God's Discipline & Our Dreams — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 42–43 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 27, 2024 · *Living The Dream*

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Genesis has been so good for me personally, and you kind of get attached to a book, or I do, because you spend so much time in a book, it kind of like becomes one of your kids. The reason I've so enjoyed the book of Genesis is because the characters in the book of Genesis, even though I believe they're genuine historical characters, kind of like you get attached to a character in a book you're reading, I get attached to these characters. And the reason I love these characters especially some of the ones we've been dealing with here at the end, is because they're so similar to me.

They have the same kind of mistakes, they have the same hopes and dreams, they have similar experiences as I've had in my past, sometimes the suffering in their life corresponds very neatly to the suffering I've experienced in my life. Sometimes that's self-inflicted suffering, sometimes that's suffering externally imposed on me for other reasons. But in every case, what they learn in those experiences are some profound theological truths that I think it's really helpful for us to be reminded of in our own lives as well. And so the book of Genesis has been really, really relevant.

When it comes to this morning and the experiences that Joseph is going to have, but really even more important than Joseph, his brothers are going to have because of Joseph's treatment of them. Are going to, I think, illustrate a powerful principle that if you are a Christian, you need to come to terms with very quickly if you're going to enjoy the Christian life. And that is the relationship between God's discipline and your maturity. The book of Genesis, the narratives in the book of Genesis don't always perfectly highlight New Testament truths.

But there's a New Testament truth in the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, that talks about God's discipline. And I think we can all heartily say amen to this verse. And it says that in the moment, all discipline is painful. No discipline seems enjoyable at the moment, right, when

it's happening, but it hurts. And all of us would say, yeah, of course it hurts. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. And the reason I love this verse is this word, it's a Greek word, paideia.

It's where we get our English word pediatrics. You guys know what a pediatrician is? Not the foot doctor, right? He's the other one, not the foot doctor. He's the kid doctor. And kids go to a pediatrician from the time they're, I guess, from the time they're born. Maybe no, that's the other doctor. So after they're born to the time... any doctors know when they stop going to the pediatrician in here? 18? 18? That's even longer than I thought. Wow. I don't have an 18-year-old yet, so that's my ignorance, but that's incredible.

So they go from when they're born to 18 years old and the primary job of a pediatrician, if he or she is doing their work, is that they oversee the entire environment of a child from beginning to end so that they have everything they need to grow up healthy and strong. Like they're overseeing that maturation process. Now you may have or maybe didn't have a great pediatrician or maybe your kids have a good or bad pediatrician. I don't know if they have a good one. But I want you to know that you have a heavenly father who, like a pediatrician, oversees the entire environment of your life so that you would eventually grow up healthy and strong.

And sometimes things go bad in your life, just like when you get sick, you go to a pediatrician, and sometimes things are going well and the pediatrician says, attaboy. So also does your heavenly father work through all kinds of circumstances to make you healthy and strong, spiritually healthy and strong. And so there is a causal, I'm going to use the word causal because I think it is a causal relationship between God's discipline in your life and your maturity as a Christian. And I think if you are a Christian, the thing you want as a believer is to become mature, to be who God has called you to be.

And I'm suggesting that one of the ways that God does that, whether you like it or not, and whether you want it or not, is discipline. And it doesn't feel enjoyable in the moment. But it's actually important because it will produce something in your life that nothing else can produce so that you have righteousness or maturity as a believer. Now we've seen this principle play out in the life of Joseph, who ultimately did nothing wrong, but because his brothers hated him, they sold him into slavery. He had a cushy job with Potiphar, but then got falsely accused of an action he didn't commit and he was thrown into prison and in prison was betrayed by people who said they were going to remember him and sat there for two years after being in there for who knows how long until finally Pharaoh gave him a promotion of being the second in command in the whole of Egypt because Joseph had successfully interpreted one of Pharaoh's dreams.

