

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
June 15, 2014
“A Father’s Discipline”

Memory Verse

“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?” Heb 12:7, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: Hebrews 12:5-13
Sermon Title: “Receiving God’s Discipline”

Sunday School Scripture: Hebrews 12:5-13
Sunday School Title: “A Father’s Discipline”
Big Idea: In order to appreciate and learn from God’s discipline, we must identify the purpose.

REVIEW: Last week, we discussed Hebrews 12:1-3. In this passage, the author compares the Christian life to a race. As a way to review, think of one thing you learned from the Sunday School lesson or Pastor Jamey’s sermon from last week.

This week, as we continue our study in Hebrews, the author of the letter encourages his readers by assuring them they are not the only ones to endure difficulties and tough times. The original readers of Hebrews were discouraged and confused as to why they were having to endure persecution and other various trials. The author assures them that the Christian life is full of challenges, whether they come in the form of obstacles to be overcome or times of discipline to be endured. Last week’s passage (Heb 12:1-5) focused on persevering through the race and enduring the steep hills and wet downpours that come. This week’s passage (Heb 12:5-13) focuses on learning from hardships that are times of discipline from our Father.

Describe a time when you were disciplined for something as a child. Why does this particular occasion stand out to you? Why do you remember it so well? What did you learn from it?

READ Hebrews 12:5-13

INTRODUCTION:

In these few verses, we see the word *discipline* or *chastise* used several times. For us to fully understand this passage of Scripture, we must first understand the words used here. Whether your translation uses the word *discipline* or *chastise*, it stems from the same Greek noun, “*pideah*.” The Greek word *pideah* has to do with the training of children. *Pideah* includes anything a loving parent or caring teacher might do to help educate a child – to help him mature and grow in his mind, heart, and body. The goal of *pideah* is to cultivate the child’s soul, to correct his mistakes, and to curb his unhealthy passions in a way that might guide him toward maturity. And *pideah* discipline is motivated by love. Now does *pideah* include punishment? Yes, absolutely. But this word is much bigger than simply punishment. *Pideah* represents an idea of providing instruction that will increase virtue. And a parent’s loving instruction will at times include punishment, but it is certainly not limited to punishment, only.

As you read today’s Scripture, every time you see some form of the word *discipline* or *chastise*, realize that the meaning is much deeper than simple punishment. Remember the ideas and word picture *pideah* carries with it – that of a parent lovingly training a child – to help you understand today’s message. So our lesson today does NOT deal exclusively with God punishing the Christian. Instead, it deals with God training and disciplining the Christian towards maturity.

1. HARDSHIP MAKES US FORGETFUL

In Hebrews 12:5, the author asks his readers, “Have you forgotten the word of encouragement that addresses you as sons?” Basically, the author is pointing out that sometimes difficult circumstances can cause us to forget God’s promises and faithfulness. These readers were enduring some tough stuff, but the author of Hebrews encourages them to remember what God’s Word promises. In Hebrews 12:5-6, the author quotes Proverbs 3:11 & 12, reminding them that we should not lose heart when the Lord disciplines us. The readers had forgotten this truth! They were enduring a time of discipline from God, and they were panicking. They were sad, overwhelmed, and confused. They didn’t understand why they were having to endure the trials. And the author of Hebrews writes to remind them once again of God’s truth revealed in the Old

Testament. He says to them, “*Hey! Have you totally forgotten what God’s Word says? You’re complaining about the tough stuff you’re going through, but God’s Word assures us that we’re gonna have some of that in our lives. In fact, when the difficulties do come, we can be confident that God has our best interests at heart because He’s disciplining us as His children! See – look at Proverbs 3:11-12. Remember that?!*”

Describe a time when someone helped you by reminding you of God’s truth or encouraged you by pointing you back to Scripture. Do you need to do this for someone else in your life?

Unfortunately, hardship often makes us forgetful, just like the Hebrews. In the midst of the Hebrews’ difficulties, the author points them back to Scripture. Sometimes it can be embarrassing to get reminders like this, but it’s also oh-so-helpful, too. Just like the Hebrews had allowed their circumstances to cloud their view, we also have times where we become so obsessed with our present troubles that we forget the promises and faithfulness our God has provided in the past. It’s nice to be reminded and pointed back to Scripture.

2. DISCIPLINE SERVES A PURPOSE

The author reminds the Hebrews that many (though not all) trials and tough situations are actually acts of discipline from God! Just like an earthly parent lovingly trains and disciplines his own child in many ways, our Heavenly Father does the same. So when we find ourselves in the midst of a trial, we should consider the possibility that God is purposefully using that trial to discipline us somehow. And just like an earthly parent has a goal for discipline, God also wants us to learn from our trials. God’s many forms of discipline all have 3 basic purposes: correction, prevention, and education. Let’s look at each of these more in depth:

PURPOSES:

A. CORRECTION

We must remember that, because of the cross, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the believer, all sins in the past, present, and future have already been punished and forgiven through the death of Christ. So a believer is never punished for the full extent of his sin in order to earn redemption. Jesus has already taken care of that. But there ARE times in a Christian’s life when God punishes for a particular sin. In these times, we commit a sin and God disciplines us to correct us so that we might understand the seriousness of sin and the importance of God’s truth and righteousness.

