

Sanding Away Our Flaws Proverbs 3:11-12

When you hear the word discipline, what comes to mind?

Some of you might think of a diet you were on and the discipline it took to eat right in order to lose weight. Or your last checkup at the doctor revealed a high cholesterol problem and so to avoid heart complications, the doctor told you to discipline yourself from eating certain foods.

Others of you may think of discipline as a necessary means of achieving some skill. Archery requires discipline to master hitting the target in 3-6" groups. Running requires discipline in both exercise and eating to achieve a time goal. Engineering or a medical practice requires discipline to develop a skill to become proficient in your field.

Still others may think of discipline as the means by which punishment is meted out for doing something that was wrong.

You didn't clean your room like you were told.

You weren't home on time.

Okay, I won't go any further with that because it will sound like meddling.

150 years ago English common law allowed parents and others who had "lawful control or charge" of a child to use "moderate and reasonable" chastisement or correction. Chief Justice Cockburn stated in 1860: "By the law of England, a parent ... may for the purpose of correcting what is evil in the child, inflict moderate and reasonable corporal punishment, always, however, with this condition, that it is moderate and reasonable." It was left to the courts to decide what was meant by "moderate and reasonable" in any particular case. I think it's still necessary today.

In 1904 the rights of parents, guardians and teachers to chastise children were further established in an English law titled the *Prevention of Cruelty to*

Children Act. A master had the right to inflict moderate chastisement on an apprentice for neglect or some other misbehavior, provided he did so

In 18th century England a husband had the right to give his wife moderate correction for misbehavior, entrusting him with the power of restraining her through domestic chastisement. It wasn't until 1870 that the courts in the United States overruled the common law principle that a husband had the right to "physically chastise an errant wife." It was until 1891 that England repealed the right of the husband to inflict moderate corporal punishment on his wife to keep her "within the bounds of duty." It gave the wife safety from such punishment.

For our passage today, turn in your Bibles to **Proverbs 3:11-12**. It is here that we see both the sixth command and its benefit for obeying. **KJV "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."**

My talking points today are the following:

There is a feeling to change

There is a fondness to consider

I. THERE IS A FEELING TO CHANGE – v. 11

Notice that Solomon once again begins this verse as he did in verse 1 – "My son." It is not an acknowledgment of his son's place in the family, he's not reminding his son of his position as someone who in the hierchial structure of the family is subordinate to the father who is the authority figure. Solomon uses the term as an expression of affection to his son. He is instructing him so as to encourage choosing the right path through obedience. He wants his son to know that the instructions he is giving will benefit him if he obeys them. It is both an expression of affection and expression of experience.

Solomon's first instruction in this command is that he should not despise the Lord's discipline. Notice what he did not say. He did not say, son, don't despise MY discipline, but rather don't despise the Lord's discipline. He wants the son to understand that when he's out in the world to be careful not to disobey God's commands – God will discipline. Now God does use a variety of means to discipline. He uses parents to discipline their children, (you parents can say amen), the court or legal system, a boss, even the church, but the intent is so much more than obeying the rules of the house. This passage goes deeper as something for all of us to consider because even as adults we can receive discipline from the Lord.

We don't like it, though, do we when it happens?

Before we go any further let's take a few moments and clarify some words. In the KJV we see the word chastening whereas in the NIV we see the word discipline.

Now I need to make a distinction between two other words: chastisement and chastening. When we hear the word chastisement we mean it be some kind of punishment that is inflicted on an individual for some wrongdoing. A person breaks the law. They go to court and are punished for their actions. The court hands out a punishment that is fitting of the crime they committed. It might be anything from serving community time to paying a fine to spending any number of days, weeks, or years in prison. When a child does something wrong we might wash their mouth out with soap, stand them in a corner for time out, dare I say in public – give them a spanking, remove some privilege for a time, like no video games or loss of cell phone or driving.

When Solomon speaks of chastening here, he is not speaking of some punishment that might be given without any kind of purpose other than retribution for the action done that required some consequence to be attached to it. Chastening has a wider or

broader meaning than chastisement. While there will be some consequence for the action the primary intent through the consequence is to teach or train the individual. The intent of chastening or discipline is to correct some behavior so that it is not repeated.

