
Your Pattern of Biblical Chastening

Hebrews 12:1-11⁵

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Discipline is hard. Self-discipline is a struggle for many. Diets, exercise, regular routines, vigilance over sins – these all require that we impose some level of regular structure on our natural tendency towards irregular, self-pleasing chaos.

But then there is the discipline imposed on us by others. The boss who requires us to be at the office at a certain time. The spouse who expects to serve and receive a meal at a certain time. Parents who mete out consequences when expectations and demands are not met.

Both of these fit in the word, “discipline”. Then there is the carefully thought through, lovingly implemented instruction, correction and consequences that we associate with parenting and child-rearing. This is the God-ordained “how-to” that shapes hearts through teaching, commands, consequences and corporal punishment. Biblical discipline then involves a path to follow and pain when the path is not followed. There is a sense of safe rest when children stay on the path. There is also trouble and pain when children get off the path.

So we have a pattern for the discipline our biblical parenting involves.

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Our Struggling in Chastening

(v. 1-5)

This text is addressed to Christians who were going through enormous hardship. They are being called to endure their hardship because it is the chastening brought by a loving Father. So how are we to think about this in reference to our own parenting?

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

The Necessity of Enduring Chastening

(v.2-3)

Our author begins by causing us to think deeply about Jesus. This is always the best place to begin in our hardships. Fix your eyes on Jesus and consider Him. What is it then that this does for us?

I believe that there are two kinds of hardship in view here. Our suffering hardship comes in two primary categories.

Requiring endurance is a part of chastening

(v. 1)

The Christian life is not a sprint. It is a marathon. It requires endurance. Part of what God is doing in chastening us is to develop endurance. It is the running, weight lifting, repetitive drills that build spiritual strength and stamina. God does this as our Father. It is part of our instruction and discipline. It is what we are to do in Biblical parenting as well. Fundamental to Biblical parenting is the idea of teaching and training endurance into our children. They have to learn to persevere when it is hard. But sadly, too many parents don't. Everything is about making life easy and fun for kids. Yes, children should have fun and be happy. But this is not the goal of Biblical parenting. Teaching and training joyful, patient endurance is.

Requiring sacrifice is a part of chastening

(v.2)

There is a kind of hardship that is related to the cross. It is the kind of hardship that comes as we take up our cross. It is the hardship that we choose when we choose sacrifice. Chastening imposes on us, sacrifice. We have to give things up.

Responding to sinners is a part of chastening

(v.3)

There is a kind of hardship that comes from sinner's opposition. In their case, it was the pressure of sinful men. They were being plundered and pressured and threatened. The hardship came because of the hostile will of sinful men. There was almost unimaginable stress. And some of you know this. You know for your faith

you are sometimes ridiculed and mocked and teased. And sometimes for the sake of holiness you are openly opposed. Some of this is at work. Some of it is at home. And someday, it may come from mob violence or government.

The Dangers in the Midst of Chastening **(v.3b-5a)**

As our heavenly Father chastens us, we must watch for certain dangers to ourselves. So, we must be alert to these same difficulties in our children as we chasten and discipline them

That they become discouraged **(v.3b)**

There is a great danger those being chastened will grow weary and lose heart and fail in their souls. It is normal for Christians to have experiences of stress and suffering that threaten their faith and presses too hard, or lasts too long and feels almost intolerable. But, losing heart is a great spiritual danger. To be fainthearted here is literally "to become loosed-souled." So in our parenting we must help our children to bear up well and not become discouraged, disheartened, depressed. This does NOT mean that we lighten the load – the Lord often doesn't. But we must help our children to understand and accept the discipline they are being given.

That they lose the Biblical perspective **(v.4)**

The point here is that things are bad, but not as bad as they could be. There is hostility and trouble and stress and suffering, but evidently no martyrs yet. We know from Hebrews 10:34 that some had been imprisoned and some had been plundered. But it is not yet martyrdom, though that could come. The stress level here is huge. How do you sleep at night when being a Christian may result in mob violence?

So we will lose heart and become discouraged when we lose our sense of perspective. We allow the pain of the present to overwhelm our sense of the big picture and the long term.

Our children will too. It is part of growing in knowledge and wisdom for children to come to understand the place and purpose of discipline. This is so important in our chastening of our children. They have to understand the long term benefit of present suffering and hardship. They have to see what the chastening is producing. You are responsible to help them see and understand that by the grace of God.

That they forget what they have been taught **(v.5)**

Why do we lose heart and lose perspective and become overwhelmed by the stress of our situation and the suffering of our hardships? Because we have forgotten the truths and exhortations and encouragement that come to us in the Word. We see our author telling them that they are risking losing heart and perspective because they have forgotten a very simple but profound text in Proverbs 3:11-12. This text in Proverbs is nested between trusting the Lord in all our ways (3:5-8), honoring the Lord with all our wealth (3:9-10) and finding wisdom as a chief end of life

(3:13ff). So the chastening hand of God requires trust, obedience and leads to wisdom.

