

Proverbs: Great Advice for Everyday Living

Lesson 26 - Discipline

Warm up -

1. What is the most trouble you've ever been in?
2. What things do you do because they're good for you, even if you don't like to do them?
 - eat spinach
 - exercise
 - study for tests
 - floss your teeth
 - other:
3. What are some things God could use to make us better people (even if we don't find them pleasant)?

Lesson -

You tiptoe in at 1:30 am. Avoid the third step - the one that squeaks. Grope your way along the hallway, past your parents' bedroom door. Attain the safety of your own room. Only to find your mom sitting on your bed. She's been waiting since midnight, and she's not happy. The excuses you've prepared sound lame, even to your own ears. She spits out the consequences. No car. Not for a month.

Discipline. A harsh word. It has to do with punishment and with making yourself do what you don't want to do. That may be true. But a lot depends on who's doing the discipline. If it's handed out by someone who doesn't care about you, you have good reason to fear. On the other hand, you can assume that the discipline handed out by your mom or your favorite teacher is going to do you good.

So it is with God's discipline. We've been talking about trusting God. Part of that trust is believing that God knows better than we do what's best for us. We may not know exactly what is going on in our lives or where we're headed. But the God who loves us is working to make us more like himself. And that involves correcting us when we go the opposite direction.

When things go wrong in our lives - things like getting sick, like broken relationships or failure or emotional pain - it's tough to know what is discipline and what is simply the natural consequences of sin. All the more reason to trust God. God knows what is going on. God knows what's best for us.

Read Proverbs 3:11-12; 10:17; 13:18; 23:13

1. As you read, list the consequences of not accepting discipline.
2. What other words are used for discipline in these passages?
3. What is the goal of discipline?
4. People who study the relationships between parents and their children have said that kids actually welcome discipline because it shows their parents care. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. What kinds of problems might children have if their parents didn't bother to discipline them or disciplined them unfairly?
6. Think of an area in your life where you want to practice more self-discipline. Talk with the group about what you could do to be more disciplined in this area.
7. What makes it hard for us to accept discipline? (The passages from Proverbs assume we should want to be disciplined.) How can we become more accepting of discipline?
8. From whom is it easy to accept discipline? From whom do you have a hard time accepting discipline? How can you learn to deal with this?
9. Is discipline always helpful? Explain.