

God's Discipline

Scripture: *Genesis 42-44*

Scripture not only depicts suffering—it actually promises it. 1 Peter 4:12 says, ***Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*** Suffering is inevitable; it's only a question of when and how it will happen. Although Scripture does not fully explain why it happens, it does provide with just enough understanding of it to give us hope. In a way, it acts as a lens through which to see suffering in our lives.

As we look at the life of Joseph, we learn that suffering is allowed—and actually sometimes ordained by God—to discipline us.

1. Why God disciplines us

Genesis 42:4 says, ***But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him."*** That in itself reveals something about the heart of Jacob: in the same way he loved Rachel more than Leah, he favored Rachel's children over Leah's. Jacob's family was supposed to be the family from which the Messiah would come, but they were dysfunctional. In addition to introducing favoritism into the family, Jacob proved himself to be a functional idolater; and this affected his ability to become a good father. Although he worshipped God, he also tended to put Rachel before the Lord. Idolatry is deadly because it is the root of every other sin that we commit against God; we never break the other commandments without breaking the first one.

The Lord allows discipline because He loves us. He knows that we have wayward hearts, and the idea of "following our hearts" can lead to destruction. Jeremiah 17:9 says, ***The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?*** Tim Keller says, "God sees us as we are, loves us as we are, and accepts us as we are. But by His grace, He does not leave us as we are." The more we focus on God and spend time with Him, the more He will change us.

2. How God disciplines us

Because Jacob was unable to properly discipline his sons due to his idolatry, God stepped in to be the father that he wasn't. In society, the word "discipline" has a negative connotation—that of punishment. Discipline, in fact, means taking care of a person's wellbeing. The same way that a samurai sword is shaped by tempering the blade—alternating between hot and cold—God alternates between moments of suffering and joy.

3. How God is able to discipline us

Hebrews 12:7-11 says, ***Endure hardships as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all... but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*** We are only disciplined by a parent if we are their children. At the end of the passage, we see Judah as a foreshadowing of Jesus when he decided to sacrifice his freedom for the sake of his younger





brother's. In the same way, Jesus lost His sonship on the cross and stood in the gap for us, so that we can become children of God.

4. Living under God's discipline

When we go through God's discipline, we know that we can trust it because of what Jesus did on the cross. When we are suffering, we have to keep looking at Jesus so that we do not lose hope. 1 Peter 4:13 says, **but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.** This is also a call for us to invest in relationships through discipleship. God uses relationships to discipline us, and accountability helps magnify His discipline with truth and grace.

APPLICATION:

Patiently listen as God reveals where you can apply the passage's lesson in your life. Write down specific action points to what He has revealed to you.

	<p>Personal: What is our understanding of God's discipline? How do we respond to it? Have we ever experienced God's discipline in our lives?</p>
	<p>Family: Talk about Idolatry. Are there still some things that each of you still idolizes. What are the areas in our life that God is disciplining us? How do we feel about this? How do we respond to this?</p>
	<p>Discipleship: Share with your discipleship group the areas of your life where you believe that God is still shaping/ changing you.</p>
	<p>Church/ Ministry: In the light of all that is happening in the world today, how am I actively and intentionally sharing the gospel to those who are around me?</p>

PRAYERS:

Lift all the things that you learned back to God. Share your thoughts to Him. If He is impressing a sin in your life, confess it to Him. He is always ready to forgive.