A classic example of God’s discipline being used for a corrective purpose can be seen in David’s life. After committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband killed, God disciplines David. God tells David through the prophet Nathan, “Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own” (2 Samuel 12:10). God disciplined David for his sins, and David lived a sad life after this point. His newborn son died, his older son rebelled, his other children were tragically killed, and David was forced to flee and hide from his enemies like a fugitive from the law. Now keep in mind that David was neither condemned nor redeemed by his punishment. He was disciplined – corrected – by it. God used these horrible circumstances in David’s life to correct him from his previous sin. And through God’s discipline, David became a better man than he had ever been. Even though God’s discipline was painful, David endured it, responded to it, and grew deeper in His knowledge of and relationship with God. God accomplished his purposes of maturing David through corrective discipline.

B. PREVENTION

As a parent, there are times when I use discipline to prevent my child from sinning. For example, like other parents, I have a rule that my sons cannot play in parking lots or streets. I teach them about this rule regularly and remain ready and willing to provide teachable moments of discipline if I see them flirting with the boundaries of this rule. The rule has a purpose behind it, and the time and energy I take to train them to obey this rule is important because it will prevent them from running into harm’s way. This discipline is not a response to something they have already done or because of a sin they’ve already committed. Instead, this discipline is meant to provide a framework that will prevent them from sinning and getting hurt in the future. Like earthly parents, there are times when God disciplines us, not as a result of sin, but to keep us from sinning.

What are some ways your parents disciplined you to prevent you from getting hurt or falling into trouble? Do kids always understand the reasoning behind adults' discipline? How does this relate to God's discipline for us?

An example of God's preventative discipline can be seen in the Apostle Paul's life. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul described a "thorn in the flesh" that somehow limited and hindered him. Whether this was an eye problem, migraines, epilepsy, or something else, Paul said this "thorn in his flesh" kept him from becoming "conceited". Though he begged God to remove it, God allowed the physical limitation to persist in order to keep Paul humble and dependent upon Him. In Paul's life, God saw Paul's proclivity towards pride. To prevent Paul from stumbling into the sin of pride, God inflicted him with a physical infirmity. God disciplined Paul in a personal way to prevent him from a specific sin. God does the same in our lives.

C. EDUCATION

Some discipline is meant not to correct or prevent sin, but to teach us about life. Simply put, some discipline is for the purpose of our education. And when God uses discipline to educate us, it is to teach us two basic things: how to know Him better and how to share Him with others.

Don't you find in your own life that trouble often drives you closer to the Lord? When things get tough, we go straight to God. When things grow stormy in our lives, we read the Bible more, we pray like crazy, and our intimate in-the-closet relationship with God grows. At the same time, trouble in our own lives also tends to make us aware of trouble in other people's lives. When we endure a challenging circumstance, we suddenly notice when someone else goes through a similar trial. And we feel qualified to encourage or minister to them. These types of trials are often sent or allowed by God in order to teach us more about Him and to train us how to minister to others for His name.

A perfect example of discipline for education's sake can be seen in Job's life. God allowed Job to endure every type of suffering imaginable. His children died; he lost everything he owned; he endured painful bodily disease. Job's positively sunshiney and oh-so-encouraging wife told him to just curse God and die. And his friends gave lousy advice and did nothing to ease his suffering. Why did God allow Satan to bring all this suffering into Job's life? It wasn't to discipline Job for any sin he'd committed. Instead, it was to teach him. And Job learned from it all! In Job 42, Job says to God, "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:2, 5). Job learned of God's sovereignty and omnipotence in a way that he could not have learned otherwise. And after Job had learned what God sought to teach him and had prayed for God to forgive and bless his friends, the Lord made Job prosperous again and gave him twice as much as before (Job 42:10).

Describe a trial you endured that ended up teaching you something about God. What did you learn about God? How did that experience allow you to minister to others?

3. TO LEARN THE LESSON, IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE

The question is not whether or not we will encounter difficulties or endure trials. Hardships are certain to come! The question is what will we learn from the tough times? In order for us to learn from God's times of discipline, we must first identify the purpose behind the discipline. We must ask:

- Is God correcting me for sin? Have I messed up? Is God having to point out my straying in order to bring me back on the path?
- Is he preventing me from sin? Has God seen a dangerous pattern in my life that He wants to prevent?
- Is he trying to teach me more about himself and the ministry he has for me?

So the next time you encounter a trial in your own life, take heart! You are a son of God, and your Father is lovingly training you to become more like Him.

