



*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. <sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. <sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” <sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup> Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. <sup>11</sup> For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*



The house where I grew up in since age five was decent sized. And by the way, it was pretty run down when I lived there and looked nothing like this. As you enter the front door there was a long hallway that would then enter into the family room with a fireplace. Then you turned left and came into the living room and if you turned left again you'd be back

at the front door. So the first floor made a continuous loop. Why am I giving you this glimpse into my childhood? My grandma lived with us I have a vivid memory of both my mom and my grandma chasing me around this circle with a plastic spatula. I was fast as lightning, but I couldn't out-manuever two adults all day long so they eventually caught me.

I was chatting about this with my sister on facebook this week and we got into a hilarious conversation about this story.

Mom too? Oh, I'm sorry! I think you should use old pictures though to really represent it! 😊

Nice you can poke fun at yourself and I don't agree you deserved to be chased with a spatula. Poor grandma was really hard to live with and worried so much! You got the worst of it. 😞

There was just the one time they were both chasing me. I think it's hilarious

I am laughing out loud at your expense!

No, I definitely deserved it. LOL

I think I can count on one hand the number of times I was spanked as a child so you can only imagine this one time I must have really deserved it! I truly felt loved by my parents and if anything, they were way too hands off in their regular discipline. And I don't just mean spanking, but general parental discipline. I really did need more of it at times.

But this morning we are talking about Godly discipline, loving discipline from our Father but for many of us, discipline from our own fathers and mothers can get in the way of understanding God's discipline. I like how this guy said it.

As believers, we struggle to apply this childhood lesson to our walk of faith. We often view God's discipline from a childish perspective. We suffer—prompting us to ask, why? When bad things happen to God's people, we puzzle in wonder or frustration or doubt. We question God's wisdom. We question God's motives. Like the parental discipline we faced as children, we question the severity of the suffering, the aptness, the justness of the trial. Why should I go through this pain?<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, why should we? That's what we will learn this morning. Let me lay down the most important thing about Godly discipline from the very start and it's found in verse eleven. *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* Discipline involves pain, but you already knew that, right? More importantly, it bears tremendous fruit in our lives but only under certain circumstances. Do you see it? it bears fruit for "those who have been trained by it." So that raises an extremely depressing thought. This verse is saying that we can be constantly disciplined by the Lord yet not be trained by it. Do you see what that means? It means that our discipline could be wasted. It means that we could go through all of that pain and not have it make any difference in our lives. In fact, I would guess that happens quite frequently to us and we don't even realize it. That's why I have titled this message as Don't waste Your Discipline. Whether we like it or not, whether we are trained by it or not, it will come. But if we follow what is laid down for us in this chapter, we will not waste our discipline.

Before we dig into the text, let me give you my definition of Godly discipline.

God constantly uses people and circumstances  
to reveal what's in our heart  
so that we can be transformed by his truth.

This is just another way of stating what the text already says.

**God disciplines us** God constantly uses people and circumstances  
**To be trained by it** { to reveal what's in our heart  
so that we can be transformed by his truth.

This means that God is working all of the time through every circumstance to gain our attention so that we can be trained and transformed. So the key question is, How do we know if we are not wasting God's work of discipline? How do we know if we are being trained by it?

You know if you are being trained by Godly discipline if...

### **1. You recognize the various types of discipline.**

Many people view God as a divine hammer, just waiting for you to mess up so he can whack you on the head or squish you like a bug. Many believe that every last bit of suffering is due to our willful sin. This is what Job's so-called friends told him over and over. First, let's remind ourselves of what happened to Job.

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. <sup>2</sup> There were born to him seven sons and three daughters.

<sup>18</sup> While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, <sup>19</sup> and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

And of course the loss of all ten of his children came on the heels of the loss of everything he owned in the world. In the midst of this overwhelming tragedy, Job's so-called friends spoke the harshest possible words to him.

