love unlovable people apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ? How do you forgive those who have been intentionally wrong to you apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ? How do you preference others instead of yourself apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ? It's impossible. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect. It's impossible. The Father demanded it, Jesus modeled it, and the Holy Spirit says, "I can do it through you." That's what he's talking about here.

Discipline from God looks different from His perspective. He's always trying to grow us into His likeness. And notice what he says. For whom the Lord loves, He what? Disciplines. He trains. He's growing you. That's why if the Lord's trying to get your attention about an issue, no matter where you turn in the Bible, no matter what book you're reading, you will find the Lord speak to you about the exact same thing from about every different passage. I know when the Lord is getting my attention. Especially as young believer, I'm like, "Oh, I'm not reading that." I'd flip through my

Bible and I'm like, "Man, [inaudible 00:19:58]. I don't want to hear that." And flip it because God's word is living and active. And He has a way of trying to grow us and that's His training process. And then He has a corrective process, but then He has a punitive process too because it says He scourges everyone, that's punishment, whom He receives. That means if you're a Christian, you're going to experience God's discipline. Every Christian does and there's nothing wrong with it. It just means that you're loved.

God loves you so much that He'll take you just as you are and He loves you so much He won't leave you right where you're at. That's the truth of God's word. Nobody taught me that when I was a new believer and when I would start doing devotions as a new believer. Very early on I would read it with excitement, but over time I didn't like reading it because I felt like I was being judged all the time. And nobody explained to me that was the Holy Spirit of my life trying to grow me in holiness. I thought it was God mad at me. So there were times where I'd shut my Bible. I'm like, "I'm not reading that this week. I feel bad. I feel lousy." No. God is showing you those things because He's growing you from where you are to where He wants you to be. And let me tell you this. You never ever graduate from the school of discipleship. God's discipline never ends. There's nobody you're going to listen to that will tell you, "I remember back when I was a young believer and God disciplined me. But now I'm just telling you, He'll discipline you too until you look like me." That's never going to happen. We're always undergoing His training process. And He loves us enough to continue to grow us.

So remember that. That there's a blessing or a grace of discipline that looks

different from God's perspective than from ours. Number two is this. The grace of discipline helps us and helps you to endure in God's family. It helps you to endure in God's family. If you didn't have God's discipline in your life, you would quit. If you didn't have God's correction in your life, you would quit. If you didn't have God's punitive creative ability to redirect your course, you would quit. If you didn't have His truth, you would quit. If you didn't have His training in taking you in the right way, you would quit. But notice what He says. It is for discipline that you endure. It's God's discipline in your life that readies you for all the things that are coming. God deals with you as with sons, for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline of, which you all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

What's he saying? He's saying, if you're not being disciplined by the Lord, you're not a believer. All believers get disciplined. Every believer gets spanked, every believer gets corrected, every believer gets trained, every believer gets to dispense the truth in their life. That's true of every believer. That's common to us in the family of God. So especially for those of you that have a really sensitive conscience toward the Lord, that when I teach on apostasy, the falling away from the face like I've taught on in this book over and over again. And you're like, "Is it me? I hope it's not me." No. It's the Lord in your life showing you I'm correcting this. If you're feeling conviction of the Lord, it's a great sign in your life that the spirit of God loves you and that He's growing you.

Don't ever weary or get tired of God showing you things in your life that must change. It's the enemy that tells you. "You don't need to change anymore. If God

doesn't love you the way He is, then why would you listen to him?" That's the enemy's voice. God says, "I love you so much that I'm growing you into something that's going to bring you greater joy, and a greater harvest, and a greater blessing. So let my hand lay upon you. Let me discipline you in the way that you need." And notice what He says, "For what son is there whom the father does not discipline? But if you're without discipline, then you are illegitimate children, not sons." Meaning this, God doesn't discipline his children out of anger. God is not up in heaven for you who are believers angry at you looking to punish everything you do wrong. That's not who our God is. He is a loving father and He wants us to grow. But who does God discipline? God doesn't punish to kick you out of the family. God disciplines to keep you in the family. There's a huge difference.

