The Road to Perfection  (Lesson 3 of 4)

**Felt Need:** I don’t like to go through hard times.

**Doctrine:** Chastening of God

The student will understand the purpose of God’s fatherly chastening and will be encouraged to repent of known sin and allow the discipline to mature them.

**Hebrews 12:11**
Even though I might not like it, what is the benefit of correction?

**Worth Repeating:** God’s loving punishment brings your lasting perfection.

**THE FELT NEED:** I don’t like to go through hard times.

**NOT Avoiding Hardship**
- Coin Flip Game
- To win the game, we just played you needed to endure more grossness (or pain), but in life why would you want more pain. None of us enjoys hard times.
- So when we go our own way, against the good plan of God, He, in love, disciplines us for our good.

**THE TRUTH:** The Chastening of God

**Bad Things Happen in Life.**

First we must realize that not all the bad things that happen in life are due to God responding to a sinful choice that we made.

- We live in a broken world.
  Sometimes we experience awful things simply because we live in a world that is falling apart, and we live in a world surrounded by other sinners.
  - You drop your IPod, and the screen breaks.
  - Files get lost on a computer the night before a big paper is due.
  - You sprain an ankle during practice before sectional playoffs.
  - Weather postpones an event you have been waiting for.

- We are in a spiritual warfare.
  We live in the middle of an epic battle of good versus evil. The desire of God for our lives is to experience good, while Satan longs to make life miserable.
• God’s chastening of our sin.
  – God is a loving Father that refuses to allow His children to just live
    sinfully. (Read Proverbs 3:11-12.)
  – God does allow us to feel the sting of the consequences of our bad
    choices at times so that we will realize that choices have consequences
    and that we might choose His perfect plan for us.

The Purpose of Discipline (Hebrews 12:11)

A. Discipline makes sin less desirable.
  • God disciplines those He loves. Repentance is His clear goal.
    Consequences are a great teacher and a powerful tool to deter us from
    further sinful choices.

B. Chastening perfects us.
  • When we experience chastening, it increases our understanding of God and
    develops character.

What chastening looks like (Galatians 6:7).

A person convicted of murder does not get the same penalty as a person caught
going five miles over the speed limit.

  • Natural Consequences.
    – When you kick a wall in anger, you may break a toe.

  • Varied Consequences
    God’s discipline shows up in the lives of His children in a variety of ways.
    – Jonah running from God’s clear command – Jonah 1:1-10

THE CONNECTION: Receiving Correction Can Protect Me from Future Poor Choices.

In the midst of being disciplined by God, our best plan is not to stiffen up and resist,
but to have a teachable spirit. Too often our pride protects us from learning our most
important lessons. On the other hand, a teachable spirit can shelter us from broken
relationships and countless regrets.

  • Rather than boiling in anger at your coach, prove your value to the team by
    leading the way in sprints.
  • Instead of slamming the door in anger at your parents, find an extra job you
    can do to lighten their load.
  • Choose to not bad mouth the teacher for calling you out, but rather humbly
    apologize for being rude.

God’s chastening is in our lives to confirm His great love for us. Let me remind you
of one last verse, (read Job 5:17-18). This verse tells us that when we are being
disciplined by God, it is always to strengthen us. Don’t ever forget that God’s loving
punishment brings your lasting perfection!
THE DECISION: Will you choose to receive correction?
As you face correction from an authority in your life—whether from parents, teachers, youth leaders, coaches, or God Himself, choose to focus on how it will protect you from future poor choices and cause you to grow.

Definitions
Chasten: To punish or rebuke in order to correct or mold the character of others.

Checklist
- Printed PowerPoint of the Real and Fake Laws for the opening game.
- A PowerPoint presentation for this module is available.
- Materials for coin flip game
- Coin Flip Game Alteration: Lightning Reaction Reloaded – Shocking Game [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRQAijNKSEs]

Resources

The Felt Need: I don’t like to go through hard times.

Coin Flip Game

Flip a coin and on heads, you pick up the item on the chair first. If you get the item first, you get a point. If you lose, you get none or take a drink from a nasty concoction. The concoction gets progressively worse each time.

Put one ingredient in a blender after each round, starting with pickle juice. Each round blend in the next item for the losing team member to take a drink of. Pour a little into a small cup for them to drink each time.