And so you could say God used seasons of discipline in Joseph's life to bring him to a place of maturity. What we see in Genesis 42 is that God is actually going to use Joseph in the life of

his brothers to do the same thing. God is going to put Joseph in a position of exercising God's discipline on his brothers so that they also come to a place of repentance and transformation and genuine maturity. So with that in mind, let's pick it up starting in chapter 42, verse 1. When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, why do you keep looking at each other?

Listen, he went on, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. I want you to go down there and buy some for us so that we will live and not die. And so ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt, but Jacob didn't send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers because he thought something might happen to him. Remember, Benjamin is the only remaining son of Jacob's true love, Rachel. He's the youngest son. And so he's like, he's not going. The rest of you take care of business.

The sons of Israel were among those who came to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. In other words, the famine wasn't just in Egypt, it was spreading. Joseph was in charge of the country, and he sold grain to all of its people, the Egyptian people, but his brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the ground, a fulfillment of the dream in Genesis 37. And when Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers, and underline this phrase, and he spoke harshly to them.

Where do you come from? He asked. From the land of Canaan. We're here to buy food, they replied. And although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Now why might they not recognize him? Probably because he was clean shaven, looking like an Egyptian, and in an incredible position of authority. Last they saw Joseph, he was sold into slavery, and for all they knew, he was dead. And so you see quite a reversal here of Joseph's dream being fulfilled and that his brothers are bowing down to him.

His brothers are asking him for food because their grain stocks are bare. Famine in their land had gotten so bad they had no other recourse except to come to Egypt. And one of the things I think is interesting is the similarities in language between Genesis 42 and Genesis 37. It says in Genesis 37 that Joseph's brothers could not find it in their heart to speak peaceably with Joseph. In other words, they spoke harshly to their brother, just like Joseph speaks harshly to his brothers. I don't think he's speaking harshly because he's angry.

We know from last week that Joseph had forgiven his brothers. He'd released them from their evil that they had committed against him. But Joseph, when he sees his brother, I think, realizes my dream is coming true. God has put me in this position for a reason. And so what God has accomplished in me, I'm now going to accomplish in my brothers. And one of the ways that I'm going to do that is give them a taste of their own medicine, which I'm sure he really thoroughly enjoyed getting to do. What goes around comes around.

But he wasn't coming at it from a place of anger or spite or revenge. He was just letting the Lord give them a taste of their own medicine. And the reason they got to where they are is because of this famine. Famines are not unique to Genesis. You had a famine with Abraham, you had a famine with Isaac, you had a famine with Jacob. Famines are a common thing in the book of Genesis. But they represent, I think, something broader when it comes to God's discipline in our life.

And one of the things you'll notice when God disciplines you is that whether he uses a famine or not is to be questioned, but he will find ways to remove comforts from your life. He will eradicate comforts from your life to motivate a choice. And you see this in our text because Jacob comes out there and he looks at his sons who I assume were just sitting there twiddling their thumbs, looking at each other. What are we going to do today, Brain? You know, just kind of mindlessly existing, not working, you know, they couldn't go farming, so I guess they're just going to starve.

And he says, you dummies, you know, what are you doing? Why do you keep looking at each other? We have to find some way to survive. I've heard there's grain in Egypt, so go and get it. That never would have happened. They never would have gone to Egypt had the Lord not lovingly eradicated those comforts from their life. And in a similar way, as a Christian, one of the things you'll find tempting to do is to get to a place of comfort spiritually where you begin to coast and status quo and I don't want to rock the boat and I'll go do the bare minimum.

I'll go to church so long as I feel a little conviction. I'm not going to go over and above. I'm not going to read my Bible. I'm not going to pray on a regular basis. I'm certainly not going to lead my family to worship together. I'm not going to, you know, do the challenging things like grow spiritually or overcome this addiction or get rid of this sinful pattern in my life. I'm just going to kind of status quo, be comfortable. And what God will do because he loves you is he will eradicate those comforts from your life so that you'll be forced to move.