The purpose of discipline, as a good parent, is not to kick your kids out of the family. Good discipline is to train them to keep them in the family because undisciplined, unruly kids are difficult to live with and they're difficult for everybody else to live with too. So discipline is given to us in the Bible as parents to discipline our kids, not to kick them out of the family, but to train them in such a way that they function well within the family. God's discipline for you is not to kick you out of the church, God's discipline for you is not to kick you out of His family, God's discipline for you is to train you in such a way that you'll be a benefit to Him and His kingdom through the church. Discipline is loving. That's who God is.

Now, you think about this because we have a whole generation of fatherlessness

going on in our culture. And I've told you from time to time, it's tough to put your finger on what the number one sin is, but certainly fatherlessness has contributed to the mess of our culture. And it's really interesting because all throughout this chapter, he's talking about fathers, discipline, fathers discipline. Dads, it's your responsibility to discipline your kids. It doesn't mean mom can't help, but it's still your responsibility. Does that make sense?

Let me just read a couple of these verses in the Bible. Proverbs 19:18 says this, "Discipline your son while there is hope and do not desire his death." It's a lot easier to spank a four-year-old than to try to correct a 26-year-old that's never been corrected in their life. How about this? Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will remove it far from him." You know that song that we used to sing growing up? The foot bones connected to the leg bone, leg bone connected to the knee bone, the knee bone connected to the thigh bone. Let me tell you. The behind is connected to the morality bone. There's something that scripture talks about that when kids know parameters and they know if I cross this, this is going to happen. I'm not going to cross that again. But if there's no boundaries and there's nobody saying, "I love you enough to show you that's bad for you." They'll continue going that way. Why? Because Folly is bound up in the heart of a child. Foolishness. Well, that's kids.

Can I tell you this? We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And here's another truth in scripture. When you come to Christ and have all your sins forgiven, your sin nature doesn't leave. I came to Christ in 1989. I can tell you my sin

nature still hasn't left. Oh, I wish I could tell you, "Since 1989 I remember when I was a sinner and God forgave me. And since that time, I've never sinned again." But foolishness is still bound up in my heart. The heart is deceitful above all things and who can understand it. There's some way that seems right in my eyes that's wrong according to the word of God and that never changes. That's why we have to be trained by God.

Let me give you a couple more. Proverbs 23:13, "Do not hold back discipline from the child. Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die." He might think he's going to die. He won't die. Now, listen. I can lie to this a little bit, but I'm not telling you to abuse your kids. I'm not talking about shaming them, I'm not talking about abusing them, I'm not talking about being harsh with them. I'm not talking about that. But there is something about firm discipline that has a way of shaping a child. Proverbs 23:14, "You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his Sheol." Discipline saves you from hell. Moreover, Proverbs 29 or Proverbs 19:18, "Discipline your son while there is still hope and do not desire his death." This is a big deal according to God. I mean God gives fathers responsibility for their children.

Notice this one. Proverbs 13:24, "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently." If you don't punish your kids when they do wrong, you hate them. You're desiring their death and you're desiring for them to go to hell, according to the word of God. Discipline your kids. Now, notice what he says in the book of Hebrews. He says, "When we're in the family of God, we got disciplined by God. But if we're not being disciplined by God, we're illegitimate children." What does

that mean? It means within a family, fathers are to punish their own kids. I don't punish other kids outside of my family. I have plenty of people that have come and stayed at our house. I've never disciplined other kids. I've told them sometimes, "We don't do that in our house."

I remember one time when my youngest was four and she had another one of her four-year-old friends over. And I asked them to do something and her four-year-old friend stood up as tall as she could and she said, "Yeah. We're not going to do that." It about made me laugh out loud, but I was trying to keep a straight face. And what I told her was, "That's okay. You don't have to, but you can't stay at my house. And I'm happy to call your mother and she can come pick you up." And she said, "Well, then we'll do it." The point is we are responsible for our own families just like God is responsible for His. And the discipline of God is using every circumstance, every situation, every conversation to grow us up into the holiness of God so that we're good for the family, we're beneficial to the family, and we can help accomplish God's purposes in the world.