**Job 8.4**--If your children have sinned against him,  
he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression.

In other words, all of your ten children were evil and deserved to die. Every last one. Can you imagine such abusive words at that moment? It's no wonder Job called them "miserable comforters." But Job's friends were not alone in assuming that all suffering is a direct result of sin. The disciples made the same assumptions.

"As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:2-3).

The exact same assumptions are made in the gospel of Luke.

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:2-5)

So when we think about Godly discipline, the first thing we need to do is reject the idea that all suffering is a punishment for your sin. Every time we stub our toe or get the flu we wonder if God is disciplining us. Maybe you never give that a second thought, but I find it is a common concern among believers.

#### Suffering for doing evil—willful sin/hidden sin

Here’s the thing. Suffering for doing evil—for our willful sin—is one of the categories. Peter is quite clear about this when he wrote, “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil” (1 Peter 3.17). God will discipline us to get our attention when we sin. Now again, we shouldn’t get all paranoid about this. It’s not like every time we sneeze God is twisting the screws on us. But we should have this awareness that God may be disciplining us.

#### Suffering due to natural consequences

But there’s also a second category of suffering for doing evil, and that is all suffering that is within the realm of natural consequences. Some examples. If you smoke your whole life, you, might get lung cancer. If you are overweight and develop diabetes, you might have to have a limb amputated. If you take meth or heroin, you could easily land in prison or lose your life. If you commit crimes, jail and prison will follow. None of these examples are God’s fault, are they? The fault lies with the person engaged in these activities. Nevertheless, God has set natural consequences in motion to get our attention and to train us toward holiness and Christlikeness.

#### Suffering for doing good—persecution

The 1 Peter verse works again here. “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil” (1 Peter 3.17). So Peter opens up this category of suffering for doing good. What do we usually call this? It’s some form of persecution. “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12). Then of course we have the striking example from Hebrews 11 I shared last week.

Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. <sup>36</sup> Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— <sup>38</sup> of whom the world was not

worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth (Hebrews 11:35-38).

It's one thing to experience persecution, but would God really use something evil like persecution to discipline us? Remember, the goal is for us to be trained. The end goal is for our good and growth, so the answer is yes. The goal is to have a more sure foundation on the other side of the application of Godly discipline. Countless believers have learned and at this very moment, somewhere in the world, are learning vital lessons and are being trained through their experience of being persecuted.

#### Suffer the effects of the fallen world

Sometimes we just suffer the effects of our fallen world. Sin has marred every atom in God's creation and the result is all manner of suffering. We get cancer, Alzheimer's, have heart attacks and strokes/ This week I talked with a guy that has a couple dozen plantar warts on the bottom of his feet. Despite years of surgeries and therapies, nothing has changed much so every step he takes is painful. That's just a bizarre sort of suffering. It's not life and death but it's very real. The mother of a friend of the Kniprath's just passed away. She got a nose bleed in the middle of the night which caused her lungs to fill with fluid which then caused a heart attack. Again, more bizarre suffering for no apparent reason. This is all part of living—and dying—in our fallen world.

Other types of suffering are things like fires, earthquakes and tornadoes. The Farrell family knows about tornadoes In 2005, 28 tornadoes swept through SW Wisconsin and one of those picked up their neighbor's garage and set it down on their house in 2005. The fires in Australia are a combination of poor forestry management and criminal actions of those who set the fires. Great suffering has resulted. Much of our suffering is directly caused by the sins of others. I don't have to give examples here because you all have many of your own examples. People sin against us and we sin against them.

#### Suffering under Satanic attacks

Finally, we can also suffer under the attacks of Satan. The clearest example might be that of Job.

- And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." (Job 1:12)
- And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." (Job 2:6)

Like with the rest of these causes, you may never know if it is a direct attack from Satan or something else, but we do know this much. Satan is a deceiver and a destroyer. He hates you and though he cannot steal your salvation, he would like nothing more to see you experience a lifetime of pain yet waste your discipline.

