

Let's go to Hebrews 12. We will be there all night. Now, I guess it's never good to start a sermon with, "I'm a little bitter about..." but I'm going to tonight. I'm a little bitter about discipline, not discipline as in organizing your life in a certain matter but more just how people handle kids these days. I'm a little bitter not because I disagree as much as I'm angry that I just missed it. I missed this kind of new wave. Like, we were in the airport today, and I never remember anybody counting when I was growing up. I never remember, "You've got 'til the count of three to do that. One...two...three." I just remember being told and then just getting beat. I don't remember getting that shot. And I don't remember the bargaining that I see. It's like, "If you do this, honey, then we will do this for you." What we got was, "You'll clean it or you'll be homeless." Or one of my favorites, "You'll clean it or we'll kill you." And maybe I'm wrong and maybe I just don't remember, but it seems like things have swung into an entirely different universe than the one I grew up in. And I've said since I got here, the whole "time out" idea is just amazing to me. I wish somebody would tell me when I was a kid, "You just go over there and think about that, alright." I would love to have gone over there and thought about something. I might have even ended up somewhat normal. But I've said since I've got here: when I was a kid, timeout is what happened when your dad knocked you unconscious. That would be like, "What happened to your kid?" "He's thinking about some stuff right now." They would walk over you and just go into the other room. Nobody's calling anybody. Nobody's reporting anything. If anything, they might spank you too. I mean, it was a time when it was free game. If you were a kid, anyone could whip you. And so now I'm just bitter because everyone else now is in the corner, thinking about stuff. And I think maybe I would have turned out without as much baggage if I would have got to think about some stuff when I was a kid.

We're in a text tonight that is all about God's discipline, I mean God disciplining those He loves. And you're probably thinking it's kind of a weird text to come out of on a Father's Day weekend, getting into the Lord's discipline. Because here's the deal. This text has nothing to do with fathers. It has nothing to do with fathers; it has everything to do with how God disciplines, how God relates, how God behaves to us as His children. But here's what I think happens when we're in this text. When we're in this text, I think there is some revelation about fatherhood and what it means to be the father of children. And so, what I want to do tonight, very simply and pretty quickly, is to simply walk you through this text and point out some things, and then I will specifically address fathers on more than one occasion just to kind of push you and jab at you and, more than anything, plead with you concerning what I believe the overarching theme is in parts of this text. So that's the plan for tonight. Let's pick it up in verse 6. "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." That verse is going to be very important here in a minute. "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?" Now, if we stopped here and I said, "What's discipline?," I guarantee you, what we mean by the word "discipline" and what this text means when it talks about discipline are two separate ideas. We would say discipline is what? Punishment. Discipline is punishment. Discipline is what we do when a law gets broken, a mistake gets made. We pull the kid aside and say, "I told you no. (Smack!!)" Discipline is punishment. But in this text, He's going to separate the two ideas, that God disciplines those He loves and He chastises or scourges all those whom He calls sons. So punishment for a broken law is in this text, but it's not when He says God disciplines those He loves. This word discipline and the idea of discipline in this text is more of a shaping and a molding for a specific form. And so, what that means is that God has an end goal in mind for you and me, He has an end goal for where He's taking us and He's actively involved in shaping and sanding and chiseling and manipulating to bring about that end. So in the end here, from now on tonight, when we use the word discipline, we're not talking about timeout or getting a spanking, but rather we're going to talk about shaping for a particular end.

I'd also say before we move any farther, that this text seems to believe that love and discipline might not be the exact same thing, but where there is one, there will be another and where there is not discipline, there is no love. Now, don't go, "If you don't spank your kids, you're a bad parent." Because we're not talking about scourging or chastising. Where there is an end goal and an end desire and an understanding of what the end is and a working towards that, there's love. So make sure you don't go back to spanking when I say discipline...even though I think you should beat your kid like crazy.