So God disciplines all of his kids. Why? Because He loves us, He cares for us. It's for discipline that sets you up for success. If you've had parents that loved you enough to discipline you, or coaches that loved you enough to set parameters, or teachers that loved you enough to set up parameters, some of those harder times that you had in your life, you'll look back on now in you're like, "Thank you. Thank goodness for that coach. Thank goodness for that teacher. Thank goodness for my parents. I did not enjoy it at the time, but I wouldn't be who I was if they hadn't taken the time to

discipline me." No discipline is fun. We're going to read about that in a minute. It's not fun to be on the receiving end and it's definitely not fun to be on the giving end. It's just not fun. We just rather live our lives and go through the motions, but God loves us enough to discipline us, and He always disciplines in love. That's who He is.

So remember that God's discipline looks different from His perspective and God's discipline helps you to endure in God's family. God is not trying to kick you out of His family. God's trying to show you how you can be a faithful member of His family. Third, let tell you this. Remember this, that the grace of discipline involves a short-term pain for a long-term gain. God's discipline is a short-term pain for a long-term gain. Now, some of you have undergone the discipline of the Lord for a longer period of time. I've realized in my life and even looking back in my family, all four of us as kids, we handled discipline differently. My sister was two and a half years younger than me. I think she just watched me and never did anything wrong. That was not me. Parameter was set. Why is that a parameter? I need to understand and explore the other side of that parameter. I needed to know where are you setting up boundaries and what are you setting them up for? And thank goodness my parents set healthy boundaries, even though I didn't like it at the time.

Some of you can hear the word of God and be like, "Well, that's what God says. I'm just going to do it." Others of you, "That's what God says. I don't think God knows as much as me. So I'm going to try to do it a different way." And then you learn through experience that God's discipline comes. So some of us go through this thing

over, and over, and over again. And some of us one time, it's like, "I got it. I don't want to deal with that again." And there are different levels of discipline and different schools as we grow. I find that earlier on in my faith, God was much more punitive and much more direct. Now, I find that he's much more course correcting, but that's not to say that God won't be punitive in my life today because there's still a way sometimes where I see in a way where I think I'm seeing clearly and God has to send things to me or speak to me in a way that I get it. Sometimes it's through his word, sometimes that's through other faithful saints, sometimes that's through circumstances. God gets to choose whatever he wants. Because why? Because God cares about me and God loves me in the same way that God loves you.

So here what the word of the Lord said. He said, "Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" If you had a dad or mom that disciplined you growing up and, "Hey, thank goodness I had that in my life." How much more should you be thankful to the God who's the giver of all life that wants to grow you into all truth. The one that wants you to live with Him forever, the one that wants you to enter heaven and be presented with exceedingly great joy faultless before the father. How much more should we listen to Him? Verse 10 he says ... talking about earthly fathers. "For they disciplined us for a short time has seen best to them, but He disciplines us for our good so that we will share in His holiness."

Our parents disciplined us in a way that seemed good to them. Do you know there's no such thing as a perfect parent? That even your parents' best efforts, they

weren't perfect. Even your best efforts as a parent, they're not perfect. Sometimes you probably should have been more punitive, sometimes you probably should have been more graceful, sometimes your parents should have been more punitive, sometimes your parents should have been more graceful. They did what they thought was best. They were trying to prepare you for life. How much more God, who is preparing you for a future with Him for all eternity should you endure under the discipline that He gives you? He loves you. Everything God does is perfect. He is a perfect parent. There's nothing disciplinary that He unfolds in your life that's wrong. He's using it all. So he says, "Endure that." And then he goes on to say it like this in verse 11, "After we share in this holiness because all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful. Yet to those who have been trained by it afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