So there are a multitude of types of trials and kinds of suffering. But the question remains, how do we know if any of what we experience is Godly discipline?

- 2. You aim at transformation (his purpose) and not information (his sovereign reasons).**

Let me explain the difference between information and transformation. Information is wanting to know the deeper reasons for why God chooses to discipline us or allow things in our life. Whenever we ask the question, “Why is God doing this to me?” or “Why is God allowing this to happen?” generally we are wanting to peer behind the curtain to see his sovereign reasons for all of this.

Part of the why question has already been answered by seeing all of the various types of suffering we just looked at. Someone might say, “I eat healthy and work out, so why did I get cancer?” Natural consequences don’t really apply here, right? At least not in the same way if this person didn’t take good care of their health. Is it just suffering from living in a fallen world and God doesn’t have a specific plan in mind? Was there willful sin involved so God needed to get their attention? Right? Each time something arises in our life we can ask these sorts of questions. We assume there is a very specific reason why it is happening to us and we think we should be given this reason.

I found a quote from DA Carson that I found to be very helpful. It’s a little long but well worth it, I think.

In any suffering, or in any other event for that matter, God is doubtless doing many things, perhaps thousands of things, millions of things, even if we can only detect two or three or a handful. A godly woman in her middle years is diagnosed with stage-four breast cancer. What is God doing? My little brain can imagine several possibilities. At one level, he may be providentially allowing the [effects] of the Fall to take their course, a constant reminder that it is appointed to all of us to die, and then face judgment (Heb 9). He may be preparing her for eternity: it is a great grace to know when you are going to die, and prepare for it. He may be shocking her 20-something son, who is living his life indifferent to the gospel, to prod him into self-examination and repentance. He may use her testimony about the joy of the Lord even in the midst of suffering to call another of her children into vocational ministry. He may be using her as a way to teach people in her church what it looks like to “die well,” anticipating several other deaths in the next two years. He may be teaching her minister-husband to slow down and care about his family, and in principle other people, instead of being endlessly busy with “the ministry.” He may be sparing her from living long enough to witness the moral destruction of her daughter. Her funeral may be the means by which several of her unconverted relatives, for whom she has been praying, will come to faith — conversions for which she would happily give her life. Perhaps one of those converts will become a Christian pastor of rare gift whose ministry of proclamation will touch thousands. Perhaps she is hiding some deep bitterness and hate in her life, and God is using this means to confront her.<sup>2</sup>

I agree that God is almost certainly at work in a way that where there isn’t just a single reason for these sorts of things to happen to us. So if we break our leg, why did that happen? Did I speak unkindly to my wife and God wanted to teach me a lesson? Do I have osteoporosis and should get that checked out? Did God want me to slow down a bit from the busyness of life? Can you see that all of them can be true at the same time? Do you see what happens is that we can pull from multiple causes or all of the causes simultaneously.

Now it's good to ask this question and God may want to give us a very specific answer. I am not saying he will never reveal a specific answer but I don't think he usually reveals a specific answer. So we may not know the sovereign reason behind what we are experiencing but we can aim at his general purpose which is transformation. This passage and others are very clear that the revealed reason for all of it is our transformation. Verse eleven says if we are trained by it will yield "the peaceful fruit of righteousness." So what we need is a readiness to allow him to work. What we need are simple prayers of trust and desire for the Lord to have his way in our lives.

So there's a spectrum of pain that we experience. On the one end is immense suffering and death. For this we need to learn how to lament, as we have been talking about some. We need to cry out to God with our pain, with our doubts and hand it over to the Lord. At the other end of the spectrum are minor inconveniences and some difficult people. For this we just need to learn. Then there is everything else in between.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:9-10)

Are you willing to receive good things and the hard things? The minor inconveniences and the great pain will come. The only question that remains is will your discipline be wasted or will it bear fruit?

**Rich Maurer**  
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/blessing-gods-discipline/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-does-god-discipline-christians/>