CLOSING: In order to appreciate and learn from God's discipline, we must identify the purpose.

APPLY IT!

Think about a trial in your life you're enduring now or have recently endured. What may have been God's purpose? What does He want you to learn?

RESOURCE: Much of today's lesson comes from a sermon by John McArthur.
McArthur, John. "The Discipline of God." April 8, 1973. www.gty.org/resources/sermons/1636/the-discipline-of-god

STUDY NOTES: (These are for your own study. This is NOT the lesson. Commentary written by David Guzik and available online: http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/guzik_david/)

Hebrews 12:5-11 deals with the question "why does God allow such difficult times as we are going through." This is a question commonly asked in seasons of discouragement. We must admit that God does *allow* every thing that happens; so He must at least passively approve of it, because He certainly has the power to stop bad things that happen.

Of course, God can *never* be the author of evil. But He does allow others to choose evil, and He can use the evil choice another makes to work out His ultimately good purpose, even if only to demonstrate His justice and righteousness in contrast to evil.

The discussion of *chastening* that follows should not be regarded as the *only* reason God allows difficult times, but it is an important one. For example, we know that God allows difficult times so that we can, at a later time, comfort someone else with the same comfort God shows towards us in our crisis (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

You have forgotten: One great reason for the discouragement among these Jewish Christians was because they saw no reason why God would allow difficult times to arise. But they have forgotten principles regarding the chastening of the Lord. How much of the difficulty in our Christian life can be traced back to those three words: **you have forgotten!** Perhaps it is some principle we remember in our minds, but we **have forgotten** it with our hearts - and we must remember it again!

Which speaks to you as sons: The quotation from Proverbs 3:11-12 reminds us that God's chastening should *never* be taken as a sign of His rejection. It is rather a sign of His treating us as His children. Only the most proud Christian would claim they are never in need of correction from God. No one is above this kind of training.

God's chastening can come in many forms; and what may be God's chastening to endure in the life of one believer may be a Satanic attack to resist in the life of another. This is why James recommends a prayer for wisdom in the context of enduring trials (James 1:2-5). We need to know how to react differently when God does different things.

God deals with you as sons: Many people claim an inability to relate to God as a loving Father, because they have never known a loving human father in their own experience. Yet, even these can still receive the love of God the Father. We have not all known by *experience* what a model father is, but we do all know by *intuition* what a good father is. God is that perfect Father, and He has given us that intuition.

God deals with you as sons: God's correction is never to punish us, never to make us *pay* for our sins. That was done once and for all at the cross. His correction is motivated *only* by His love, not by His justice; He chastens us without anger.

If you are without chastening ... you are illegitimate and not sons: Those who fancy themselves "beyond" God's chastening mark themselves as **illegitimate** children of God. God demonstrates His wrath when He ignores our sin, allowing it to pass without correction. His inactivity is never due to ignorance or a lack of initiative, as may be the case with a human father.

We paid them respect: We should be even more submissive and respectful to our Heavenly Father's correction than to an earthly Father's correction.

Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live? Therefore, we must never despise God for His chastening, though it is unpleasant. When we resent it, we consider ourselves virtual equals with God, instead of His children. It is humiliating and bitter to be chastened by an equal, but not by one who is legitimately our superior. Resentment at chastening shows how we see God and how we see ourselves.

But He for our profit: Human fathers, even with the best of intention, can only chasten imperfectly, because they lack perfect knowledge. The all-knowing God can chasten us perfectly, with better and more lasting results than even the best earthly father.

Afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness: Our author isn't trying to deny the unpleasant nature of a "heavenly spanking" (**no chastening seems to be joyful for the present**). But he does want us to look beyond the *process* to the *result*.

The peaceable fruit of righteousness: Is this **fruit** evident in your life? The reason why many live a "one-crisis-after-another" life is because they are either blind to God's chastening, or are resisting it. They have not been **trained by it**, and so the **peaceable fruit of righteousness** is not evident. They never experience the **peaceable fruit of righteousness** because they have never been **trained by** God's chastening.

Trained in the ancient Greek language is a word from the world of athletics; as an athlete is trained by some agony, so are we - as God's "spiritual athletes." God has a purpose for training you. Think of David after being attacked by a lion while just he was just a boy tending the sheep. "Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen to me?" He might of thought, "I barely escaped!" But if only David could see ahead, he would see God had a giant named Goliath he was destined to face, and the battle with the lion prepared him ahead of time. God always has a purpose. We can trust Him.

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down: Almost like a coach or a military officer, the author tells the "troops" to get with it. He has given exhaustive *reasons* to be strong in the Lord and put off discouragement, so now is the time to *do it*. The pictures here (strengthened **hands** and **knees**, "straight-ahead" **feet**) speak of readiness to work and move for the Lord. This readiness is first to go when one surrenders to discouragement.