My translation of that is all discipline stinks. It's horrible, it's painful, it's hurtful, it's sorrowful, it's remorseful. We don't like it in the moment, we hate it, but if we endure under it for the moment, there's a long-term gain. And the long-term gain with the Lord is that it yields a peaceful fruit of righteousness. Peace with God. Now, when we're safe, we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, according to Romans 5, but we can have an ongoing experience of peace with God in our life if we're trained under his righteousness, that we can experience that peace that passes all understanding that can guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. There's a peace that comes with enduring the discipline of the Lord. And God wants us all to endure His discipline. Now, the hard part about that is we don't like it. We wish other people were

here listening to this sermon because they need to hear it because God needs to discipline them, but we don't like it in our lives. As earthly fathers, we discipline our kids so that they don't become unruly in our society.

Just open your eyes and look around to some of the mess that you see in our culture and you'll see a group of people who never experience loving discipline in their life. And unfortunately they falsely believe that the whole world owes them something. And if they don't get their way, they're going to burn it down. That's how four-year-olds act. That's foully stored up in the heart that's never, ever been disciplined. And the only hope for people like that is to trust Jesus Christ and let our wonderful beloved heavenly Father endure them with His spirit, and discipline them, and grow them. Amen.

God is perfect in His discipline of us and God wants us to be trained by it. Why? Just as kids, we naturally cheat, lie, and steal, and selfish, but you know what? As we grow older that doesn't just go away. We have to train that to go away. Our flesh has no desire to be trained in godliness. Our flesh that's still with us has every desire to have God and other people serve us. That's what our flesh does. I'll prove it to you this morning. I'll just read you a list of some truths about God's word that you could make your discipline to be and just see if there isn't some flesh that comes out, just see as when I'm talking if you're not making excuses for yourself, just see as if I'm talking you hear that voice say, "Well, if he's going to say that, you should go to another church. He's wrong on that." I mean just, just see if you don't feel that way. Because we all have flesh and as much as we like to say, "I love God's word and I'm obedient to it." There's things inside of us that we really don't like. See if excuses don't spring up when

I say some of these statements.

Listen to this. Make it your daily discipline to read the word of God, make it your daily discipline to pray for yourself and for others, make it your daily discipline ... make it your weekly discipline to share the gospel with somebody that doesn't know Christ, make it your discipline to miss no more than three or four Sundays a year in person in church. I felt a lot of flesh on that one. Make it your discipline to miss no more than one first Tuesday in person per year, make it your discipline to be in a group at work and prioritize those relationships in that community above everything else other than your family, make it your discipline to tie it to the church from all the monies that you receive and look for ways to go above and beyond that. If you're married, make it your discipline to preference your spouse in everything. Make it your discipline to preference your boss in everything, make it your discipline to ask God to show you your sin and then repent of it immediately. Or how about this? Make it your daily discipline to ask God to show you specifically how you can start making changes to grow more like Jesus.

See, in Bible churches, we like to talk about our theological convictions a lot. And I enjoy those conversations, but I want to tell you something, your theological convictions are what you practice. That's what you actually believe. Your theological convictions are what you practice, not what you say you believe. It's this idea that your actions are so loud. I can't even hear what you're saying. I can have conversations about this. Are you more Calvinist or more Arminian? And how do you understand the Bible? And that's okay. Those are good conversations. But my bigger question is who

cares? Are you sharing your faith and who did you share your faith with this week?

Because it really doesn't matter what you say. If you read through the new Testament, apostles and prophets, what were they doing? They were sharing faith with a lost all the time. Or how about money?

