

Hello again everyone. Hope you enjoyed the last Sunday of August. Next week is Labor Day weekend. I would like to invite you all to our church picnic at Dean and Lea Miller's house. It will be after Sunday school. You can follow someone if you don't know where they live. Meat and beverages will be provided. Feel free to bring a covered dish or a dessert. They have a swimming pool for any who want to swim.

Hard to believe summer is over. Remember to pray for our students as they go back to school.

God bless you and yours!

Pastor Don

“Spiritual Vitality thru Discipline” Hebrews 12:3-17 8-25-13

Little Johnny was being defiant about going to bed. He would constantly call out Mama I need this or that. Finally Mama had had enough. She said if I hear mama one more time, I am coming in here and spank you; then she slammed the door and went back to the couch, sat down and enjoyed 5 minutes of peace and quiet. Then she heard Little Johnny's voice saying “Mrs. Green, could I please have a glass of water?”

Raymond McHenry said that children need 2 pats on the back. One high enough to encourage them when they do right, and one low enough to discourage them when they do wrong. Effective discipline requires knowing which end of the child to pat.

Dennis Fakes said it best, every child knows that the sole purpose of middle names is so he can tell when he is in real trouble.

It is a parent's job to rear their children so they can be well adjusted adults. Parents teach the children how to survive on their own. We spent 2 years teaching them to walk and talk, then we spend the next 16 telling them to sit down and shut up. All too soon our job is completed; they are adults and out in to the world. One of the most important things we teach our children is self discipline. It's very important for everyone to be self-disciplined

Football teaches self-discipline; what else would cause a person sit out in the open in freezing weather? But seriously though, self discipline is very important. In the 1960's Stanford University ran what they called the marshmallow test. Researchers would leave a 4 year old alone in a room after telling them that they had to run an errand and would be right back. The 4 year old was offered a marshmallow to eat while they were alone. But if they waited until the researcher returned, they were promised 2 marshmallows. After 12 years they restudied the same children. They found that those who ate the single marshmallow were more troubled as adolescents. Also, those who were patient and waited for 2 marshmallows scored an ave. of 210 points higher on their SAT tests.

God not only teaches us self-discipline; He teaches us to be self reliant.

Sometimes though we get mad at God when he disciplines us don't we? I guess it is to be expected, we get mad at our earthly parents sometimes when they discipline us. But that doesn't mean we stop loving them or that they stopped loving us. Love hurts sometimes.

16 century reformer Saint Theresa even got mad at God. One day while standing mired in mud as she was traveling on one of her many journeys she cried our to God if this is the way you treat your friends, it is no wonder you don't have many.

Are we God's friend? Is He our friend? Do we trust Him? Do we obey Him? Do we love Him, even when he corrects us? Are we willing to serve Him no matter what He asks us to do or where he sends us to do it?

Are we people of faith? Do we let God build our faith thru discipline and tribulation?

Would you pray with me as we begin this morning's message? [Pray]

Hebrews 12:1 says "since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, & the sin which so easily ensnares us, & let us run with endurance the race that is set before us". In order to run this race of faith, we must have self discipline. Paul Harvey said "Self-government won't work without self-discipline." How do we get self discipline? God gives it to us. When God chastens us, that is when He disciplines or corrects us; He is teaching us how we should behave. Proverbs 3: 11-12 says "*My son, do not despise the chastising of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.*" Because we have all sinned & fallen short of the glory of God, we all need disciplining at one time or another. God disciplines us because loves us; just like our earthly parents discipline us because they love us. We learn through their discipline of us. Proverbs 22:6 says "*train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.*" The writer of Hebrews says we respect our earthly father's for their discipline; shouldn't we

much more respect God, our heavenly Father, when He disciplines us? How do we feel when God disciplines us?

No chastening is painless but it yields peaceable fruit as it teaches us the proper way to behave. God must teach us self discipline so we can stay the course. It is only by self discipline that we can keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. If we are to complete our race, we must stay focused on the finish line, Jesus Christ. Is Christ our focus? Christ was able to endure the cross because He was focused upon doing the Father's will. He knew His reward awaited Him. He never took His eyes off the goal.

Because Christ endured and conquered, we can too. Are we focused on the Father's will? The author tells us not to be discouraged or grow weary when we face persecution, affliction, trials and conflicts. What we face is not as bad as what Jesus went through. He was nailed to the cross with the sin of all mankind upon Him. He was separated from the face of God for the only time in his life. Jesus promised to never leave or forsake us.

If we are focused upon Him, we can face what ever life throws at us with the confidence that He is with us; that it will be all right in the end. Christ is seated at the right hand of God; He has prepared for us a place in heaven. Do we have faith to believe that every thing will be alright? Do we believe Romans 8:28 "*all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose?*" Are we willing to endure discipline, torture, shame, persecution, or death for the cause of Christ? We will face some or all of these things, and it won't be as hard on us as it was for Jesus.

The people who received this letter originally had not yet suffered deadly persecution. They were not martyrs yet. Do we have enough faith to lay down our lives for the cause of Christ? Dying for a cause is easy, anyone can do that; it's living for a cause that's hard. Are we living for the cause of Christ?

Suffering breeds patients and total reliance upon God. It strengthens our faith. It is true: that whatever doesn't kill us; only makes us stronger. How is our strength today? Do we lift up our eyes to the hills from whence comes our help? Our help *comes* from the LORD who made heaven and earth. Is the Lord the strength of our lives? Is he our focus?

