

My name is Blake. I'm one of the pastors here, and I'm actually preaching this weekend because Matt and Lauren are supposed to have their baby this weekend. I'm excited about the opportunity to preach this morning, and I feel like I have a great word for you. This word that I have is about discipline. I feel like discipline has sometimes been distorted because when we think of discipline, we think of punishment automatically. So this morning if we can grasp this, I think it can be foundational to the health of our families and also to our church.

So turn with me in your Bibles to Hebrews 12. Verse 3, "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord..." Now here's that distortion, because automatically we think punishment. We think spankings, time-out, privileges withheld and that kind of stuff. But what this word means is correction, it means instruction and it means training in righteousness. "...nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." Did you catch that? The Lord disciplines us because He loves us. That's His motivation in correcting us, in instructing us, in training us in righteousness. And I know as kids, if you grew up like me, you never believed that. That never made sense to you. Your dad's going, "Hey, I'm going to spank you, but I'm going to do this because I love you." You're going, "I don't want your love. I just don't if that's the way it's going to be." That made about as much sense to us as your dad saying, "Hey, I'm about to spank you, but this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you." That is an outright lie. I have kids now and I do spank them on occasion and I promise you, their bottom hurts a lot more than mine when that happens. But the deal is, He's going, "Hey, I'm disciplining you because I love you. That's the truth of the matter. If I didn't discipline you, I wouldn't love you." And we'll see that here in the next part.

Let's keep going. Verse 7, "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? 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. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" We don't discipline other people's kids. And I know we've all seen kids at the store or at the restaurant that might need you to come over and do a little discipline, but you don't do that. We don't do that because they're not our kids. That's not our responsibility, whereas my kids are my responsibility. So I take that as a privilege that I get to discipline my kids. It is my job as their father to correct them, instruct them and train them in righteous living. My wife knows this. It doesn't matter if I'm in a meeting, if I'm across town, it doesn't matter where I am, she can bring my kids to me and say, "Hey, they need a little daddy discipline. They need a little time with you." And I love that because it's a chance for me to instruct them. It's a chance for me to sit down with them face to face and go, "Hey, I care enough about you, I love you and I expect more out of you than this." And I get to train them and correct them in righteous living. It's my privilege as their father.

Let's keep reading. Verse 10, "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. 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." Did you catch that? It's for our good. He disciplines us for our good. It's kind of like vegetables when we were kids. No kids really like vegetables very much, but they're good for you. In the same way, discipline, though doesn't seem good, it may not feel good at the time, but what

it does is it produces holiness in you and it produces that peaceful fruit of righteousness. Now what that means simply is this, if you've ever seen someone or you know someone or maybe you are someone who never sat under discipline, if your parents never disciplined you, if you never had authority figures in your life and you just got to do what you wanted to, it's going to end in total chaos because of that. You've seen those people. But you've also seen those people who have had authority figures over their lives, who have had discipline administered in their lives and they have lived out righteous living because of it. There's holiness. But this isn't just the point of it. He gives those two things, but ultimately discipline is to reconcile us in our relationship with God. And that's even what holiness is for. Holiness is being pure, undefiled and separate from sin. But our sin separates us from the Father. And so God comes down and goes, "Hey, I want to bring you back into relationship with Me." And that's my goal as a parent and it should be all of our goal as parents when we discipline our child, to reconcile that relationship with our kids, to go, "Hey, you've sinned against this person. Let's reconcile that relationship. You jabbed your brother in the eye with a very sharp object, and he is crying and bleeding." We want to reconcile that relationship. You want to reconcile your relationship with God the Father because you sinned against Him. That's the point of discipline. It's not just punishment; it's an opportunity to correct, instruct and train in righteousness so that we might be reconciled with God.