You'll be forced to make a choice. And if you don't believe me, just wait. And it'll happen. Because it happens to the people that God loves. So they're moved to a point of action, and when they get there, Joseph responds, I think in a way that would have taken them by complete surprise. Remember, he recognizes them, but they don't recognize him. And so Joseph remembered his dreams in verse 9. Again, this is important because Joseph, I don't think, is coming at this from a place of revenge or spite. He's saying,

this is God's will. This is what God has been working towards. All of my pain and misery has been so I could be in this position for God to use me in the life of my brothers to provide for them, but also to help cultivate godliness in their character. So he said to them, You are spies, and you've come to see the weakness of the land. I think it's interesting that he calls them spies. If you remember back in Genesis 37, what did his brothers accuse Joseph of being? A spy.

Because he would go and bring a bad report to his brothers. And then when they went to Shechem and Dothan, Joseph followed them up there because Dad said, go check on your brothers to see what's going on. So now Joseph is saying you call me a spy. I'll call you a spy. No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. We're not here to spy. We're sons of one man. We're honest. I wonder if Joseph kind of choked on that word. Honest. Your servants are not spies. No, he said to them, you have come to see the weakness of the land.

And they reply again. But they replied, we your servants, we're twelve brothers, we're the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, the youngest is with our father, and one is no longer living. I'm sure he choked on that part. Then Joseph said to them, I have spoken: you are spies. Verse fifteen. Then this is how you will be tested. As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. In other words, prove it. If you have a younger brother, bring him here.

Send one from among you to get your brother, the rest of you will be imprisoned, so that your words can be tested to see if they are true. And if they're not true, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies. And so Joseph imprisoned them together for three days. You notice the similarities? They spoke harshly, he speaks harshly. They call him a spy, he calls them a spy. They threw him into a pit, he throws them into a prison. He's giving them a taste of their own medicine.

And I'm sure in their mind they were thinking, this is crazy. Who is this guy? Why is he so angry? Have we met before? I just came to buy some food. You know, usually when you go to Walmart, the cashier's not this angry at you. This is awkward, this is weird. And the reason I'm pointing that out is because sometimes when God wants to discipline you, he'll do something similar. What he'll do is he'll elevate, I'm going to use the word chaos, but he'll elevate like weirdness in your life, like weird circumstances and unusual difficulties, and it shouldn't be this hard.

And why is it so difficult for this to be what it needs to be, he'll elevate the chaos to create change in your life. You've heard the phrase, you won't change unless the pain of staying the same outweighs the pain of the change. Similar kind of dynamic I think is happening here with Joseph's brothers. They would have sat there in Canaan twiddling their thumbs and would have never changed, but God pushed them out of the nest and he brought them to a place of absolute chaos. So that the conditions were right so that they could actually hear what God wanted to say and respond in a way that would produce transformation in their life.

And so God will do the same in your life. He'll eradicate the comforts so that you'll be forced to make a choice and then he'll elevate the chaos so you'll be motivated to make a change. And so they're sitting there in prison. I'm sure they were thinking to themselves, this is madness. But on the third day, Joseph goes up to them. And notice what he says. He says, I

fear God. He doesn't say I fear Ra, who is the Egyptian god, who he should have feared as an Egyptian king, but he says, no, I fear your God.

I fear Elohim. Do this and you'll live. Now this had to take them by surprise. They're probably thinking, is this guy, like, crazy? One minute he's harsh. Now he's a believer and he wants us to live. And Joseph says in verse 19, if you're honest, let one of you be confined at the guardhouse. It used to be only one of you could go. Now only one of you has to stay, while the rest of you go, and take grain to relieve the hunger of your households. In other words, I'm going to make you wait to prove yourself.

I'm going to send you with grain, even though you don't deserve it. Bring your youngest brother to me so that your words can be confirmed, and then you won't die. And so they, obviously, as you might imagine, consented to this. And then they said to each other, obviously we are being punished for what we did to our brother. We saw his deep distress when he pleaded with us, but we wouldn't listen, and this is why this trouble has come upon us. And then Reuben replied, didn't I tell you not to harm the boy?