Let's keep reading. Verse 8, "If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them." Let's chat here. Because what the Scriptures just said is that where there is not an understanding of the end and a working towards that end, you have illegitimate children. This is never the child's fault. So even if you're in here tonight and you are an illegitimate child, no one chooses illegitimacy. Illegitimacy usually occurs because of a narcissistic male who's had an impossible time saying good bye to sixteen. And if you don't understand what I mean, have you ever been around sixteen year olds males? No offense, the whole world's about them. "It's about me...It's about what I want... It's about what feels good to me...It's about what I like..." And what ends up happening is usually you leave that and become a man, but in our culture, we celebrate manhood in a whole different way that encourages narcissism rather than destroying it. More on that later. So what ends up happening then is a son or daughter becomes illegitimate if there isn't the shaping and molding that brings about the particular end. In this case, this is beautiful on so many levels. And what that means is that God is sending like rain and wind and water, elements of erosion. He's sending those things into my life to bring about the end that He has desired for me. That is a beautiful place to rest, where I know joy and sorrow and struggles and happiness, authored by God almighty, to shape and mold and bring about the end that is my role in His story. That's a great place to be because you can go to bed at night no matter how difficult things are. But here's where I want to plead with you fathers, to dream massive, God-sized, eternal dreams for your sons and your daughters and then war for it, to dream bigger, grander, more beautiful dreams than them being good at sports, than them being safe, than them just getting married and making good money, to dream God-sized, eternal, massive dreams for your sons and daughters and then to begin to shape and mold and speak and breathe in such a way to bring about that end. And I am not talking about becoming the morality police. Because what this text says is that fathers do this in such a way that brings respect. And here's where I think that happens. I don't think any discipline brings instantaneous respect. I've got two kids, a four year old and a two year old. It hadn't worked that way in the Chandler crib yet, but we're trying to mold, shape, sand, chisel, hammer, direct in such a way that there will be a day when my son and daughter look back and respect. Do you know the sin of most men is that they're just not there even when they are? I mean, they're there, but they're not there at all. So they're married, but they're not there. And they've got kids, but they're not there. And here's what I'm pleading with you about. Don't disengage. Sweet Christ, don't disengage. Dream, believe hope and then shape. Which means that there are days that we have to show up and go, "That's unacceptable. That's unacceptable...no. And here are the repercussions." But honestly, for most of us, that's not most days. Instead, most days should be spent, "That was amazing! You look beautiful. Great job. This is why we do this. Man, that was amazing." Discipline in such a way that brings about respect, which means you love, you encourage, you speak life and you whoop that tail. And listen, I want to be careful here because some of you will leave and think that's not necessary. "Let's just...we'll just love 'em." That is love. It is love. Do it in such a way that brings about respect. That's monumental. That's a whole different level. Like, it's one thing for me to want my kid to be a good athlete or want him to be a good musician or want Audrey to be this, but when you've got God-sized, massive goals and you understand your own sin...Anybody? Where you're like, "I'm supposed to produce in them the peaceful fruits of righteousness? Are you kidding me?"

And I think the next line's going to help us. Look at verse 9 again. "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? 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." Okay, I'm going to be careful here, but I think I'm going to offend some of you. But I'll let that be between you and the Lord. Some of you in here tonight are playing a really sad religious game with your kids and with your own life, and you want your kids to turn out morally okay, so you drug the whole family to church in the hopes that that would be the end. What you might have just done is damned everybody. Because they will get enough of the gospel to be inoculated to the whole of it. And listen, I don't care if you're Tom Cruise. He ain't kidding anybody. I mean, you think you've pulled the wool over your kids' eyes simply because you're coming to church? I mean, this text is saying, "If you want to dream these kind of dreams, you had better be subjecting yourself to the Father of spirits yourself. You had better be humbling yourself because you're not a good enough actor to pull it off. Kids have this weird like hypocrisy radar. It's insane man; it just picks it up. I mean, in a matter of minutes, they'll be like, "Liar. Uh uh, I'm out." You can giggle, but it's absolutely true. I am constantly talking the gospel in our house. Lauren and I flew in this afternoon, the plane landed, mother-in-law picked us up, our kids were in the back, I climb in the back, sit between the two kids, Reid falls asleep, I begin to talk with Audrey. She says, "Are you preaching tonight?" I go, "Oh, I'm preaching. Hebrews 12. Here's what I'm saying. Here's why I'm saying it. This is what I'm going to encourage the daddies to do." She asked a couple of questions, and the next thing I know, we're talking about queso. We talk through queso, we go in, hang out for awhile, I go in to my office, pray and get here. Now, we're constantly, constantly, constantly talking the gospel, which means I am constantly confronted by my own hypocrisy. And here's what that looks like. I'll give you an example of what that looks like. When we were doing the six services live, Audrey had to be here for like four of those services. And so, I ran and grabbed her out of the class during worship at the seven o'clock on Sunday night and run her over to the Martin Building, which is completely shut down and dark. And I get out my keys and she wanted a little snack, so we were going to go raid the kitchen. I'm opening up the door and she was like, "I don't think we're supposed to be in here." And I said, "It's okay, we can be in here." We got in, turned on the lights, got into the kitchen, the kitchen door was locked and I put my key in that and unlocked that and she was like, "Dad, I think we're going to get into trouble for this." And I tell her, "Baby, Daddy can't get into trouble for going into the kitchen. He's the boss. He's the boss here. He can't get into trouble for going into the kitchen." So we walk into the kitchen and I flip on the light and I'm looking for something for her to snack on. She's behind me, I'm looking into the cabinets. And she goes, "Um Daddy, you're not the boss here." So I spanked her. You don't talk to me....I'm kidding. I'm like, "(Smack) Who's he boss now, sucka?" No, I didn't do that. She says, "You're not the boss here." And I was like, "Oh yeah?" She said, "You're not the boss here. Jesus is the boss here." Now, we had already had that talk. So she burned me. She was like, "Hey, your thinking's off. Wait a minute. Which is true? Is what you told me before we went to bed last week true, that Christ is the boss of the church and you serve Him? Or are you the boss?" And you might just be thinking, "Ah, it's just a four year old. She just doesn't understand. You were just kind of kidding around." But listen, she's picking it up at four. "This is inconsistent." And I'm not telling you to be perfect. No man possess that ability. It's why the cross is such a thing that stirs up worship in the hearts of those who trust Him. I'm not talking about perfection, I'm talking about honesty and the pursuit of Christ. You don't have to be perfect, you just have to honestly pursue Him. How do we dream massive dreams and reverse engineer in such a way that we impart it to our children? We subject ourselves. We get help ourselves. I know you don't want to hear this, but we don't battle against flesh and blood but against spirits and principalities. When you've got secret junk in your life, secret sin in your life and you've brought those things into your home, do you not believe that you've invited certain spirits into your house? I mean, I know we're Americans and don't believe in spirits and this is a cognitive confession of good, moral theology, but if you actually believe the Bible, you're playing a dangerous game. Alright, so subject yourself to the Father of spirits. Pursue Him yourself; honestly pursue Him. It's okay that you're not okay. This is a great place to not be okay. There's a lot of us. Just don't be a liar and don't pretend and don't let your pride damn you. It's okay to not be okay, but let's just do business. Let's just not be liars. Let's just not pretend. Let's just get the help we need. Let's just subject ourselves, submit ourselves, let the Lord shape and mold us.