Again, note that it is the Lord who at times has to discipline. And when He does, He wants it to be a teachable moment. **So why is discipline important? Why does God sometimes have to discipline us?**

Discipline is used as a way to teach that something is either dangerous or wrong. **When I was around 8 or 9 my brothers and I disobeyed our Mom by going down to the neighborhood pumphouse with the other kids to play dodgeball. She was expecting and not feeling well but came down to get us. Needless to say when Dad got home we received the rod of correction.**

We might tell our kids that it's wrong to run out into the middle of the road or when they are very young that they can't run and hide in a store. We might cut allowance or take away a privilege for a week if the child lies about something. **Robyn's piano teacher told about a time when as a little girl she had long pig tails. During school one day she took her scissors and cut off one of the pig tails at the rubber band. The teacher asked her if she cut her hair. "No." Her Grandmother asked if she cut her hair. "No." Her mother asked if she cut her hair. "No." She got in big trouble for lying and was disciplined.**

When we discipline our children or grandchildren it should always be with the intention of instructing them, never punishing them. Keep in mind that discipline is not the same as punishment.

The point of punishment is to penalize a "crime" or wrong doing. Punishment comes at the end when there is nothing else that you can do.

The point of discipline is to build up the individual in order to strengthen them for the future and to teach them to choose to do right the next time.

Solomon further states that when the Lord disciplines us we are not supposed to despise His discipline. To despise is a word that means to reject or refuse, to hate, detest or loathe. A natural response to discipline is to hate the person and the discipline given. Solomon says don't treat them that way. Don't have that kind of feeling toward them. He will give the reason in the next verse.

When a parent disciplines a child for doing something wrong how many times has the child turned around in a huff and angrily shouted "I hate you" to the parent. In that instance the child despises the parent and the discipline. We hate them and the measure of discipline they just gave us. We do the same thing to the Lord. We step out of line by not obeying His command and He in some way disciplines us for our behavior. Some people then respond by turning around and rejecting or hating the Lord for that discipline. They feel they don't deserve it. But He only wants to restore us back to fellowship with Him and for us to learn from our mistake and grow from it. The bottom line is that He wants our character to become like His own. Peter admonishes us to become holy just as God is holy quoting the Lord who said **"Be holy, because I am holy."** He didn't say that it was okay to be slightly holy or less than holy. God didn't say that it was okay to let a few things slide, after all, we are human and as has been said of us to err is human. NO, God commanded that we are to be holy just as He Himself is holy. It is to be set apart to God, to be set apart from sin and impurity. Parents want us to be better. God wants us to be better – holy. Solomon is telling us to be prepared for God's discipline, but don't resent it.

God will chasten us for our sin, our wrong doing. Notice what is honorable in these vs. what is normal

Leviticus 26:15

Job 5:17-18; 36:22

Psalms 119:71

Let me say that when God disciplines though it may hurt, it will not harm. He wants to correct us.

Hebrews 12:10 "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

I will be the first to admit that when I was growing up I didn't like it very much at all when I got a spanking from Mom or Dad. Truth be told I don't see any kids lining up behind a parent saying to them "Hey, just for fun get the belt out and give me a couple of good ones. As a matter of fact let's meet here the same time tomorrow." Even though we deserve it, we don't like it. But Solomon is telling us in a sense that it's going to be necessary at times and when God disciplines, He's trying to teach you something, so get it right the first time and you won't have to go through it again and again. Getting disciplined by Mom and Dad was something I wanted to be a fast learner on. And unlike operas we don't have an understudy who can step in and take our place.

II Samuel 12

This is the follow up passage to David's sin with Bathsheba.

He lusted after another man's wife.

He committed adultery with another man's wife.

He lied about it and tried to cover it up.

He murdered the other wife's man.

Nathan came along. Nathan was a prophet. How many of you think being a prophet was a dangerous occupational choice? Usually when the prophet came along he had some doom and gloom message. It usually wasn't good news. He got an audience with the King. He shared a story that got the dander of the king up – he was furious with the guy who stole some family's pet sheep to feed some out of town guest when he had a large number of his own. As a matter of fact as you read the story it says that David **"burned with anger against the man"** – not Nathan, but against the guy who had the audacity to rip someone else off because he wouldn't part with

one of his own flock. He truly was in the wrong and punishment needed to be meted out, justice needed to be served. The guy had to pay for what he had done.

