

Family Study: An Intro to Discipline
for the College and Career Class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church
12/31/23 by Steve Thomas

Introduction

Discipline can serve varied purposes. Scripture reveals the mind of God regarding discipline towards His creation. Care must be taken by the believer so as not to overstep the authority given in any situation.

Discipline in the OT

God disciplined Israel with the intent to get them to “hearken” - to hear, be obedient, to yield to - (Lev 26:18, 23). He wanted to reform them. *Yasar* is translated “punish” and “be reformed” here. It is also translated “chastised” and “instruct” (Lev. 26:28, Deut. 4:36). God disciplined Israel as he would a son (Deut 8:5). However, under law a rebellious son was stoned if he did not respond to chastening (Deut 21:18, 22:18). God ultimately performed a version of this punishment on Israel, setting them aside and will allow them to be purged. Solomon and Rehoboam chastised their workers in varying degrees to accomplish the different work projects in unified Israel (1 Kings 12:11,14). Job is said to have used this instruction properly, strengthening weak hands, and strengthened weak knees (Job 4:3-4). David was the recipient of this correction from Jehovah, and requested for it to be kept from him (Ps 6:1, 38:1). David understood that it was the iniquity of man that provoked God to correct, both his people and the heathen (Ps 39:11, 94:10). He also recognized that it was a blessing to be in this position (Ps 94:12).

Solomon, and the various writers of Proverbs recognized the wisdom of using this correction properly.

- Prov 9:7 - There are those (the scorner) that will not be corrected.
- 19:18 - There is hope for a child if he is corrected early and often.
- 29:17 - Rest is the result of a properly corrected child.
- 29:19 - There are some who will not be corrected with ordinary means, stronger methods are necessary.

The prophets are full of these warnings for Israel, which they ultimately did not heed.

- Isaiah 28:26 God continues to instruct during the judgement process.
- Jer 2:19, 6:8, 30:11, 31:18, 46:28 Correction is coming for wicked Judah.
- Ezek 23:48 Lewd behavior is to be judged.
- Hosea 7:12 and 7:15 Show us the purpose of proper chastening, to strengthen the arm, so that God’s will might be done. However, it does not have the desired result. Ephraim would not perceive the instruction in the right way, imagining mischief against their Lord.
- Hosea 10:10 With judgement on the way, there is still an appeal to follow righteousness. God desires obedience and humility.

Purposes of Discipline

Preventative / Preparative - Teaching to keep the student from straying. Intended to keep the student on the correct path. Imparting some knowledge to the student. Training in some fields of study.

Corrective / Restorative - Needed because the student has strayed and needs to be brought back to a correct path.

Punitive - punishment meant to correct behavior. It contains a vengeance or retribution factor. Can be a deterrent for others “in the room”. Some punishment is not intended to correct the evildoer but to send a message to those who might consider the act in the future.

Vengeance is mine

The punitive aspect of discipline involves vengeance. The believer should be careful not to usurp the place of God with this aspect. Consider the way God uses vengeance:

God is the only being that is entitled to vengeance. No other being is worthy of vengeance. This is a sobering thought. Often believers succumb to the feeling that they somehow deserve vengeance. Vengeance belongs to God and God alone.

Pilate's Plan

Pilate had the idea to chasten Jesus, and then let him go. There was no corrective or restorative purpose here, just an attempt to remove a problem from Pilate's plate so to speak. He was attempting to appease the religious leaders. Pilate could find no fault in Jesus (Jn 18:38, 19:4, 19:6). This was definitely an abuse of power and not according to God's plan for proper discipline. Pilate states no less than three different times that Jesus had committed no crime that he was aware of.

Discipline surrounding the Apostle Paul

Paul was taught at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). This was an amazing claim. Gamaliel was one of the greatest Jewish teachers in the ancient world. Gamaliel was one of two Rabbis who greatly influenced the Sanhedrin. For Paul to be educated by this Rabbi, his education could be rivaled by few. This was similar to the education Moses must have received being a son of Pharaoh's daughter. This was part of Paul's claim to be a Pharisee in Phil. 3.