If we are going to run the race of faith, we must strengthen our hands which hang down and our feeble knees. The author is telling us how important it is to renew our strength so that we can

endure the whole race. When runners get tired, their arms drop and their legs get shaky. Christians can not let the circumstances of life get us down. We need to stay focused on the goal; we must get our second wind and persevere to the finish line. We need to rely totally upon God to get us through the trials& tribulations of life. Isaiah40:31 tells us that "*Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*" God will give us the strength to run our race of faith, just like he did the great cloud of witnesses that surround us. Do we pray for strength? Do endeavor to persevere?

Do we stay focused upon the goal? Making straight the path for our feet means staying focused. God is not just a loving father; he is also a demanding coach. He demands self-discipline so that we can stay focused on the goal. Part of our goal is to live peaceful and holy lives. If we don't have a holiness about us and a sense of inner peace, why would anyone want our Christ? Do our lives present Jesus in a good light?

Our witness is more than just our words; it is our lives, deeds and actions. Actions speak louder than words. Talk is cheap; does our walk match our talk? Do we practice what we preach? Does our life say that we are Christians? Are we good ambassadors for Christ?

How do we pursue peace and holiness? Paul tells us in Romans 12:18 "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*" That is not always easy is it? We have to be careful not to let the roots of bitterness grow in our hearts. Those roots tend to spring up, bloom & cause trouble don't they? That is why we are told to look carefully. We need to examine our own lives for sin, bitterness, apathy or anything else that might get in the way of us having a right relationship with Jesus. A right relationship with Christ is the key to having a good life. Do we have a right relationship with Jesus? Do we believe that He truly is the Messiah, the savior of the world? To fall short of the grace of God means that we don't believe in Jesus; that we don't accept Christ's sacrifice as atonement for our sin. We can only have true holiness through Jesus. We can only draw near to God when we come to him by faith in the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Have we accepted Jesus?

Sin always blocks our view of Christ, so if we want to see Him clearly, we must repent. Immorality and irreverence are closely related. If we want a clear view of Christ we must repent. Psalm 24:3-4 "*Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.*" Esau lost his inheritance because he was only concerned with the present; he did not care about the future. Esau was a profane person, irreverent towards God. Esau wanted God's blessings, but he did not want God.

Esau is an example of the lasting effects of sin. Some sin cannot be fixed, even if we repent and receive forgiveness, we still must deal with the consequences of them. As we run our race of faith, we must remember that God sees the whole picture and that He is in control. We need to trust Him; we need to pray for His guidance. We need to remember that Father truly does know best. Do we trust Him? Are our eyes on the goal? Are we examining our own race rather than someone else's? Are we living peaceful, holy lives?

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How do we react to persecution? How do we handle trials and tribulation? What do we do when God disciplines us? Do we get mad at Him? Do we pout or threaten to quit the race? Or do we repent and try to learn our lesson. Do we try to be self disciplined? Do we strive to be holy because God is holy?

Charles Swindoll relates the story of the last spanking he got. It was on his 13th birthday, but it wasn't a birthday spanking, it was a disciplinary spanking. His father was weeding the garden and ask Charles to come help him. He said no in a sassy, disrespectful manner.

The next thing he knew, his father was in his room grabbed him and spanked him all the way out to the garden, which he weeded until dark. Then his father took him out to a surprise birthday dinner. His father gave him what he deserved earlier in the day, and then gave him what he did not deserve later that evening. That is grace, getting what we don't deserve. God loves us, that is why He disciplines us, so that we will learn and grow and be able to serve Him with all our heart as obedient, faithful children of God.

God has a plan for each of us. What He calls us to do He will equip us to do. We are all engaged in the race of faith; a race that can only be run in faith. God builds our faith thru trials, discipline and tribulation. Faith is a muscle; it must be exercised to be made stronger. Faith comes by hearing and by experience. The author told us about these great people of faith who serve as example for us. Now we are running the race of faith, are we being good examples for those who see us?

Do we truly trust God? Is our faith squarely upon His shoulders? Do we love, serve and obey Him no matter what the circumstances? Do we believe that he loves us and only has our best interest at heart? Does God's discipline strengthen our faith?

Amen. Let's pray. "Spiritual Vitality thru Discipline" Hebrews 12:3-17 8-25-13

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Call to Worship:

The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help?

My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.

The LORD is your keeper; The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.⁸ The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore.

Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Offertory:

The poet Coleridge once had a visit from a man who had a theory about raising

Children. He said “I believe children should be given a free rein to think and act and thus learn at an early age to make their own decisions. This is the only way they can grow into their full potential.” Coleridge made no comment, he just asked the man to come and see his flower garden. Upon seeing the flower garden, the man said “this is not a flower garden; it is just a yard full of weeds.” To which Coleridge replied “It used to be full of beautiful roses, but this year I thought I’d just let them grow as they willed without tending to them. This is the result.”

Children, like flower gardens will not automatically flourish, they need tending, training, loving and care. They need to be taught discipline so that they can learn self discipline. Tithing is a self discipline. Let us now give to the Lord as He lays upon our hearts. The usher will wait upon us.

Benediction:

Go now; go now in safety for u cannot go where God is not. Go in love, for love endures forever. Go with purpose, and God will honor your deication. Go in peace, for it is the gift of God to those whose hearts and minds are in Christ Jesus. Amen.