Let's keep reading. Verse 11, "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." When you start coming to church and you get into

the church scene, you get around church people, it feels unnatural to do really deep business because you feel like you're in this venue where everybody's good and everybody's doing well and everybody's worshipping and everybody's lifting their hands at the right time in the song, everybody but you. And so it feels unnatural and it feels awkward to come clean. Has anyone ever felt natural about unpacking their junk? Everything inside of you screams, "No, no, no! You fight it...you beat it...we'll conquer it...we'll stop it...we'll grow..." Every voice in you screams out, "This is unnatural...this is not right...this will not end well...you're going to be judged...you're ostracized....this cannot be the way...there must be another way," every voice except the one that would save you. It feels unnatural. This is what this text is talking about. It never feels pleasant at first. The guy who's come clean about the sin in his life, the man that's confessed, "I don't know if I know the Lord," I've never met the guy who felt good that instant, but I've met hundreds who, four years later, say it was the greatest night of their lives. It's unnatural to dream massive dreams for your kids and then to reverse engineer it. Because you have to live life on purpose. And Thoreau says most men live lives in quiet desperation. That quote no longer applies in '07. They now live lives in chaotic desperation. Nobody gets quiet desperation; that's gone. So to actually stop and think, to actually spend the time it will require, to pray through, think through, dream the end and then to figure out your plan of attack, that feels awkward, it feels strange, it feels unnatural. Because our thing is just kind of "go with the flow of everything," but godliness never happens on accident. Nobody stumbles into godliness. I know the hyper-Calvinists are in here, "I disagree!" And I love the doctrine, I do, but I love the Bible more. So what I would tell you is that the Scriptures say train yourself for godliness. What do you do with that? "For physical training is of some value, but training for godliness holds value for this life and the next.

So Lauren and I have got these four or five things we want to see in our children. It's made us do some insane things. Last June, we piled up both our kids, my three year old daughter and less than one year old son, on an airplane to Asia. And I don't think that was the smartest thing in the world. I don't even think it was a good idea. But with the end we have in mind, with the end the Holy Spirit birthed into our heart, Audrey and Reid have to understand that most of the world does not live like us and you shouldn't splurge everything you have on yourself while most of the world... Now I can show her pictures and I can tell her stories, but images, smells and noises brand the soul. So we had to take them to get branded. Most people will sacrifice tomorrow for today. For laziness today, they will remove any real chance at depth and beauty tomorrow.