But you wouldn't listen, so now we must account for his blood. And they didn't realize that Joseph understood them, because there was an interpreter between them. So they were assuming Joseph didn't speak Hebrew, but he actually did. When he heard them, he turned away from them and he began to weep. And when he turned back and he spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and had him bound before their eyes. Again, when God lovingly introduces discipline into your life, not only will he eradicate some of your comforts and increase a lot of chaos in your life, he'll begin to introduce little acts of kindness and mercy and grace, just like Joseph does with his brothers, to bring you to a place of conviction.

The Bible says that God's kindness, it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. And here you see Joseph saying, well, I believe in God. And I'm not going to be as harsh as I initially threatened to be. I'm actually going to let all of you go except for one. And that produces, I think, some conviction in their life for two reasons. Number one, sin is almost impossible to see in the mirror, but it's really easy to see in the lives of people you don't like. It's easy to find sin in the people you don't like, but it's really hard to find sin in the mirror.

And so what I think the Lord has graciously done for these brothers is to say the sin that you cannot see in your own face, I'm going to put it on you from this other guy so that you'll see. What he did to you is wrong and what you did to your brother was wrong. He'll allow people to sin against you and harm you and hurt you in ways that you used to hurt someone else so that you'll finally wake up and realize I'm that man. I'm that woman. And he does that kindly, gently, for a reason, and the reason is so that you will come to a place of confession.

You'll never have genuine life change unless and until you come to a point of genuine godly remorse and confession of your sin. The Bible says that we confess our sins to one another so

that we might be healed. 1 John 1:9 says, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just not only to forgive us of our sins, but to cleanse us from unrighteousness. So unless they came to a point of genuine confession, the Lord was not going to be able to produce the change in their lives that was necessary for them to experience.

And in a similar way for many of us this morning, we may desire change and we may be in a position where it's so chaotic that if we don't change, nothing else is going to stop. But what it requires of you is what it required of Joseph's brothers. You need to confess your sins to the Lord, obviously, but in some cases to the people you sinned against. Joseph needed to hear their confession, even though they didn't know they were confessing to Joseph. You notice what it accomplished in Joseph's heart was maybe the Lord is working in them.

Maybe my forgiveness of them was warranted because God is using all of this terrible situation for his purposes. So he'll extend a little conviction so that you'll come to a point of confession. And when they confess, you begin to see even more mercy and more grace demonstrated towards them by Joseph. Joseph in verse 25 gave orders to fill their containers with grain, which you would expect because they brought money. But not only did he fill their containers with grain, he returned each man's silver to his sack. And then on top of that gave them even more provisions for their journey.

So it's grace upon grace, mercy upon mercy, the order was carried out, and they loaded the grain on their donkeys and left there. And at the place where they lodged for the night, one of the brothers opened up his sack to get the feed for his donkey. And he saw his silver there at the top of his bag, and he said to his brothers, my silver has been returned. It's right here in my bag. I swear I didn't steal it. And their hearts sank, because they realized this isn't good. And they begin to tremble.

That word trembling is the same word that was used of Isaac when he was trying to bless Esau instead of Jacob. And the Lord convicted him. No, Jacob is the one I have chosen. Isaac trembles and repents and does what he's supposed to do. So this is a similar kind of dynamic. Their hearts are convicted because of God's grace and kindness in their life. They are repenting because they've recognized that God is trying to do something in their life. And they turn to one another and they say, what is God doing here?

What has he done to us? And when they reached their father, Jacob, in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They recount the story, the man who's the lord of the country spoke harshly to us, and then he accused us of spying on the country. But then we told him, we're not, we're honest, we're not spies. He said that we were twelve brothers, that you were our father, and that one was no longer living, and then the youngest was with the father in the land of Canaan.

And then that lord of the country said to us, that this is how I'm going to know if you're honest, you have to leave your brother with me. You've got to take food to relieve the hunger of your household and go, but bring your younger brother back to me, and then I'm going to know you're not spies but honest men, and I will allow you to trade in the country. In other words, you can get some more grain. And as they began emptying their sacks there, in each man's sack was his bag of silver.