But here's the deal. We automatically read this passage, especially if you've been in church a while, and we think children. We automatically think about rearing children, because of the language, because of model relationship between a father and a son that's given. But couldn't this stand to mean something even more? Couldn't it go beyond that parent/child relationship? Couldn't this be referring to all those whom we love, for all those who are in our life? It could be for friends or family or neighbors or people in our home group. Because ultimately, we want this for everybody. We want everybody to be reconciled in their relationship with God the Father. Don't we want everyone to walk in holiness? Don't we want everyone's lives to yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness? If you love them, that should be the desire of your heart. We should want this.

A couple of years ago, it became real clear to me. There was a friend of mine who I heard was caught in some sin. I just kind of caught wind of it and ended up calling him saying, "Hey, could you meet me up at church? I've got some time between services where we could talk." He was like, "Sure, I'd love to talk with you." So he comes up, and if you've been on this campus at all, between services is like someone just kicked an ant pile. There's just kids and people and dogs everything running around. So it was kind of hard to find a quiet spot. You don't want to do this kind of confrontation out in the foyer. And so I was like, "Where can we go?" And there is this room right down here that's the nursing room and nobody was in there. So we went down there, we walk in and sit down and I just start this conversation out going, "Hey, do you know that I love you?" He's like, "Well yeah, I know you love me." And I said, "Well here's the deal. I've heard some things that are going on in your life, and I just wanted to hear from you. What's going on?" And immediately, my buddy just breaks and begins confessing this sin. And James 5 is right. When you confess, there's healing. Some healing took place, and it was this beautiful time. And we've continued to walk together and have done some accountability since then. It's been a great thing.

What's crazy is, after that service, my wife brings one of my kids to me and she's like, "This one needs some daddy discipline." And I was like, "Alright, let's go. Let's do this." So obvious I don't want to do this out in front of everybody, so I bring him down to this room. And so I open the door, he walks in and sits down in the same chair that my friend sat down in, and I end up sitting in the same chair I was in. And as I began to correct him, instruct him, train him and discipline him on righteous living, it just clicks with me. The Lord's going, "Hey, it's the same thing. You're doing the same thing to this three year old boy that you did to this thirty year old man." And I started thinking about that in my life, that I don't really do that enough. I don't have those tough conversations with friends. I don't have those tough conversations that I need to as much. And then I started thinking that I don't really know very many people who do. And I was wondering why we don't discipline more. Why don't we correct and instruct and train in righteousness like we should?

First of all, it's difficult to do. That conversation is not easy. There are a million other conversations that I would rather have out there in the foyer, about what's going on on ESPN or what's going on in this relationship. Surface level stuff, that's a lot easier than going, "Hey, there's some sin in your life." And that's not even the hard part. That conversation is difficult, but what's even more difficult is walking with that person after that conversation. Some of you are champs at that and say, "I could have that conversation all day long. Line them up. I'm a prophet. I can do this." That's kind of how we operate. And that's fine that you've got that gift. It's very useful. But that's not the end of it. There's that walking with them and holding them accountable and doing life with them beyond that. It's hard.

Dr. Criswell was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas for years and years. He has since passed away. But near the end of his ministry, they asked him this question. They said, "What's one thing you regret in your ministry?" He said this, "I wish we would have never stopped doing church discipline, because it was so healthy for our church." And they asked him, "Why did you stop doing it?" And he goes, "It became too difficult to continue to do." It's difficult, no doubt about it, but it is so necessary.

And so maybe that's one of the reasons we don't do it also, because we don't know how or we don't know why. Maybe we don't know that this kind of discipline is mandated in Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul lines it out and goes, "Hey, this is how it should be done corporately in the body of Christ." But maybe we don't know that we should do it individually as well. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 spells out the things we should do, warning the idle, encouraging and rebuking. Maybe we don't know that's part of the Christian faith. Maybe we thought it was coming in, singing some songs, hearing a sermon and jetting out. Maybe we didn't know how or why.