Listen to me loved ones; the Scriptures are more than just a theological textbook or a therapeutic sourcebook. They are the very truths of God shaping our hearts, renewing our minds, motivating our wills and directing our conduct. These people were not finding help and solace and direction from the Word. So the hardships came to them and threatened them and shook them to the foundations.

We must constantly be pointing our children back to the Lord, the Word and to the truths they are learning. We must help them to remember what the Scriptures say. It will be very discouraging to children if your discipline does not have a comforting, encouraging and hopeful aspect to it.

Now go back and notice how it is actually written. We are to give careful consideration to Christ *in order that* we do not grow weary or fainthearted. We must train our souls to pay attention to and to think much about the Lord Jesus with the aim of encouragement and endurance. I will come to the Lord, listen to Him in the Word, think on Him through meditation, commune with Him through prayer and receive grace to be strong and large souled. While this grace may come to us through the loving, encouraging, admonishing ministry of people, all of that must point us to Christ, His promises, purposes and power.

So this grace gives us endurance – it fixes the soul on Christ so that we receive power and gain perspective.

Now, what does that mean for us as parents?

We must not despise God's chastening and so not discipline our children.

We must engage our children to be sure that they are taught and trained about chastening and discipline itself.

We must relate our chastening of our children to Christ and the cross. It is a means and opportunity for the gospel. It is a means of grace.

We must have confidence that chastening and discipline is what God requires *regardless of what it produces*. We must be faithful while we depend on and hope for God's grace.

Our Understanding of Chastening

(v.6-11)

The Bible gives us an analogy and a reality on our chastening. The suffering we are experiencing is to be endured like a father's discipline. So the fact that our heavenly Father disciplines us helps us to chasten and discipline our children well.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

⁷ 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? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ 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? ¹⁰ 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 his holiness.

¹¹ 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.

The hostility of sinners and the hardships of life are both equally under the sovereign control of God. The cold germs and the horrid teacher at school are both under God's control, bringing testing and discipline as He sees fit and as He deems necessary.

Chastening is God's way

Chastening is in the sphere of our relationship with God as family. He is our Father. We are His children. Jesus satisfied God as our judge. God has punished Jesus for us. He no longer punishes us. And so, we do NOT punish our children. We chasten and discipline them, not as their judge, but as their father and mother.

Chastening is God's way of transforming and maturing His children. God allows and brings us hardship. He is not merely using what happens; He is the One who purposes, plans, provides and permits all the hardship that comes our way. It has aim and purpose. It is always right. It is never executed in anger. It is carried out with love and grace.

Chastening is God's way for parents with their children. Because God lovingly disciplines us as our Father, then we must lovingly discipline our children. Biblical parenting requires, demands that you chasten and discipline your children. If you do not, you are disobeying and displeasing God. Biblically faithful chastening is a means God uses to transform and mature your children. One of the reasons we have so many immature, self-focused, self-absorbed foolish adults in our society today is because most of them were reared largely without discipline. While we are not guaranteed results, there is both natural and spiritual good for those children reared in a grace-based, love-filled discipline.

Chastening involves both circumstances and people. We see that from the context. The believers were suffering both hardship and hostility. Part of Biblical parenting is to teach our children the value of responding to both in a God-pleasing way.

Our children have to learn to respond to instruction and discipline that comes through circumstances. There will be natural hardships and difficulties. And there

will be times in which you will impose hardship. You will require your children to “suffer”. You will not make life easy for them. God doesn’t for you, does He? Is He a perfect Father? Yet He imposes correction, chastening and discipline that is hard and painful. Have you Biblically thought through this in your own parenting?

Our children have to learn to respond to instruction and discipline that comes through people. First, you will sin against them as their parents. That is a simple and sad fact that is reflected in this text. You will need to repent of your sins against them and ask their forgiveness. However, you *must* teach your children to respond rightly to anyone who sins against them. They will have poor teachers, demanding coaches, unreasonable bosses. It is your responsibility to prepare your children to handle those situations in a way that pleases God. Yet we too often are too quick to step in, to defend our kids, to take their part. I am not saying that there are not times to do that. But when will they learn that they cannot help how people are; but they can help how they respond to how people are.

So, whether it is the hardship of suffering or the hostility of sinners, all discipline is being designed and determined by God. He is crafting it so that it is exactly suited to help you lay aside weights and sins and to enable you to run with endurance the race He has set before you. O, brothers and sisters, believe this in an obeying way!

Now, there is one huge lesson for Biblical parents. *It is good for your children to experience hardship.* You must not just shield them from everything that is hard, you must give hardship so that they will learn to endure. We are too indulgent and easy. We give in their whims, their wants, their whining. We think we have to entertain them and make them happy. I believe that this helps to provoke them to a lifestyle of sinful anger. The result is children who are self-focused, self-indulgent, self-centered, lazy, incompetent, inconsiderate and rebellious. But children who go through chastening and discipline will learn to endure hardship, grow in maturity and deal with the hardships of life.