Everybody gets all worked up about money in the church. And the reason why is we're not very generous and we're not very content. And we think that the money we earn is our money. "Well, I earned it." "Well, how did you earn it?" "Because I got a job." "Well, how'd you get a job?" "Because I got an education." "Okay. Who gave you your brain? Who gave you your skill sets? Who gave you the ability to earn money? Who wants it back?" "Well, you understand my flesh tells me tithing is an Old Testament concept. We're New Testament people. I don't have to give anymore. It's grace giving now." Okay, great. Old Testament, don't murder. New Testament, don't even think of murderous thought. Old Testament, don't commit adultery. New Testament, don't even have a lustful thought. Old Testament, you study all the tithing and all that they had to give about 23%. New Testament is what? Everything you have 100% of it belongs to God. So 10% would just be a scrap to get started no matter who you are. And then you look for other ways to give above and beyond that. "Well, I don't like this church anymore."

I remember the way I started practicing tithing was because I didn't want to. When I got out of college, I made a pretty good amount of money, but I didn't tithe. I started tithing when I started making \$1,000 a month. I was given a parsonage and my

dad gave me a used car. And I could afford gas because gas costs different prices back then. And what I do is I take \$200 out of a check every month and give it to the government. And I took \$1,000 out of that 1,000 and I started giving it to the church. And here's what I said, "Lord, if I run out of money, I'm done with ministry." I'm still in ministry, y'all. I've watched God pay for seminary, I've watched God do incredible things, I've watched God, give me more seed to sew. He's not giving me more money so that I can store up stuff here. He's giving me more because He wants me to know everything I have as His. So how do I steward everything He gives me and how do I give more away? That's what it means.

So oftentimes we like to talk big. We can even theologically disprove obedience. "Well, if I was married to him, I'd act just like you." No. God gave you your spouse for a reason. I've done enough counseling with my wife that every time we walk away, I sit and say to her, "Okay. That was important for me. I need to be better at this." And she says the same. And oftentimes we're meeting with a couple and they don't get along, we walk away and we kind of smirk to ourselves because this will be true of Kim and I too, they're perfect for each other just like Kim and I are perfect for each other. See, sometimes we don't like to be trained by discipline. And here's what I mean by that. Sometimes in the church there are well-meaning Christians that when somebody has a problem, what do we want to do for them? We want to alleviate the problem. They're single. So we want to find them a spouse. They're married, but they're miserable. So we want to alleviate the pain. They have a job, it's not working out. So we want to help them get them more money. Sometimes that's God's discipline in your life because

you're not living the way he wants you to live.

Singles, if you're sleeping around and getting drunk and praying for your godly spouse and that when your godly spouse comes, you'll change, it's never going to happen. "Well, I just don't know if there's any good women out there. I've dated a lot and there's no good women." You're the consistent factor in the relationship. Other people go from job to job and town to town. "I can't believe it. Every boss I have is just a horrible boss." Have you looked in the mirror? Maybe you're not as good of an employee as you think you are. And we can move geography, and we can move jobs, and we can change who we date, and we can change all those things and we still have the same problems. If that's going on, that's God trying to get your attention saying, "Hey, for the last 30 or 40 years, do you know you're the consistent pattern there?"

Some of you that have financial troubles here would be my question, do you tithe and are you content? Because if you're not generous and content, we can give you \$100,000 more and you still will run out of money. Money is not your problem. If you spend more than you make, that's your problem, and it doesn't matter if you make \$10,000 or a million dollars. But sometimes we're afraid in the church to call people out that perhaps the reason they're struggling is not anything other than God's trying to get their attention. Friends, if you're married, let me just tell you something. God gave you your spouse and they're perfect for you. "You don't understand, Pastor Jeff. You don't live with them." I don't have to. I know that God gave them to you as heavenly sandpaper to rub off your edges. And if instead of blaming them, you go before the Lord and you say, "Lord, search me and try me and see if there's any wicked way in

me and lead me in the way everlasting. You take care of my spouse, but I'll let you deal with me and I'll repent of anything that needs to change." I promise you your marriage will look different.

