

11/24/24 - Hebrews 12:5-11 - "Discipline — A Love and Grace"

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[0 : 01] Today's text will be Hebrews 12 verses 5b to verse 11. It also will be on the screen as well.

And it reads, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the ones he loves.

And chastise every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respect them.

Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they discipline us for a short time, as it seemed best to them. But he disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

[1 : 17] For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant. But later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. This is the word of the Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Praise God. Amen. Praise God. Amen. Praise God. So, you might have noticed Brent's not here today, which means I'm preaching today.

It's good that Brent's able to get a week off from the duties of the church. And I know he really loves this church. And he was worried last night that we would mess up, so he sent us a whole to-do list.

And I was like, it's all right. Enjoy your day off. We will burn the place down. And I'm still not sure he noticed I didn't put not in there.

But all he responded was, as long as God is glorified. So, that's our aim. But we do appreciate Brent and all the work and devotion he puts into this ministry.

[2 : 20] And praise God that he is able to get a week off. Last week we finished our series in 2 Timothy. And the next series is Advent, but that starts in December, next Sunday.

And so, today we have a week off from our normal series. And so, usually if that happens, we do a topical sermon, which is quite rare at Steel Valley Church.

But today, the sermon is going to be on the topic of discipline, as described in our Statement of Faith. And so, we're going to be learning about discipline.

Not to be confused with church discipline, as covered in Matthew 18. Although we will talk about it a little bit. But today I want to talk about biblical discipline. The Lord's discipline in our lives.

And so, we chose Hebrews 12, 5 through 11. Because it speaks greatly of God's discipline, as he disciplines us as a father.

[3 : 25] And we will get to Hebrews 12. But I want to look at some truths and clarify some things about God's discipline before we get into Hebrews.

And I want to start out by noting that discipline is a topic with a lot of possible connotations, right? It depends a lot on the context, what we mean by discipline.

And the way that we feel about the word discipline also depends a lot on our personal experience with discipline. It can bring to mind a whole range of thoughts. And so, I would ask you, when you hear the word discipline, do you think of something positive?

Or do you think of something negative? Overall, in your mind, does it bring positive thoughts or negative thoughts? And I think it also depends on whether or not we're using the verb form, right?

When we talk about discipline in the context of disciplining our children. I don't have children, but I kind of know what discipline is like from the perspective of a child.

[4 : 30] When we talk about disciplining a child, usually as parents, it's not something we enjoy. And even more so, I don't think children enjoy being disciplined, right?

That's where we get the saying, this hurts me more than it hurts you, right? As a parent, we don't always enjoy disciplining children. But when it's used as a noun, I think discipline has a lot of positive connotations, right?

For example, having self-discipline is usually something we admire in people. Self-discipline is a good thing. And so sometimes we even envy people who have discipline to read regularly, to exercise often, to work hard, to eat healthy, to pray frequently, to disciple their family, and to be actively involved in church.

These are all aspects of discipline that we carry out in our lives that are good things. But the topic today is not self-discipline.

It's not a self-help sermon. The topic today is biblical discipline. And so this word, it shows up a lot in Scripture, and its meaning also varies a lot based on context.

[5 : 49] And so it's often translated from the Greek or the Hebrew into words such as training or education, reproof, correction, warning, rebuke, punishment.

Sometimes words that we don't really use that often anymore, like chastisement, right? These are all forms of discipline in Scripture.

And they can have positive and negative connotations in our minds when we read them. While we find it comforting to know that God, he trains and educates his children so that we can walk in righteousness, it can also be difficult to see God's reproof and his rebuke in our lives as loving or gracious, especially when at times it involves trials and perhaps suffering.

And so I really want to start out by laying the groundwork of what discipline is not. Because depending on your upbringing, when you think of God's discipline, you often think of punishment.

But God's discipline is not punishment. God does not punish us for our sin unless we reject God, in which we receive eternal punishment by separation from him in hell.

[7 : 14] But the punishment for our sin, it was born by Christ on the cross. Christ received the punishment deserved for our sin, and he received it in full so that there is no more punishment for our sin.

The penalty for sin, past and present, has been paid in full by Jesus. There's nothing more to be done. However, that doesn't mean that upon believing in Jesus, we're at once made perfect.

It doesn't mean that we are sinless, and so it doesn't mean that we do not receive discipline. Just not in the context of condemnation, punishment for our sin.

And so that's really what I want to look at today. How God disciplines us, not because of our sin, but to remove sin from us.

And therefore, I want to look at four realities of God's discipline. And these are going to be how God uses discipline to produce repentance, to produce restoration, to produce righteousness, and to produce rejoicing in our lives.

