

Spring Small Group Guide 2026

Week 1: The Chastening of the Lord

Scripture Focus: Hebrews 12:1-13

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores the challenging but essential doctrine of God's chastening—His loving discipline that shapes us into Christ's image. Like a loving father who disciplines his children, God sometimes allows difficulties in our lives not to harm us, but to qualify us, purify us, and ultimately heal us. The goal is to become partakers of His holiness and to run our race with endurance.

Introduction

Opening Question: Share about a time when discipline or correction from a parent, teacher, or mentor was difficult to receive in the moment but later proved beneficial in your life.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Concept

1. **The Forgotten Doctrine:** Pastor Clay mentioned that we've "forgotten" the doctrine of God's chastening. Why do you think this teaching has become uncomfortable or unpopular in modern Christianity? What are the dangers of avoiding this topic?
2. **Five Causes of Trouble:** The sermon outlined five possible causes of trouble in our lives: the devil, a fallen world, other people, ourselves, and God. How does understanding these different sources help us respond appropriately to difficulties? Share an example from your life.
3. **Discernment Challenge:** How can we discern when we're experiencing God's chastening versus spiritual attack or natural consequences? What role does prayer, Scripture, and community play in this discernment?

Going Deeper

4. **Looking to the Cross:** Hebrews 12 tells us to look specifically at the cross to learn how to run our race. What does this teach us about God's purposes in suffering? How does Jesus' experience of the cross relate to our own seasons of difficulty?
5. **Two Wrong Responses:** The passage warns against two responses to chastening: despising it (treating it lightly) or being discouraged by it (wanting to quit). Which of these responses do you tend toward? How can we guard against both extremes?
6. **Qualification, Not Just Punishment:** The sermon explained three purposes of chastening: punishment, purification, and qualification. How does understanding that God may be *qualifying* you for something greater change your perspective on current difficulties?

Personal Application

7. **Job's Example:** If Job were asked today whether he'd go through his suffering again, the sermon suggests he'd say "absolutely" because of what God accomplished through it. What does this tell us about God's eternal perspective versus our temporary discomfort?
8. **The Last Word is Healing:** Pastor Clay emphasized that God's final word on chastening is always healing and restoration. How does this hope affect the way you endure difficult seasons? What promises in Scripture can you hold onto?
9. **Strengthening Weak Hands:** Hebrews 12:12-13 calls us to "strengthen the hands which hang down." Are you currently in a season where you need to be strengthened, or is God calling you to help strengthen someone else? How can this group support you?

Key Takeaways

Have group members share which of these truths resonated most with them:

- **Chastening is proof of sonship:** "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6)
- **The goal is holiness and healing:** God's discipline always has a redemptive purpose
- **Endure, don't embrace:** We endure chastening but embrace God's promises

- **The peaceable fruit of righteousness:** Training produces transformation that benefits others
 - **Get back in the race:** Even when knocked down, we can stand again through God's strength
 - **God's last word is healing:** The chastening is temporary; the transformation is eternal
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one or more of these action steps:

1. **Heart Examination:** Set aside 30 minutes this week for honest prayer. Ask God: "Is there an area where You've been rebuking me that I've been ignoring? What are You trying to develop in me right now?"
 2. **Scripture Meditation:** Write out Hebrews 12:11 and post it somewhere visible. Meditate on the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" God wants to produce in your life.
 3. **Encourage Someone:** Identify someone in your life who may be going through a difficult season. Reach out to them this week with encouragement, practical help, or prayer support.
 4. **Respond with Zeal:** Following Revelation 3:19, if God has been speaking to you about an area that needs change, take one concrete step of repentance and renewed commitment this week.
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Prayer Time

Prayer Focus Areas:

- **For those under chastening:** Pray for endurance, discernment, and faith to see God's loving purpose
- **For those who are discouraged:** Pray for strength to get back in the race and not give up
- **For healing:** Pray specifically for physical, emotional, and spiritual healing
- **For holiness:** Ask God to complete His purifying work in each group member

- **For qualification:** Pray that God would prepare each person for greater purposes ahead.
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Memory Verse: *"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."* — Hebrews 12:11

Additional Scriptures for Study

(The Chastening of the Lord – Hebrews 12:1–13)

God's Loving Discipline

- Proverbs 3:11–12 – The Lord disciplines those He loves
- Deuteronomy 8:5 – Discipline as a father trains a son
- Psalm 94:12 – Blessed is the one whom the Lord instructs

Discipline That Heals and Restores

- Job 5:17–18 – "Blessed is the one whom God corrects... He wounds, but He binds up; He shatters, but His hands heal."
- Isaiah 35:3–6 – Strength for weak hands, healing for the broken, hope for the weary

Endurance That Produces Righteousness

- James 1:2–4 – Testing that produces steadfastness and maturity
- Psalm 119:67, 71 – Affliction leading to obedience and wisdom

No Condemnation in Christ

- Romans 8:1 – Discipline without condemnation
- Lamentations 3:31–33 – God does not afflict from His heart

Christ Our Example

- Isaiah 53:5 – Wounded for our healing
 - 1 Peter 2:21–24 – Christ suffered, entrusting Himself to God
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Optional Reflection

- Psalm 139:23–24 – Inviting God's loving correction
- Galatians 6:9 – Do not grow weary in doing good

Leader's Notes

Reminder: This topic can be deeply personal and may touch on trauma, abuse, or current suffering. Create a safe space where people can be honest without judgment. Be prepared to offer additional pastoral support if needed. You can encourage people to contact our pastors if they would like to talk about things further.

Balance: While emphasizing God's sovereignty in chastening, also affirm that we should always pray for healing and deliverance. Don't let anyone leave feeling they shouldn't seek God's intervention in their struggles.

Follow-up: Check in with group members during the week, especially those who shared vulnerable struggles or requested prayer.