Or maybe it's because we've got sin in our own lives. And so we don't want to go, "Well I'm going to go call this brother out on this. I can't do that because he will then point out sin in my own life." So because we're not living a holy life, because we're not living a righteous life, we don't want to do that, because he may call us out on our stuff. So what if they do? Do you know what that would be? That would be an opportunity for you to go, "You know what? You're right. I do have that sin in my life. Could you help hold me accountable as I help hold you accountable? And we'll just do this together." That's what community is. That's what doing life together is. That's why we do home groups. That's why we set this thing up the way we do. That's what it's about, what it's for.

But when we don't say those things, when we don't discipline, when we don't administer discipline on our brothers and sisters in Christ, when we don't correct and instruct and train in righteousness, we automatically communicate a few things. The first thing is we simply communicate that we simply don't know what's going on in their life. We communicate that we're ignorant to the affairs of their lives, meaning they're not known by us. And everybody wants to be known. That's why Facebook is so popular now, because people want to be known. And so by you not saying anything, maybe you're just ignorant to what's going on in their life. Which makes me ask the question: do you ask the tough questions? Do you ask the tough questions on a regular basis going, "Hey, what's going on in your life? I remember you shared one time that you struggled with this. How's that going? Are you keeping your pride in check? How are you responding in this relationship at home? How are you treating your kids? Are you loving your wife like Christ loved the church? Are you respecting your husband? How is this working out?" Do we ask those questions or do we just live on the surface level where we don't ever go deep in people's lives? Maybe we just don't know.

Or maybe we do know but we just don't really care enough. Maybe we don't care enough because maybe their sin really isn't that big of a deal. Maybe that's what we're communicating. This past week, I got up early one morning and cooked my two boys a gourmet breakfast. We had frosted brown sugar cinnamon Pop-Tarts. That's about the extent of my cooking skills. So I put them on separate sides of the table so they can't mess with each other. My three year old gets easily distracted. He'll take like three bites, and then he'll see a toy in the other room or he'll see something on TV and

have to run in there. So his breakfast takes a little bit longer. My other son just sits there and inhales everything that's put before him. So I'm running around getting ready to go to work, and I come back through the kitchen to find my four year old reaching across the table and he's got his hands on his brother's Pop-Tarts. He totally got caught with his hands in the cookie jar. He got caught with his hands on it, and he's looking at me like, "Is this okay? Am I permitted to do this?" Now right then, I'm going to communicate to him even if I don't say a word. If I pass by him and don't say a word to him, just go about my business, get my stuff together, I'm communicating to him, "Daddy doesn't care. What you're doing really doesn't matter." And then he'll inhale his brother's Pop-Tarts. But we do the same thing with our brothers and sisters in Christ when we know the sin that they're in and they know that we know about that sin and we don't say a word. We're communicating that that is okay, that we just don't care, that it's just not that big of a deal for me to even get involved in. That's what we communicate.

Or maybe we're communicating that we don't really love them. And I know that's hard to hear, but it's true. Because loving someone means you want what's best for them. And I would dare to say this. If you're not disciplining your loved ones, you don't love them. Because you don't really want what's best for them. And it's so funny how we do this. We get this sin and we play with it like it's a little toy, like it's never going to grow, like it's never going to get dangerous. It's just this cute little toy that I have over here, knowing good and well that Satan's intentions are to steal, kill and destroy our life with this, that sin wants to keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay and take you farther than you ever wanted to go. And we just let our friends and our family and the people we labor for Christ with just kind of play with this while it is internally destroying them and growing and growing and growing in their life. Do you see how selfish that is, to stand over here and go, "Hey, I love you. You just keep playing with that sin." when you know that's not what's best for them? And I would dare to say that you don't love them, because you're simply exploiting them. You're in that relationship for selfish reasons, to see what you can get from them, not what you can give to that relationship. We're communicating by not saying anything. When you don't engage in discipline with those you love, your friends, your family, your children, whoever, you're communicating that you don't love them, you don't care and you don't know them.