Chastening reveals relationship

(v.7-8)

Understand this: hardship and discipline reveal, not conceal relationship. The hardships that come from the loving disciplines of our heavenly Father assure us that we are truly His sons. Discipline is for all. It is how we know that we are loved. Every son and daughter the Father receives is disciplined by the skillful hand guided by the loving, holy heart of God. Every child of God receives chastening. Every one of you.

If we are without the disciplining hand of God then we are illegitimate or more frankly, bastards. We are pretending what is not so. We are not true sons of heaven, only lost sons of earth. Do you look carefully in your life and trace out with joy the disciplining hardships God has brought to you and controls for you and assures you through them that you are His?

Chastening and disciplining our children confirms our relationship with them. If done Biblically, it affirms our love for them. Withholding a child’s necessary discipline *is not an act of love.* Proverbs **13:24** says, “²⁴ Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who

loves him is diligent to discipline him.” Many Christians do not know or believe this verse. Sometimes people say, “I love my child too much to spank them or to cause them pain or hardship.” As kindly as I know how to say this, the Bible says that is not love for your child. It is hating your child. It is loving yourself instead of loving God and loving your child.

Contra what the world believes and teaches, a child who is Biblically disciplined will generally be more sure of their parent’s love. They may not always respond to it well. But in the long run, they will know that you loved them and cared enough about them to do the hard stuff of Biblical parenting.

Chastening requires submission (v.9)

If you think that the hardship itself can bring discouragement and depression, what do you think would be the effect of resisting the loving chastening of our great God? What happens to children who resist God by resisting their parent’s discipline?

If we respect our earthly father’s correction, what should be the response to our heavenly Father’s chastening? There is an assumption being made here. Our author assumes that you know what it means to respect those correcting and chastening and disciplining you because you have personal and practical experience of it. It causes me to pause and wonder if so much of our lack of submission to the discipline of God and the disciplines of the faith is because we know so little of personal and practical discipline.

So, my beloved, do not resist the chastening of God. Children, do not resist the discipline of your parents. Submit to it. Endure it with a sense of joy in the future. Bow down your heart when it wants to chafe under chastening. Bend your will to the God’s holy will and your parent’s loving discipline. The chastening gladly submitted to will profit you so much more.

Chastening is for their good (v.10-11)

Here is the reason that we ought to submit those whose hand is chastening us – it is for our good, our holiness. How does he argue for this?

First, by contrast to the discipline we received from earthly fathers. Parents, you will discipline for a short time and as best as you can. The clear intent here is to show that earthly fathers, even when correcting and chastening children, are very limited in what you do. But not so with God. He not only knows perfectly what is good for us, but also what He is aiming for. Following God’s example, we must design the chastening of our children so that it is good for them.

Second, by comparison to the cultivating and harvesting of fruit by a skilled farmer. He starts by asserting what all of us know in our hearts but don’t like to admit. The pain of chastening is worth the gain it brings. All discipline is by design supposed to be painful. But it is also supposed to cultivate and yield righteousness. The peace that comes from becoming holy sons and daughters is what is pleasant. What it takes to produce it may not be, but what it produces is.

Third, by asserting the value of its process. Notice how he says this: "those trained by it." We talk about discipline and call it child training. This is so very important. The wise and good discipline of a sovereign God benefits those who are submissive to it, profit from it and are therefore trained by it. It seems to me that there is an implication here that there may be true sons and daughters who are not trained by God's chastening because they resist it and thus it does not produce what God intends.

Therefore, we affirm that Biblical parenting involves training our children through instruction and discipline. We must be loving, wise and gracious. We must also know our children well. We must bring and allow hardship and pain for their good. We must know when to chasten with the rod and with other consequences. We must be willing to train our children to endure hardship, submit to others, not resist the hand of God and to grow in maturity.

Reflect and Respond

- *WHAT IS GOD WORKING ON IN YOUR LIFE NOW?* Some of you are experiencing a season of blessing. Others of you are experiencing a season of hardship. God is behind both of these for your good and His glory. Do not become weary. Do not become small souled. Do not forget what the Bible tells you. Endure as under the discipline of God.
- *ARE YOU FAITHFUL IN CHASTENING YOUR CHILDREN?* Will you love them enough to do what God calls you to do? Or will you love yourself instead and not discipline your children? Will you ask God for the grace, the wisdom, the faithfulness to do all that Biblical parenting involves.
- *HOW ARE YOU RESPONDING TO GOD'S DISCIPLINE?* Will we rejoice in that we are assured that we are His children? We should find real rest in knowing that His hand is showing His love even in the hardship. Are you helping your children to respond well to your discipline so that they will endure and become what God intends?
- *WILL RIGHTEOUSNESS OR REBELLION BE ITS FRUIT?* Will we "be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?" Or will we rebel against the father of spirits, and die? Will we trust him? If we submit to this sovereign, loving, fatherly care, we will not "grow weary and lose heart," but we will keep the faith, fight the good fight, and finish our course, and die well, and glorify our Father in heaven.

Look to Jesus
Consider Him who endured for you.
Look to your heavenly Father
Consider Him who disciplines you
Learn to follow His pattern.