And when they and their father saw their bags of silver, they were afraid. Now God is extending compassion to these brothers even though they didn't deserve it. This compassion from the Lord, I believe, is to produce a spirit of contrition. The word contrition, you could use the word repentance, but he extends compassion to motivate contrition. Contrition is coming to a place where you realize, God, you're right, I was wrong. You begin to agree with God about the facts. God's kindness and mercy brings you to a point where you agree your way was the best way.

The Bible in the book of Romans, chapter 12, says that when your enemy is hungry, you should feed him. When your enemy is thirsty, you should give him something to drink, because in doing so you will heap burning coals on his head. In other words, be compassionate to your enemies if you want them to experience contrition. The phrase burning coals on their head, that actually some say is an Egyptian custom where they would carry burning coals on their head as a way of saying, I'm eating a little crow here. I was a fool, I should have done better.

And that's what the Lord is doing with these brothers. You should have lived differently, you should have been thinking differently, you should have been acting differently. And it wasn't God's wrath and judgment that brought them to that place. It was his mercy and compassion that produced that spirit in them. And the same will be true for you. And that's not to say God won't let you suffer. He will let you suffer. He will eradicate the comforts. He'll elevate the chaos. He'll bring you to a point of brokenness, dependency, humility. But after he brings you to that place, he's a loving, merciful Heavenly Father.

He's abounding in steadfast love. And he will begin to demonstrate mercy and grace so that your heart will find a genuine remorse and you will turn from the way that you were living and turn toward God's good design. And so Jacob hears all of this, and he isn't having it. Okay, he didn't have the same experience they had. He's still the selfish old man he tends to be. And so in verse 36, their father Jacob said to them, it's me that you make childless. Joseph is gone. Now Simeon is gone.

And now you want to take Benjamin. Everything happens to me. Anybody got a dad like that? Don't raise your hand. Then Reuben said to his father, this cracks me up, Reuben, who's, I think, kind of pretty dense, says to Jacob, well, you can kill my two sons if I don't bring him back to you. Kill your grandkids if I don't come through. I'm sure that made Jacob

feel better. He responds, no way, my son will not go down with you. His brother is dead. He alone is left, and if anything happens to him on your journey, you're going to bring my gray hairs down to Sheol in sorrow.

That's a fancy way of saying I'd rather go to hell than let this happen. Now the famine in the land was severe. We don't know how much time transpires between the end of chapter 42 and the beginning of chapter 43, but I imagine it was some time because Jacob's a very hard-headed person. And his sons, like their father, are very hard-headed sons. And they're essentially saying to Jacob, we ain't going unless you release Benjamin. And Jacob is saying, I'm not releasing Benjamin, so we're just going to have to sit here until something changes.

And so they sit there and finish out the grain. Maybe it took a week, maybe it took a month, maybe it took a year. But the famine was so severe. When they used up the grain they had brought back from Egypt, their father said, go back and buy some more. But Judah, remember Judah used to live off in the far country. He was playing the prodigal until the Lord worked in his life in Genesis 38 and brought him to a place of humility and repentance. So Judah is a man of faith.

I think he recognizes for us to get what we need, we're going to have to trust the Lord. And so he says to Jacob, the man specifically warned us, you won't see me again unless your brother is with you. And if you will send our brother with us, then we'll go, and we'll buy food for you. But if you will not send him, we will not go. For the man said to us, you will not see me again unless your brother is with you. Israel's response is, what you might imagine, why have you caused me so much trouble?

Why did you tell the man that you even had a brother? Woulda, coulda, shoulda. They answered, well, the man kept asking us about our family. Is your father alive? Do you have another brother? And we answered him accordingly. How could we know what he would say? And how could we know that he would say, bring your brother here? So they're basically saying to Jacob, listen man, we don't have a choice. We didn't have a choice then, and you don't have a choice now. You can either lose Simeon and keep us here with Benjamin and us starve to death.

Or you can release Benjamin and potentially lose Simeon and us all at the same time and all of your kids die. Or you can trust the Lord. And you can trust that when you release Benjamin and we present ourselves to this king in Egypt, that he keeps his word, releases Simeon and Benjamin, and lets us trade in the country. He had an impossible choice, in other words. And I think that's another thing God does in discipline. The Lord will lovingly engineer a crisis in your life so that you're confronted with an impossible choice.