I promise you if you're single and you pray and you say, "Lord, change anything in me that's not right. I want to make sure that everything in me is right. I'm praying for a spouse, but change me first." I promise you as God changes you, God will bring the right person at the right time. That's what he does. It's a step of faith to allow God to speak into us about things in our life. And I can tell you having walked with the Lord for a number of years in every single discipline in my life, whether I'm talking about marriage, or parenting, or money, or job, or friends or neighbors, there's so many ways that God has disciplined me over the years and I wish I could tell you it's done now. And it's not done until the day I die and meet Jesus face to face because he's still growing me just like he's still growing you. And none of us have to enjoy it.

No discipline at the moment is fun. No training on a sports team without playing a game, none of that is fun. No discipline from a parent at the time is fun, no discipline from a coach at the time is fun, no discipline from a military leader at the time is fun, but if you'll endure it and you'll be trained up under it, and if you'll be thankful for it, God will use that for your good. Now, let me say one word to you because some of you were like, "Well, if I respected my parents, I'd listen to what they have to say." God gave you your parents. So even if you don't respect them, endure under the discipline they gave and God will see that you can endure under somebody that's not doing it right and God will still bless you. Does that make sense? Well, if God gave me the

right boss, then I totally would submit to him. If God gave me the right husband, then I totally ..." It doesn't work that way. Just be the person God wants you to be in the difficulty and then God takes you through that discipline. And here's the beauty of it. God is a prospering God, God blesses us, God does all sorts of things, but isn't it true through the trials in our lives that God grows us even more? The things that we don't enjoy, the things that we're uncomfortable with.

Here's the following testimony of Charles Hadden Spurgeon, a great preacher of a couple 100 years ago. Here's what he said. He said, "I am afraid that all the grace I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the hammer and the anvil, the fire and the file? Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house."

Friends, God's discipline is challenging, it's hard, but the reality is when we get to heaven, for those of us who have been trained up under it and we're in a group and somebody's talking, "We're with Job and he's talking about what he endured and we're with Paul talking about what he endured." There'll be no Christian there that says, "I don't know what you're talking about. I came to Christ, He prospered me, and blessed me, and it was awesome. Everything worked out perfect." Every single one of us will have stories to say about how God was pruning us, and changing us, and challenging us and growing us because of his great love with which he loved us. Amen.

That's what he wants us to know. It's a short-term pain for a long-term gain. And

even if you say, "Well, my whole life has been a pain." I would tell you as a Christian, your life is but a vapor compared to what's coming. God is preparing you for a world that is phenomenal. That's why He says in the book of James, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." You don't get to pick your trials. You don't get to pick the way God comes. If you did, you never pick what happens to you. You would pick different things. "How come they don't have to go through that? How come she's not having to go through that? How come they don't have to endure? How come it's me?" Because God loves you so much, He's teaching you something. So look to Him. He'll help you.

Finally, the grace of discipline does this, number four, it protects us from discouragement. Discipline protects us. God's discipline protects us from discouragement. Notice what He says, "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble and make straight paths for your feet so that the limb which is lame may be put out ... may not be put out a joint, but rather be healed." If you've walked with the Lord long enough, there's going to come a time in your life where you're going to want to quit. Your hands are going to become tired and you're going to say this, "I've served enough. It's somebody else's time to carry that mantle and serve. I'm kind of done doing the whole serving thing. Let somebody else serve. I'm weary right now." Some of you may come to your knees and say, "I'm as tired of walking with the Lord. I've been walking with him, and walking with him, and walking with him and I'm just thoroughly discouraged."

Discipline has a way of strengthening your hands to serve and strengthening your

legs to walk because when God begins to show you, "Here's what I'm training you for and here's what you're doing." You know what? You'll be able to walk in ways and do things you couldn't do. And I've talked to you about this before. The first karate kid that you all saw, which was the best karate kid. With wax on and wax off and paint fence and sand the floor. And this kid's all mag is like, "What's all this discipline about? When are you going to teach me how to fight?" And Mr. Miyagi does what? He is telling him, "Hey, paint the fence." And he's like, "Paint the fence." He's like, "No, no. Paint the fence." "Sand the floor." "Okay. Sand floor." And he is doing all these things. And next thing he knows in all this training he has been doing, all these jobs for his master, he realizes he's been trained to fight and he's stronger than he ever thought he was. That's what God's discipline does. He's strengthening your hands, He's strengthening your legs. The reason why it's difficult is because He's building endurance in you to be ready to do what He's called you to do. And then He says, "Make straight the paths."