Let's look at the last thing. Verse 12, "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed." Okay, so here's the great thing about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't really need me to say anything in particular tonight to convict you of an area that He wants to work on. Isn't that awesome? For you guys that are seminary guys, that's just one of the greatest things in the world for a preacher. Because the Scriptures would command us in 1 Thessalonians, as preachers, to warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Can you possibly do that in one message? Maybe. So we study and we pray and then we preach the word and just let the Holy Spirit be the Holy Spirit. Do you ever think about how strange it is that some people get saved in messages on tithing? How weird is that? "Give ten percent..." "I need Jesus!" You're just like, "How can you not be a sovereignty guy. It's that kind of weirdness. Well, here's what I'll say across the line. If something's grabbing you tonight, then let's go. So if tonight I'm going, "Quit playing a religious game. Quit being church folk. Quit doing that. Dream bigger dreams than just your kids being morally decent humans." If that grabs you tonight, then let's chase that, let's run it down, let's subject ourselves to the Father. If I'm saying tonight to dream big dreams for your kids and your heart gets all stirred, then let's go home and dream. Let's skip dinner with the crew tonight; let's go home and dream. Let's go sit in their bedrooms when they sleep and just dream. And then, I would just plead with you, plead with you fathers to love your daughters, kiss them and hug them and don't ever let them walk in the room where you don't stop and go, "You are gorgeous. Turn around. Spin. Whoo!" Don't let a day go by that you don't romance and love and kiss and date your daughter. Because the glory of Christ is revealed in godly marriage. And how will they ever spot the dogs if you haven't trained them what a man is? How are they ever

going to spot it? Instead, they're going to look for affection and they're going to look for attention in places that will never fill their souls. Please date your daughters. Please kiss them. Please buy them flowers. Please write them poems. Please do those things, even if you're not good at it. Come on man, you don't have to be that good. How old are they? It doesn't have to be complex, just pick some nice words that rhyme.

And then, can I say this too? Will you please kiss your sons? Will you kiss them on the mouth? Now if they're 20, maybe not. Some of you have a 20 year old son in here who's like, "Try it. Try it, old man. I will hurt you." Maybe not at that age. If you've got small ones, will you please kiss them. And let me be very honest with you...and we might get into this in August, I'm praying through it. We're having a manhood crisis in the U.S. We're having a very difficult time socializing boys. And I'm telling you, every number proves it, from how many males are graduating from high school, from how many males are graduating from college, how many males are pursuing masters degrees, when the average male leaves their parents' house. It's an absolute manhood crisis. And the church isn't helping any. The church might even be hurting. As if manhood is tied to camping and how much you like the movie "Braveheart." I mean, that's it. You can't even go to a retreat without somebody showing a clip of "Braveheart." I've got to paint my face blue and kill Englishmen? That's manhood? Don't get me wrong; I love that movie. But that is not a bearing on my manhood. We are breathing narcissistic death in the air. Manhood doesn't have anything to do with abs or body hair or whether or not you hunt or fish or whether or not you can fix a car. That's not manhood. Selflessness, sacrifice, passion and zeal to protect God's daughters, creativity, passion, zeal, these are some of the marks of manhood, but nobody's teaching that, not one commercial, not one movie, not one show. Nope, narcissism. But no one will walk with a limp in heaven. No one will strut. No one will feel large and powerful. One of my favorite verses when it comes to my family is a passage in Isaiah that says, "...that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified." That's our end, and everything we're trying to do right now is to shape and mold and point towards their enjoyment of God in such a way that they display His infinite worth. And you know what, if Reid can run a 4.2 forty, I'm cool with that, but I'm not spending all the days of my life training him in it. And if he likes soccer, we'll kick the ball around, but only so I can talk with him about the gospel while we do it. And if he wants to dance, then give my my camera. Let's go take pictures of my boy dancing. I mean, it's a biblical command. "Praise His name with dancing." Put on your leotard and spin for the glory of God, I'm in. If he wants to play music, I'll buy him a guitar. If he wants to be an actor, be an actor so that the infinite perfections of Christ might be enjoyed in public. Please, check back in.

Let's pray, "Father, I just ask for Your help. Will You stir up in us these desires to be these kind of men, men that don't exasperate their sons, men who aren't indifferent to their daughters? Will You kill our pride? Because I just know there's got to be those in here who are thinking 'What about me? What about my needs? Who's going to take care of me if I'm doing that?' I just pray that You'd kill that and we'd seek a greater treasure, maybe one that won't even come this side of heaven. I pray for our boys in here. I pray for our fathers. I pray for patience for our single women. I pray for our single mothers, Father. I thank You for grace and mercy. And where what is ideal is lacking, Your sufficiency makes known Your power. I pray that twenty years from now, thirty years from now, that in this place this not be an issue. And I pray that we be that steadfast about it, that we as men give our lives to it, our energy, our creativity, our lust, our zeal, our savvy. It's for Your beautiful name I pray these things. Amen."