Paul tells the Corinthians that the believer is chastened by the Lord so that he will not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor 11:32) This falls under the corrective purpose of discipline. It also shows the Love of the Father to keep the believer from further judgment. He is under no condemnation (Rom 8:1). If a believer continues to pursue a rebellious action, God will not

allow it to continue. This could be averted if the believer would judge himself, but at the behest of the Intercessor, the Son, the Father will keep the believer from being condemned with the world.

In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul gives a good contrast of what is visible and invisible. He endures torture and suffering, yet approved of God. It was Paul's greatest fear to be a castaway (disqualified from service). The chastening he reports in verse 9 is similar to the retribution Christ suffered at the hands of Pilate. This is why he can be sorrowful yet rejoicing, dying, yet living, and chastened yet not killed. This is counter-intuitive to the way the world thinks, and only achievable with the power of God, and word of truth (vs 6-7).

There is an application in the Christian's home that is profitable. Taking trials away from our kids deprives them of the chance to grow, build character, and learn to hope in God. The best character-building lessons are learned from trials. Don't inhibit your child's growth by them from or taking over difficult situations. Rom 5:3-5

Darby says of Paul, ***“Thus he shewed himself to be the minister of God in everything which could test him; in pureness, in kindness, in love; as a vessel of power; whether disgraced or applauded; unknown to the world, and known and eminent; outwardly trodden under foot of man and chastened, inwardly victorious and joyful, enriching others, and in possession of all things. Here ends his description of the sources, the character, the victory over circumstances, of a ministry which displayed the power of God in a vessel of weakness, whose best portion was death.”***

Paul himself is involved in the discipline of two believers, Hymanaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1:20). Having lost a good conscience, these two believers lost faith and fell into heresy. Paul “delivers” these two to Satan. Darby explains: ***“God thus made use of Satan himself as a rod for the good of His rebellious children. Satan should instruct them, through the pains he would make them suffer, of whatever kind it might be, whether anguish of soul or of body and the latter is the immediate effect, in order that their will might be broken and brought into subjection to God. Solemn discipline! Marvelous power in the hands of man! but a proof that the love of God can order all things for the purpose of delivering a soul and bringing it to Himself.”*** The discipline here from the apostle is most assuredly based on his apostolic authority. The believer can find nothing in scripture which gives him the authority to perform this discipline on a fellow believer. Even church discipline which empowers the elder and bishop is not to this extreme.

The believer cannot be touched without the authority given by God. The story of Job explains the process to us. Satan lobbies to work against the believer, and God allows him to inflict a

measure of suffering, not above that which is granted. Satan is still under the rule of God. In these two stories, we see the Mind of God. Suffering is allowed to be corrective, and restorative.

Consider the second letter to Timothy, where Paul elaborates on the topic of a believer who is ensnared by Satan. In order to recover this one, the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, apt to teach, patient, instructing in meekness those that would oppose themselves. The goal is restoration through repentance. It is easy to become part of the distraction. Good intentions will often drive a believer to anger over the damage being done. Anger is not the proper response. This is because the "anger of man" distracts the believer from a pursuit of righteousness (James 1:19-20). In parenting, the anger of a parent confronted with a child's poor choice shifts the focus from the child's bad behavior to the parent's angry response.

James tells the believer to be quick to listen and slow to speak. Parents can learn from this as well. Listening carefully, speaking little, and helping the child explore the motives behind his behavior can lead to the sort of insight that points the child toward the righteousness of God.

A good consequence, delivered with empathy, demonstrates love and respect for the child's freedom to choose and his ability to learn from the consequence of a bad decision. The author of Hebrews says it well: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:11). Hebrews also describes the intent of the Father when He chastens the believer (Heb 12:6-10). Discipline comes from the love of a Father. It has the intent of allowing the believer to partake in the Holiness of God. This is of profit to the believer.

One of the best teachers is Grace. It shows us how to live in this world. Denying our lusts, looking toward the blessed hope, the return of our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-13). This type of teaching is corrective, and preventative. The provisions of Grace empower the believer, protect the believer, and infuse the believer with a proper focus.

In conclusion, Biblical discipline is of great value to the believer. It is the result of a loving Father directing the child where he needs to go. While it is not enjoyable at the time, it will bring a positive result and should be viewed as such. When carrying out discipline himself, the believer should strive to be preventative, preparative, restorative, corrective, but never punitive, seeking vengeance. God does not settle his accounts in October, but He is faithful to bring justice in His time and way.