And that choice is going to require you to demonstrate courage and faith in the Lord. The Bible says in Hebrews 11 that faith is the assurance of things that are hoped for. It's the

conviction of things that are not seen. And so one of the things that God does in discipline is bring you to a place where you have to demonstrate that kind of confidence and conviction and assurance so that he can accomplish the fruit of discipline in your life. Without faith there could be no fruit of discipline. There can be no peaceful fruit of righteousness without the faith.

And so what God has done in Jacob's life, just like he's done in the life of his sons, is he's engineered this crisis where they're confronted with a choice. Am I going to be courageous and trust the Lord or am I going to be controlled by fear? And ultimately, Judah's response, I think, motivates faith in the heart of Jacob. Judah said to his father Israel, send the boy with me. Okay? You don't have to kill my grandkids. Just send him with me. We'll be on our way, so that way we may live and not die.

Notice his confidence in the Lord. Neither we nor you nor our dependents. We're not going to die. I will be responsible for him. You can hold me personally accountable if I do not bring him back to you and set him before you. I will be guilty before you forever. Besides that, if we had not been delayed, we could have come back twice by now. In other words, this is getting ridiculous, Dad. We could have been so much better off if you just would have had faith and trust in the Lord. And if you can't have it for yourself, let me give you my faith and you can borrow that for a little while and just trust me that it's going to be okay.

And evidently it was inspiring because Jacob responds with if it must be so, let it be so. Their father Israel said to them, if it must be so, then do this. Put some of the best products of the land in your packs, and take them down to the man as a gift. Notice the items that he chooses: balsam, honey, aromatic gum, resin, pistachios, almonds, these are the same things that were used by the Ishmaelite traders when Joseph was sold into slavery. They sold Joseph along with aromatic gum, resin, so on and so forth.

Now they're giving themselves to this Egyptian king with the same items. I think it's quite a beautiful reversal of sorts. Then he tells them, take twice as much silver with you. Return the silver that was returned to you in the top of your bags. Perhaps it was a mistake. And then you need to take Benjamin also and go to the man at once. And then he prays, may God Almighty cause the man to be merciful to you, so that he will release your other brother and Benjamin to you.

As for me, if I'm deprived of my sons, then I am deprived. The men took the gift, double the amount of silver, and Benjamin, and they immediately went down to Egypt, and they stood before Joseph. So this is Jacob exercising faith, inspired by Judah, and this is how you enjoy the fruit of God's discipline in your life. You've got to demonstrate faith. But before you can demonstrate faith, what you see in Jacob is that he counts the cost. Jesus said in Luke 14, no king goes to war without first considering whether the people that he's up against are greater than the people he has to fight with.

No builder goes and builds a house without first considering how much is it going to cost me to build. In a similar way, if you're going to be obedient to the Lord, you need to count the cost. And in this case the cost was great. But often when obedience costs you the most, that's when God's blessings will be the best. When obedience is most costly, God's grace is most abundant in your life. And so they count the cost and they stand before Joseph, and it may be for you, for you to enjoy God's discipline.

You need to take inventory of what it's going to require. It's not I'll obey you, Lord, until it gets hard. It's Lord, if I obey you, this is how hard it's going to be, but I'm willing to sacrifice it, I'm willing to give it up, I'm willing to do whatever it takes. And so they're standing there before Joseph, and when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his stewards, take them into my home, which was kind of different. Usually that didn't take place. Not only do I want you to take them to my house, I want you to slaughter an animal and prepare it, because they're going to have lunch with me at noon.