[8 : 36] It took a bit of work to make them all start with R, but I found the right words. But before we look at these, I've broken it into three points. I want to go through them each one at a time.

But before then, I do want to pray that the Lord would give us wisdom and also humility to receive these truths. So let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word.

We thank you for your patience to teach us through your word, Lord, to discipline us, that we may repent of our sin and turn to you, that we may be restored to right fellowship with you, that we may grow in righteousness.

And Lord, in seeing all this, that we may rejoice at your goodness and give all the glory to you. And so I pray that you will prepare our hearts to receive from these words, Lord, with humility and submission, and to love you more.

We pray this in your holy name. Amen. So my first point I've titled, Discipline Produces Repentance. The Lord's discipline produces repentance in our lives.

[9 : 53] So I'll start with a question. Have you ever been overwhelmed by guilt? I know personally, I sometimes have this feeling when I've done something wrong that I just can't sit still until it's been confessed, until I work up the courage to confess.

Even seemingly small things can steal joy and peace until we find the courage, the conviction, to confess these things. And I think David, he captures this best in Psalm 32, verses 3 through 5, which we'll have on the screen for you, but I encourage you also to look in your Bible at Psalm 32.

It is a psalm where we hear about God's forgiveness. But David says in verse 3, For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away, through my groanings all day long, for day and night your hand was heavy upon me.

My strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Selah. We see that David, he felt as though he was wasting away under the weight of sin. And he recognizes that it's God's hand that weighs heavy on his conscience, so that his strength feels dried up.

[11 : 23] But when he finally confessed his sin, and he received forgiveness of his sin, this also brought peace to his conscience. And so he says in the same psalm, blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

His sin wasn't covered by his discipline. His sin was covered by the blood of the Lamb that was slain, literally in his case, but in the case of Christ, who was slain once for all for the forgiveness and covering of his sins, and for all sins for those who believe in him.

We see also from Jesus' words in Revelation 3.19, jumping to the far end of the Bible, John writes, Jesus' words in verse 19, those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

This word reprove, it's not used very often today. It means to convict, or produce conviction of sin through discipline.

The result, again, is repentance, turning away from sin. Although, under God's conviction, we feel as though we're wasting away, as though our strength is dried up, we realize it is the Lord who is patiently teaching us to confess our sin and to fall into the hands of the Lord, not punishing us, convicting us, so that we may repent and be restored.

[13 : 08] We also see that the Lord's discipline produces restraint, not only repentance. I like what the psalmist says in Psalm 118, verse 18.

He writes, The Lord has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Even in the severity of the Lord's discipline, the psalmist sees mercy, that he has not been given over to the death that comes through sin.

And so the contrast we see in this verse is that if we live in sin and give in to the passions and desires of our hearts, we will be consumed by sin. If we war against the hand of the Lord, our hearts become hardened.

Eventually, our conscience is silenced, and we are given over to the deceitful desires and dishonorable passions that lead to death.

If it were not for the restraining mercy and discipline of the Lord, we would remain dead in our sins. But we see throughout Scripture that God is rich in grace.

[14 : 28] He is rich in mercy. And he disciplines us to bring about repentance and through this to restrain us and keep us from going astray.

His purpose is for our repentance and for our being kept, our being restrained. The psalmist also writes in Psalm 119, verse 67.

119 is a very long psalm, so perhaps you don't know these verses, but they stand very true. In verse 67, he writes, Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word.

Continuing in 71, he says, It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. We see the psalmist having been afflicted, having been disciplined by the Lord, he sees it as good, as a blessing that led to his salvation.

Through his discipline, he was kept from sin, and he learned obedience. So as we move into the second point, I want to see how the Lord also uses discipline to produce restoration and to produce holiness in those who love him.

[15 : 49] And so I've titled my second point, Discipline Produces Restoration and Righteousness. How often do you feel guilty about sin, confess your sin, and then wake up the next morning and do it again?

As soon as the guilt is removed, how easy is it to go back? Right? But we see that God's purpose and discipline is that we turn from sin, that we turn from it.

That's what repent means, to turn from it for good, to be restored from it, and to grow in righteousness. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 7, verses 9 through 10, I think we'll have it on the screen, Paul, he says, As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting.

Your conscience grieved you by the work of the Lord into repenting. For you felt a godly grief so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Paul had confronted the sins of the Corinthians back in his first letter. He had written a letter convicting them of their sin, but in his second letter, he's able to rejoice that they were grieved into repentance, that they had turned away from this sin and removed it from their presence, that they took his word to heart, they turned from their sin, and they were restored to a right standing.