Do you really and truly want the people in your life, your brothers and sisters in Christ, your family members, do you truly want them to know Jesus? Do you want them to love Jesus? Do you want them to be like Jesus? Because ultimately it comes down to this. Do you believe in the gospel? Do you really and truly believe in the gospel that Jesus Christ came and lived on this earth to model a righteous lifestyle for us to follow in? Do you believe he died on the cross because He cared enough about that sin to die for it? And do you believe that He rose from the dead because He's got the power to do all things and to change and transform lives and to raise the dead to life? Do you believe in the gospel? Because that's what this comes down to. When we don't engage in discipline, in correcting, in instructing, in training our loved ones in righteousness, do we really and truly believe this gospel? Do we believe this book?

So how do we discipline biblically? How does this happen? Because I know some of you have never been disciplined correctly. Some of you have never had those conversations where someone has sat down with you and said, "Hey, do you know that I love you? Okay, you're in sin, and you've got to get this out of your life. And so I want to give you two really quick things on how we discipline, correct, instruct and train in righteousness in a biblical manner. Turn with me in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3. Starting in verse 16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Guys, this validates what you're saying. The Bible validates what you're saying because it's the authority by which we live. I mean, you can go to somebody and go, "Hey, I think you're messing up. I think you're blowing it in this. That's just my opinion." And they can take that and go, "Whatever. That's your opinion. I disagree with you." But if you bring the Word of God before them and say, "Hey, you're missing it. You're in sin, and I'll show you where. It's very clear," it changes the whole deal. Now it's not just your opinion, it's God's truth. I try to do this with my kids, even at a young age. When one of them hurts the other one, I've got to say, "Hey, do you know that God loves your brother? Does God love you? Yes. Okay,

so don't you think that God wants you to treat them as you would have them treat you? Okay, that's what God's word teaches us. And so you've sinned against your brother, and you've sinned against God because He's commanded us to walk this out." And they're too young to read, so I don't take them to the passage, but we use truth to train, to instruct and to correct in righteousness. And they can try to argue with that. I've had friends who have tried to argue with it, but I'm like, "Bro, it's pretty plain and clear. Do you believe the truth of the Word? Are you a Christian? Do you follow Christ? Then it's no my opinion. You can get mad at me, you can get mad at this, but this is truth." You present the truth of God's word. That's how you discipline biblically. It's got to be done through the word.

Let's keep going. Look 2 Timothy 4, verse 2. "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." There it is again, "reprove, rebuke and exhort..." But he adds something. "...with complete patience." You see, a lot of us are just real good at laying down the law. We come up with our family Bible and just want to whack somebody on the head and go, "It's the truth, buddy. You had better live by it. I'll crack you on the backside again." And some of us have that gift and we're like, "Line up. I'll be the one to rebuke everybody." But he says we're to do it with complete patience. And the reason he does is because it is a process. Very few times have I ever rebuked someone and corrected them and trained them, even my kids, and they automatically just get it where it just makes sense to them. Never have they automatically gone, "Oh okay. Now I'll follow that." That would be beautiful if we worked like that. You hear it one time, you get it and you're good. But what happens usually is we're bent towards sin and we continue to go back to that same thing. And so we need somebody to come along side us in patience and go, "Hey, let me walk with you through this." This is not just a one and done deal. This is, "I confront you here, and let's walk together. When you struggle, call me. Let's pray. Let's talk through this. Let's examine what's truly in your heart that's causing you to sin and causing you to go back to this same sin over and over and over again." But it takes patience on our side. Sometimes for me, I run out of patience with people. I'm like, "Are you kidding me? I told you this already one whole time. You don't get that?" And my pride gets checked and the Lord's like, "Oh yeah? How many times have I told you the same thing about your junk?" And I have to remember the Lord's patience for me, that He is so patient and so gracious and so gentle and so loving and He just stays with me. And I want to model my discipline after His, that it's out of love.