So the man did as Joseph had said, and he brought them to Joseph's house, but the brothers were afraid because they were taken to Joseph's house. Joseph is trying to demonstrate mercy and grace and they're getting afraid, which is often what happens when you trust the Lord and you count the cost and you obey what God wants you to do. All of a sudden you're confronted with the reality, what if God doesn't? What if things don't? And so that's what they're saying. They're saying, we've been brought here because of the silver

that was returned in our bags the first time. They think we stole from them. They intend to overpower us, seize us, make us slaves, take our donkeys. And so they approached Joseph's steward, and they spoke to him at the doorway of the house. In other words, in case things are bad, we can just bounce. And they said, my lord, well listen, we're not trying to steal. We really did come down here the first time to buy food and we came to the place where we lodged for the night and then we opened up our bags of grain and there was silver on top of our bags.

It was the full amount of our silver and we brought it back with us. In other words, we weren't trying to steal it. You can have it. We didn't try to put it in there in the first place. We even brought additional silver with us to buy food because we don't know who put the silver in our bags. And then the steward responds, chill out, bro. It's fine. Don't be afraid. Notice what he does. Remember, he's the one that put the silver in the bag, but he doesn't take the credit.

Who does he give the credit to? God, your God, the God of your fathers, must have put the treasure in your bags because I received your silver. In other words, God is being gracious to you, men. So stop stressing out and be happy. I received your silver. Then he brought Simeon out to them. In other words, they thought they were going to make them slaves, and instead of making them slaves, they released Simeon from his bondage. Then the steward

brought men into Joseph's house and he gave them water to wash their feet so they don't overpower them.

They clean them up, give them hospitality. They don't steal their donkeys, they go and get food for their donkeys. Since the men had heard that they were going to eat a meal there, they prepared their gift for Joseph's arrival at noon, and when Joseph came home, they brought him the gift that they had carried into the house, and they bowed to the ground before him. And he asked if they were well, and he said, how's your elderly father that you told me about? Is he still alive? And they said, yeah, our dad is doing great.

He's still alive. And they knelt low and they paid homage to him. And when he looked up, he saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and he said, is this your youngest brother that you told me about? And then he said, may God be gracious to you, my son. And then Joseph hurried out because he was overcome with emotion for his brother. And he was about to weep. And he went into an inner room and he wept there. And then he washed his face and he came out, regaining his composure, he said, serve the meal.

If you want to enjoy the fruit of God's discipline in your life, one of the things you need to do is not just count the cost of what it's going to take. Not just to endure through the fear and what-ifs when you're in the middle of obedience. But in the midst of that obedience to remember the reason why you're there in the first place. Notice Joseph's response was one of incredible compassion. He was so overcome with love and affection for his brother that he had to leave the room. Again, I don't think Joseph is doing these things because of spite or revenge or anger.

And in the same way, when you're responding to God's discipline in your life, if you want his discipline to have its effect, you've got to remember he does it from a place of love. He does it from a place of compassion, that he disciplines me because I'm an adopted son or daughter, that I'm not an illegitimate child. And so it changes the way you receive the pain and suffering in your life. And it makes you much more eager to receive acts of grace. Instead of assuming the worst about the Lord, you believe the best that I don't have to be afraid because he is kind and gracious and merciful and you begin to see demonstrations of his mercy and grace over and over again.

And then the last test he gives at the meal. They served Joseph by himself. He's the top dog in his own room. Big table. The brothers were served by themselves because Egyptians and Hebrews ate separately because the Egyptians couldn't tolerate them. They were detestable to them. A little bit of ironic racism there. Joseph is a Hebrew, but he's pretending like he's an Egyptian. So in the Lord's economy there is no real distinction. And then they were seated before him in order by age from the firstborn to the youngest, and the men looked up at each other in astonishment.

Why? Not just because how much food was given, but because portions were served to them from Joseph's table, and Benjamin's portion was five times larger than any of theirs. And they drank and they became drunk with Joseph. This I think Joseph's final test on his brothers was a test of their envy and jealousy. Originally Joseph's brothers hated Joseph because he was the favored son of the father. He had the special robe, long-sleeved, many colors, whatever it was. And because Dad loved Joseph more than anybody else and showed grace to Joseph more than any of the other brothers, they hated him and tried to kill him, and when they couldn't kill him, they sold him into slavery.