What do we know from Proverbs 3:5 and six? That when we trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean out on our own understanding and all our ways we acknowledge God, he makes our path straight. So God is the one that makes the path straight, but here's what discipline does. Discipline shows you the way to walk in, discipline shows you the straight path. When you're disciplined in the things of God, you're not wandering off a side street or maybe I'll try that. I know where that pathway goes. I know where that pathway goes. Folly, folly. This is the straight path. I want to walk in that." Discipline trains us to go the way God wants us to go. Discipline keeps us from going down the path where we're going to twist an ankle and be put out a joint

and be dislocated. Straight paths help us walk in a way that we can walk in strength the way God wants us to go. Discipline protects us. Guess what it also does? It protects everybody else from us.

Have you ever been to a restaurant with an unruly kid and you're looking at the parents like, "Are you going to do anything at all ever? Because your kid is not just annoying you. He's annoying everybody else in the entire restaurant." And the parents are sitting there doing nothing. God loves us enough to not sit there and do nothing because God wants His church to be filled with people that are undergoing His discipline and growing in His discipline so that they have strong hands, and a strong walk, and a clear pathway. Not only so that you know where to go, but it protects others from you not knowing where you're going. That's why He uses His church to build the body. And that's what He's doing here so that we're not put out of joint. So we're not walking through life, twisting our ankle, and putting this out joint. But rather that we'd walk in a way that we'd be healed, that we'd be whole.

You've been around people that have disciplined you well. Not people that are angry at you, but people that have loved you. You've seen the result of that. I told you that when I played football in high school, I hated condition. I hated it, but I remember our coaches telling to us amid all the yelling, and all the sweat, and all the stuff, "You may not be the best team in the state of Illinois, but you're going to be the best condition team in the state of Illinois." And we always were. And we always knew if we got to the mid part of the third quarter and we were either leading or we were close to being tied or we were just a little bit behind, we're going to win because there's no way

they'll be able to keep up with us because we're just starting to hit our stride.

Why does God discipline us? Because He's entrusted us with a mission in this world that's greater than us. He's entrusted us with the gospel once and for all delivered to the saints. He's entrusted us to take this gospel out to the world. And what does He want? He wants walking, talking, living testimonies of what it looks like to have the Holy Spirit in your heart so that no matter what your vocation or what gender you are that you can share the gospel of Jesus Christ with boldness and you can be excited about how God is using you.

Friends, don't reject the discipline of the Lord. Receive it. It's the discipline that will cause you to endure. If you're a genuine believer, discipline comes as part of the package because you have a loving Father. And it's this discipline that will keep you on the right path, it's this discipline that will grow your strength, it's this discipline that will help you be the most effective you can ever be for Christ. And how do we know that? Because God love is so much. He sent His only begotten son who died on a cross for us. He demonstrated His love. Perfect love, perfect justice by giving His life to die for all the sin of the world and by raising from the dead to show that He's indeed God's one and only son to offer life to all who call upon his name.

So today we're going to take communion. And as you hold the elements in your hand, I want you to prepare your heart and I want you to consider what the Lord might be doing in your life. What he might be trying to change in you, what you might need to stop, what you might need to look different in order to best honor Him. And I want you

to think about those elements and then we will take them together as the family of God. Would you pray with me? Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory and honor for who you are. And Lord, we ask in this moment, as we consider our great sin, we would also consider your amazing abundant grace. Lord, that we would rest in the truth. That no matter who we are, that we can come to you when we're tired and we're weary. When we're sinful, you'll accept us just as we are. You'll forgive us a fresh and you'll give us a fresh new start. God, do a work in and through your people today. We give you all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.