[17 : 40] They were restored to fellowship with God. But we also notice, as in the previous verses, that worldly grief at work in those who reject God, it's ignored by their conscience.

The world feels grief, but they ignore it. They silence it. They continue living in sin, which leads to death.

This is in contrast to those who are moved by the Lord's discipline, by the grief that he produces, moved to regret, and moved to salvation, right?

To being restored in the joy of their salvation, as the psalmist says in Psalm 51, right? Restored to the joy of salvation, without regret.

More literally, this phrase, without regret, means irrevocable salvation, right? Indelible salvation. They're restored to indelible, permanent salvation.

[18 : 48] And so we see that, although we all struggle with sin, we all battle temptations, the Lord is faithful to produce repentance and restoration in the lives of all those who love him.

More practically, in this letter to the Corinthians, we see, it's not only the Lord, but it's Paul's pen and God's word that bring about grief leading to repentance.

So thinking about it more practically, the Lord uses the writers of his word to produce conviction. He uses his word to produce conviction.

and he uses his church to produce conviction that leads to repentance and restoration. I think we see this very clearly in Galatians 6, verse 1, when Paul is confronting the Galatians' sin.

He, as he's wrapping up the letter, says in the first verse, Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

[20 : 08] Brothers here means us, brothers and sisters in Christ. It is on us to restore those who are caught in transgression.

The Lord, he has invited us to bear one another's burdens, to confront sin, and to restore our brothers and sisters with all gentleness, with all gentleness.

We are to join their consciences in causing grief in them that they should be restored. That is an act of mercy. We are to remind them of the real and deadly consequence of sin and of the joy that is to be found in salvation.

And when they repent, right, we are to rejoice together with them that God has restored them. That's why the New Testament calls us to gather together often.

Right? To gather together often and encourage one another all the more as the day draws near. Right? In Hebrews 10, we're called to gather together often. Not just here on Sunday, in small house churches throughout the week, together in Bible study.

[21 : 24] we are called to know one another's lives, to know one another's weaknesses, to call out the sin in the lives of those around us.

It is not loving, caring, or compassionate to ignore another's sin until their conscience is silenced and they die in their sin. the Lord's discipline, it doesn't end only with repentance and restoration.

It instead overflows in righteousness. And so I want to put an image in your mind of a promising young athlete.

They have a gift, a talent for basketball, but they lack discipline. They can continue practicing and playing regularly, but without discipline, without direction, without teaching, they're probably never going to be great at the game.

However, this same athlete with the direction of a skilled coach that is invested in them has the chance for greatness. how many great basketball players, when they're inducted into the Hall of Fame, they thank their coach.

[22 : 48] But greatness requires discipline, requires training, drills, exercise, practice, competition. It requires wins and losses, all necessary parts of success.

At times, it's extremely difficult, but the reward is excellent motivation, especially when there's people cheering us on and invested in our success.

Now, the illustration falls short because God is not our coach, right? But God is faithful and he is invested in our righteousness.

Looking at Psalm 94, verse 12, we see that the psalmist writes, blessed is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, and whom you teach out of your law.

We see that it is a blessing when the Lord patiently disciplines us so that we may grow to know him and to know his word. There may be seasons of reproof, correction, and rebuke.

[24 : 01] Certainly, they're difficult. But I think the Lord's discipline is at work in our lives most often, most consistently through training in righteousness.

We see throughout Psalm 119 that he teaches us his statutes, that we may walk according to his law, and he trains us that we may keep his word. Every time we read the word of God, we are being taught through the many warnings and the many encouragements of scripture that we may grow.

The Lord gave us his word. We saw this just a few weeks ago in 2 Timothy 3. The Lord gave us his word that we may be complete and equipped for every good work. He also says in Ephesians 4 that he's given us pastors and teachers, evangelists, the apostles, the prophets, so that we may be equipped, and built up to speak the truth in love.

Reminds me of less read it from the Beatitudes this morning, Jesus' words when he said, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

When we were dead in our sin, before we knew Christ, righteousness was contrary to our sin nature. But the spirit of God, he's given us a new nature that hungers and thirsts for righteousness.

[25 : 34] We know that Jesus, he's the only lasting source of righteousness, and his righteousness is credited to those who believe in him. But he's also the source of living water, the one who satisfies the hungry, and the one who satisfies the thirsty.

And so he helps us to grow in righteousness through discipline. He patiently teaches us to observe his every commandment, as we see in Matthew 28.

Going back to the illustration, the athlete subjects themselves to teaching, to correction, and training in pursuit of being crowned champion. But those who believe in God, we submit ourselves to teaching, to correction, and to training in pursuit of the crown of righteousness, as Paul says in his letter to Timothy.