And so what Joseph is doing is the same thing to Benjamin. He's saying, I'm going to treat him special. I'm going to give him more. More grace is going to go to him, and I'm going to see whether they respond with hatred and jealousy or whether they respond with wonder and enjoyment and astonishment. And they respond affirmingly. They don't get jealous, they don't hate Benjamin. They're just sitting there going, dude, that's awesome. Hear, hear. You know, when they get wasted. By the way, I'm not sure that this is a proof text for getting wasted with your brothers.

If that's what you think you need to, I think, consult someone else. Sometimes the Bible prescribes things and sometimes the Bible describes things. I think this is a descriptive phrase of them enjoying the grace of God through Joseph. And they do so by getting drunk, but it's, I think, a point. If you want to enjoy the fruit of God's discipline in your life, you need to learn to glory in God's grace. And just to give you a personal example, and then we've got to wrap it up because we're running out of time.

But there's been times in my life where God has disciplined me. Eradicating comforts, elevating chaos, all the things that we talked about. But in responding to God's grace, one of the things I've noticed is that there is an accounting of the cost of what is obedience going to require. There is a tug of war between fear and faith as you respond to the Lord where you begin to fight to remember God is good, God is gracious, God is holy, God is dependable, and so you endure in obedience. But one of the climaxes of that experience is that God will often give to others what you desired for yourself.

He'll begin to bless other people in ways that you thought to yourself, well, that's what I wanted. And I think one of the reasons the Lord does that is to gently remind us. What is it to you if God blesses one person with 10x grace and you get 5x grace? You both get grace. You're undeserving of any of it. He's undeserving of any of it. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. And until and unless you can come to a place where you realize, God, you are my heavenly Father.

And I don't expect you to be fair, because if you were fair, I'd be in hell. And so I'm going to glory in your grace. And if you're gracious even to the unjust, I'll celebrate your grace because it's not about me, it's all about you. And when you can come to that place of humility

and contentment in the Lord, then God has got you in a position where he can make you a great man or woman of God. And that's why sometimes he puts you in those conditions so that his transforming, sanctifying effect for your life will come to fruition.

So all discipline is painful in the moment. So what do we do when we're disciplined by the Lord? Hebrews chapter 12, verse 5 says, do two things. Number one, don't be discouraged by the discipline, but neither do you need to despise it. Don't despise the Lord's discipline. Don't take it lightly, in other words, but don't let it cause you to lose heart. So as we bring our time to a close this morning, do you sense that the Lord might be disciplining you? And if that's the case, there's two wrong ways to respond.

One wrong way is to treat it lightly, to say it ain't happening, it's no thing. It's bad luck. God's not in it. Don't do that. Don't miss what God's trying to do. But neither be discouraged by it. Don't lose heart. Don't say God hates me. I deserve this. I'll never be happy. Don't despair. Don't despise God's discipline, don't be discouraged by it. The right response, Hebrews chapter 12, verse 12, strengthen your tired hands. Strengthen your weakened knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but healed instead.

Strengthen what is weak. How do you strengthen what's weak? You remember the reason God is disciplining me because I'm a son. I'm not illegitimate. I'm adopted as a child of God, and God is a God of mercy and grace. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2, verse 1, be strengthened by the grace that is in our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus. Hebrews 12 says, fix your eyes on Jesus, the author, the founder, the perfecter of your faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. In other words don't despair, don't lose heart.

Allow the grace of God and the mercy of God and the kindness of God through Jesus Christ strengthen you so that you hold fast and you don't give up. And then straighten what is crooked. There may be things in your life this morning that if you were honest you'd say this needs to go. This is wrong. It needs to be put back in its proper place. I've been living according to my own designs and my own standards, and I haven't submitted to God's will for my life. Straighten what is crooked so that what is lame might not be dislocated, but healed instead.

And so I don't know what that looks like for you this morning. I know in my life I can look to all of the seasons of God's discipline in my life. And those were the two things I needed to hear. Don't despair. Be strong in the grace of God. And straighten what is crooked through repentance and faith, enduring obedient faith and what the Lord's calling you to do. So if I can pray...