Has anyone ever told a story to you where you missed that it was about you? That was David. He totally missed the point of the story. Nathan pointed a boney finger at the king (at least we assume it was boney), and said that he was the guy. He proceeded to unveil the truth of what David had kept secret. Look at **II Samuel 12:7-12**.

Now pause there for a moment. Let sink in what David has just heard from the Lord through the mouth of Nathan. Fast forward a few decades. His son Solomon is giving instruction to a son, maybe, just maybe he was thinking at this point about that event, because it was his mother who had that adulterous relationship. Then he proceeded carefully with what he was about to say, **“Don’t despise the discipline of the Lord or resent His rebuke.”**

Proverbs 9:8-9

What happens next in the story of David is important. It’s the make or break issue for his reign. **Will he be wise or foolish?** He’s just been told by Nathan that God is going to discipline him for his sin. **Will he despise the Lord’s discipline or will he learn from it?** We read in the very next verse, **verse 13 “Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin.’”** Understand here that the Lord forgave David because David genuinely repented, but God didn’t take away the discipline. Just because little Johnny or Susie repents doesn’t mean that they get out of the discipline they need to receive. Just because we repent doesn’t mean that we’ll get out of the consequences of our sin.

God was teaching David in the discipline. **How do we know that David learned what God was teaching him?** Turn to **Psalm 51:7-17**.

God delights when we learn from His discipline. So even though it is difficult in the moment, remember that it is for our good and for His glory, remember that He wants us to develop godly character through the discipline. In that Psalm David’s intentions then became to teach others about their wrong behaviors with the hopes of getting them to turn from their sin and live godly lives and also through him that God would receive praise for His unfailing love and forgiveness and to help him again walk in integrity.

David would pen in **Psalm 94:12 “Blessed is the man You discipline, O Lord; the man you teach from your law.”**

When it comes to the Lord’s discipline we have a feeling that needs to change. Don’t hate the Lord for His discipline. It’s necessary to shape us to become like Him in character. Consider it as God sanding away our flaws. I shared with you last year how I spent a week refinishing the living room/dining room floor. I first had to strip off the old varnish and take it down to the wood. That was a painstaking operation on my hands and knees literally for hours. I could only use a palm sander because anything larger or faster created too much friction and heat and only served to heat the old varnish to the point of melting and then caking up and hardening on the sandpaper rendering it useless. So I used a coarse 80 grit sand paper and went back and forth over the floor to remove the old varnish. Some areas were more difficult and required more sanding effort.

When the whole floor was finished I took some 100 grit paper and went back over the floor again to give it a smoother finish. More hours were spent on the floor. When that was done I used yet a lighter grade sand paper and sanded it with a 120 grit paper. Multiple times I went over it with a vacuum then a Swiffer and then a tack cloth to get up all the dust.

Once that was done I got a gallon of polyurethane and applied a coat to the floor. The next day after it had dried I took a 220 grit paper and did a light sanding by hand on the surface and then wiped it down with a tack cloth. Then I put a second coat of polyurethane on and let it dry, hand sanding it again. I put a third coat on. When the room was completely done I put back all the furniture. It looked great.

A day later after admiring my work I noticed something as the light reflected into the room and off the floor. It's a fairly large room and so I had done one half and then the other. One gallon wasn't enough to do three coats on the entire floor so I had to go and get another quart. Somewhere along the manufacturing process they had improperly marked a can so that the quart wasn't semi-gloss as I had wanted, it was satin. There was a marked difference. I showed Robyn the flaw and we talked about options. We could leave it like it was. After all it clearly separated the two rooms. The other option was to take out all the furniture and redo the last coat. There really was only one option to consider. Now I could have despised the extra work it was now going to take me to fix someone else's error, but I knew that the only right thing to do was to redo the floor.

Sometimes we can feel like the discipline that God gives us is like all the work it took to finish the floor. We might take a step back and think that what we have just been through is sufficient, that we look pretty good in a spiritual sort of way, after all we have grown some. But God sees that we aren't quite finished yet. He still has some more sanding and buffing before He's done with us. We might even thin that His discipline is too rough and ask Him to ease up. As the Master Craftsman, He knows what He's doing.

Ephesians 2:10 starts out by saying that “we are

God's workmanship...”