As we move into point three, I want to see how the Lord uses discipline for our joy. Right? Sounds contradictory, but for our joy, and then for his glory.

And so I've titled this point, Discipline Produces Rejoicing. Now I think discipline as it's being carried out in our lives probably does not make us feel joyous.

[27 : 03] Probably the severity of discipline does not bring to mind joy. But as we look at James' words in James 1, verses 2-4, he writes, count it all joy.

Rejoice, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

You may not think of testing as the Lord's discipline, but certainly the Lord allows testing in our lives with the purpose that we may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

It is his discipline at work in our lives. Now I want to notice that James is not talking about trivial matters here. He's not talking about the trial of waiting an extra ten minutes for a cup of coffee or waiting an extra day for your Amazon package to arrive.

If you read the letter, he's actually more concerned with sickness, with persecution, and the many difficulties that Christians face.

[28 : 23] And so I think depending on our season of life, it can be really difficult to hear, count it all joy, when you meet trials of various kinds. Especially when we are questioning why God would allow a loved one to die, or why he would allow a child to suffer from disease, or why he would allow a family member, a husband, or a wife to endure cancer.

And I don't want to minimize or overlook this pain that many Christians endure. But I want to remember, first of all, that the Lord's discipline is not punishment for sin.

At times, his discipline is meant to bring about repentance, but often his discipline in these trials is there to produce steadfastness, or unshakable faith that is being made perfect and complete.

Now, there are times when we question why God would allow such severe affliction. Even Job, a man that was described as blameless and upright, he questioned when he faced overwhelming affliction and grief.

But we see that in all this, he did not sin or charge God with any wrong. Now, Job's friend Eliphaz, he came to encourage him in the midst of his suffering, and we know Eliphaz didn't get everything right, but I think he was correct in Job 5.17 when Eliphaz said, Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves, therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty.

[30 : 10] When the Lord's discipline seems severe, we must remember it is done in perfect love, with the purpose of making us more godly. In the end, the testing of Job's faith, it produced steadfastness in the midst of great loss.

trials, we see that even as our faith is tested, these trials produce steadfast trust in God. By faith in the goodness and grace of God, we too can count it all joy, even in the midst of trials, knowing that the outcome is for our good and for his glory.

So we see Peter echoes James' words in 1 Peter 1 6-7. The apostle Peter writes, In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

gold is refined, at least in the ancient world, by melting. The lighter elements rise to the surface, they're scraped off, and then this is repeated until there's no more dross left, until it is perfectly pure.

The children of God are being refined, being refined until our faith is perfect and complete. the enemy certainly tries to break our faith by various trials, but in the end, the testing of our faith produces assurance that this faith is indeed genuine and that it overflows in praising glory to God.

[32 : 10] This is why we rejoice, we fall to the ground in worship in the midst of the trial, and we echo the words of Job. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. As we close, I finally want to get to Hebrews 12, 5 through 11.

Kind of a reverse sermon today, we get to the passage at the end. But I think there's a lot of truth here that perhaps has the wrong connotation if we don't know what the Lord's discipline means.

And so I'll read it. The author of Hebrews says, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son who he receives.

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

- [33 : 27] Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness.

For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

End quote. We see the first part of this quote is actually taken directly from Proverbs 3.11 and 12, reminding us that the Lord treats us as sons.

just as a father disciplines his children, the Lord disciplines the one he loves. I think just as with the word discipline, the word father brings to mind a lot of different things for each person, depending on their own experience with their father.

Some were blessed with a loving, caring, and present father who invested in their life, who trained them up in all manners of discipline, to walk in good discipline, but others had a father that wasn't loving, wasn't caring, or perhaps wasn't present.

- [34 : 53] I think every father falls somewhere between these two extremes. dreams. Even if our earthly father didn't deserve our respect, we must notice that the heavenly father is perfect in love, in care, and in discipline for those who he loves.

And so we subject ourselves to the discipline of the heavenly father, submitting to his teaching, his training, his reproof, his correction, his reproving, so that we may share in his holiness.

Moreover, we must not disregard or grow weary of the Lord's discipline. We must not give up. Instead, we must endure, because it is his discipline in us that yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in all who are trained by him.

as the apostle James also said in his first chapter of his letter, blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

We see that the Lord's discipline, it comes in many forms, from training, to correction, to rebuke, but that the Lord disciplines those who he loves.

- [36 : 22] He will not give up on us, he will not give us up to our sinful passions, the desires of our flesh. Instead, he is perfectly faithful to bring us to repentance, to restoration, to righteousness, and to rejoicing.

Through this all, he refines us so that we may be holy as he is holy. Let's pray.