Which leads us to our second thing. We can't just discipline them through truth without love. We've got to discipline people in love. Turn with me to Galatians 6. Starting in verse 1, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." It's got to be done in love, it's got to be done with patience, it's got to be done in gentleness. And I would push you that if you're not ready to discipline someone in love, then you're ready to say anything. And I've been in those situations where I've seen something come up with little relational conflicts, and I've had to bite my tongue until I was in a place where I was ready to love that person enough to say it. I've been there. And I've had to hold my tongue because I could lash out and use all kinds of truth, and I could just blast that person. But that's not achieving the goal of reconciliation with God. I mean, He draws us to repentance by His kindness, Romans 2 says. And so it's got to be done in love. So sometimes I just have to bite my tongue and pray, "God help me to love this person. Help me to love them to the point that I can't stand to see them in this sin any longer. Get me to that point. Bring me to that place." And all of a sudden, the Lord starts doing surgery on my heart, changing me and making me more of a lover of this person. Because some people's junk is just annoying sometimes. I know my junk is. And you're like, "Are you kidding me? This is wearing me out." But then you find out what's really going on in their lives and why this stuff continues to flush itself out this way. And you hear the history of their story, and the Lord reveals to you why they act out this way. And all of a sudden, your heart begins to break for that person and you begin to love them as Christ loves them. And then you can discipline them as Christ disciplines them.

And the cool thing about this is the Lord is right there beside you the whole time. Like this is no new revelation to them. If they've got sin in their lives, you can bet that God has been working on them and wooing them with patience and love

and kindness and gentleness, all the while going, "Hey, please let go of that. That's killing you our relationship. Please let go of that." And so all you're doing is coming in as a reinforcement of what God's already been telling them. But it's got to be done in love.

Not only is your holiness and spiritual health at stake in this matter, but the spiritual health of this church is at stake. If we don't begin to engage in disciplining others through truth, in love, correcting, instructing and training in righteousness, if you guys don't do that in your home groups, in your families, in your day to day relationships, this church, the church will be an unhealthy body. As the church staff, we will continue to try to figure out how to do church discipline. It is a difficult, costly, timely thing to do. And we will continue to try to work that out and try to administer as best as possible, but it has to be done on an individual basis.

And not only should you be administering that, but you should also be receiving that. So maybe this morning you can't think of anybody off the top of your head that you go, "Hey I need to speak to this person." But maybe it's coming home. So maybe you need to check your heart and go, "Okay God, if someone confronts me on this, I need to kill my pride and accept that word." And maybe some of you guys are over here playing with this sin and you see the destruction that it's causing and you're going, "God, please send someone to confront me on this. Please expose this sin, expose this thing so that I can wash my hands clean of it." And so maybe that needs to be your prayer this morning. I don't know.

But here's the question: Do you love people enough to do it? Do you really have what's best in mind for them? Do you love and believe the gospel enough to say, "I'm going to follow what this books says. I believe God's way is best. I believe the truth of His Word, I believe the truth of His message, I believe that He hates sin and that's the reason He came and died for it." Do you believe in the gospel enough to act and to move on this? The health of the church is at stake.

Let's pray. "Father, thank You for Your example of the way that You discipline us. Thank You that You are so patient, so loving, so kind and yet so persistent that You don't let us stay in sin. In fact, that's Your wrath to let us stay in sin. So regardless of how we've been disciplined in the past, may we recognize how You discipline us, and may we take that model of instruction, correction and training in righteousness and may You allow us, give us the strength and empower us to go before our brothers and sisters in Christ and go, "Hey, I want you to reconcile your relationship to Christ. And this sin is separating you from God. You are not living holy, your life is not yielding the peaceful fruit of righteousness. It is yielding conflict and chaos and sin. God, give us the words, give us the strength, give us the patience to walk with that person long beyond a conversation. Even right now, would Your spirit move in this place and speak to the hearts of Your children and place that person on our heart that we need to talk to, that we need to walk with better, for the sake of Your gospel, for the sake of Your name and for the sake of Your bride, the church. Lord, change us, make us more like You for the glory of Your name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."