Philippians 1:6 “Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

His discipline is for our benefit, to make us just like Him. Sometimes we can think that we would just as soon have the Lord stop all the sanding He's doing on us, but this verse says that He's going to continue until it meets His standard, He's going to continue it until the work is completed.

Solomon is telling his son and all of us who are reading along with him on this journey of pursuing wisdom, that we shouldn't reject or hate God or His discipline because there is an intended purpose in the process. The goal, even in His discipline, is to make us like Him. He wants us to be godly in character. So in essence Solomon is saying that while a wise person will change his feelings about the discipline, the foolish person will continue to despise it and reject it. The foolish person doesn't see the benefit. The foolish person only sees the pain and he hates it. He grows bitter and angry and continues to reject God's discipline.

So what is the benefit? Why does God do it? Why do our parents do it? If there is a feeling to change, notice in verse 12 a fondness to consider.

II. A FONDNESS TO CONSIDER – v. 12

In the moment of discipline a feeling of love is farthest from the mind or in the heart of the recipient, yet that is the message that Solomon wants to convey. **Why does God discipline us?** He disciplines us because we are His children. That He disciplines us is a guarantee of our relationship with Him. If He didn't discipline us it is a telltale sign that we do not belong to His family. If He does not discipline us, then in time we will experience not

His discipline but His punishment. Because God loves us He acts as any parent does who loves his or her children. Discipline is to teach not punish. Discipline proves a) that God loves us and b) that we are His child. If we don't receive the discipline of God then we need to be asking a serious question about whether or not we have a personal relationship with God.

In disciplining us, whether we believe it or not, God is acting in our best interest. He doesn't want us to make wrong decisions in the future, but rather He wants His children to be just like Him in character. At the time it may be painful and we may not think that it is beneficial yet in looking back, if we yield to His discipline and learn from it we see how necessary it was to bring us back to behavior that is godly. We have to trust God through His discipline. We have to trust God that He is transforming us in character to be godly. As someone has said "God loves us too much to let us stay where we are." And I add to continue doing what is wrong.

God's discipline is futile when the heart is resistant and stubborn. In such a case the heart that despises
 Rejects the knowledge of God
 Rejects the Law of God
 Rejects the Word of God
 Rejects the statutes of God
 Rejects the discipline of God

In Hebrews 12 we are again reminded that God loves those He disciplines. He continues on by telling us that when we experience His discipline we should not lose heart or become discouraged. The intent is to repent and grow from it because it is for our good so that we can become holy like Him. Thinking that God deliberately inflicts pain on us because He enjoys watching us suffer totally misses the point of the benefits we gain from it including an understanding of His love for us and wanting the best for us.

C.S. Lewis concluded that when "we complain of our sufferings we are not asking for more love but less pain." I would add that sometimes we tell God that we know He loves us so He can stop what He's doing any time.

At times God will use Scripture to discipline us. Someone shared with me recently a discussion they had with someone else who had been away from church for a while, but had been reading the Bible some. The person went on to explain that they stopped reading when they came to a passage that told them that what they were doing was wrong. Don't take that approach. Not reading Scripture won't somehow automatically remove God's discipline. If you ignore it, it will go away. Allow it to show you where you need to change to be godly.

As in the case of David, God also uses other people to discipline us, to get us to repent and return to the Lord. They point out our wrong doing and in some cases are the ones used to mete out His discipline.

At other times God uses the consequences of our actions to discipline us. You know well the story of King Nebuchadnezzar who in pride rejected the notion that God had given him the Kingdom. Daniel warned him to repent of his pride but he wouldn't and so a year later God disciplined him by taking away the kingdom for seven years until his pride was driven from him. After which he gave God glory.

God also uses His Holy Spirit to discipline us. It may be through a lack of peace or some other godly character that is no longer evident because of our sin. When we yield to Him He begins to work in us again to develop those godly traits of love, joy, peace, patience, etc.

He will use illness or some other type of life event to discipline us and get our attention.

You may feel today that God is doing an awful lot of sanding on you. Maybe you're to the point of wishing the abrasive discipline would stop. Just know that the Lord's desire is to give you a finish that will reflect His image. Allow it and learn from it. And remember it is out of His love for us that He will discipline.

We have a feeling we need to change about God's discipline.

We have a fondness to consider that reveals just how much God really does love us. Strange as it may sound His discipline tells us that we belong to Him. **God wants to complete His work in you, will you let Him?**