(Feel free to substitute items from the list but keep in mind this does need to be drinkable.)
- Pickle juice
- Lemon Juice
- Cocoa powder
- Hot Sauce
- Vinegar
- Cinnamon
- Ginger

Teacher’s Note
An alternate way to open the lesson would be to purchase a Lighting Shock game to open this lesson. You can find them on Amazon for about $25. You can see how the game works in the video below:
Lightning Reaction Reloaded – Shocking Game [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRQAijNKSEs]

This game is a great one to set up the fact that none of us likes pain. You can also make the point that when it comes to this game, the pain is all self-inflicted. This is similar to the chastening of God which comes into our lives as a result of how we
live our lives. Different than this game, God's chastening has the purpose and goal of helping us to grow. To win the game we just played, you needed to endure more grossness (or pain), but in life, why would you want more pain? None of us enjoys hard times.

What if I told you that there might be hardship in your life that you could get rid of just like that… OR…. what if I told you, you might be doing something that is bringing extra pain and difficulty into your life? We may have even seen others go through hardship because of obvious sin (or bad decisions they have made), and maybe you thought, “I don’t want that to happen to me!”

Whatever your situation might be, these bad experiences can lead us to perceiving discipline as a completely negative, dangerous, or unfair experience. If we choose to ignore or break rules, there will be consequences. We will be rebuked, corrected, disciplined, or punished. Sometimes this causes us to shut down, reject authority, and hate all rules. How we handle the process of being corrected can be critical to how happy or miserable we will be in life.

God wants us to realize that rules are not only important, but necessary to make us more like Him. While there are some people that carry out discipline in inappropriate ways, God never does. God loves us too much to let us live in the danger of sinful choices. When God says “Don’t,” He is saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” Remember that if we choose to sin, we are choosing to suffer. So when we go our own way, against the good plan of God, He, in love, disciplines us for our good. But is all hardship we face the discipline of God?

Bad Things Happen in Life.

First we must realize that not all the bad things that happen in life are due to God responding to a sinful choice that we made. The truth is that, although everything passes through God’s approval process, not all the bad events are orchestrated by Him. He may allow something to happen, but it doesn’t mean that He caused it or sent it as some sort of punishment in our lives. There are other reasons for bad events in our lives.

- We live in a broken world.
  - Sometimes we experience awful things simply because we live in a world that is falling apart, and we live in a world surrounded by other sinners. Nothing in our world improves on its own, rather, everything is aging and in a state of decline. Things happen.

    Weather postpones an event you have been waiting for.
    You drop your IPod, and the screen breaks.
    Files get lost on a computer the night before a big paper is due.
    You sprain an ankle during practice before sectional playoffs.

Experiences like this are intended to remind believers that this world is not our final home; we have Heaven waiting for us.

- We are in a spiritual warfare.

The Truth: The Chastening of God
– We live in the middle of an epic battle of good versus evil. The desire of God for our lives is to experience good, while Satan longs to make life miserable. (Read John 10:10.)

Here we see the desire and goal of both God and the devil. Satan will do all he can to kill, steal, and destroy us. Sometimes the bad things that happen are because we live on an active spiritual battlefield.

- God’s chastening of our sin.

There are some bad circumstances in our lives that happen due to God disciplining us for sin. God set up rules to be followed in life and He corrects us when we don’t obey. In human relationships, parents are responsible for the training of their children. But with God’s children, He lovingly disciplines His children to bring lasting perfection. God is a loving Father that refuses to allow His children to just live sinfully. (Read Proverbs 3:11-12.)

As we try to understand this better, we must first understand what the word “chastening” means. Chasten means to punish, chastise, or rebuke in order to correct or mold the character of others. You might say it is a heavenly spanking in one form or another. It is important to understand that it is not punishment, but correction and discipline.

You may be wondering what the difference is. Punishment is what we deserve because of our sin – it is the penalty that is associated with our guilt. If you know Jesus Christ as Savior, He has taken your punishment and you will never have to pay that punishment or penalty for sin – He already has. However, God does allow us to feel the sting of the consequences of our bad choices at times so that we will realize that choices have consequences and that we might choose His perfect plan for us.

The writer of Hebrews gives us some context of God’s discipline and shows us why God chastises us when we sin.

**The Purpose of Discipline (Hebrews 12:11)**

*Have a student read Hebrews 12:11.*

A. Discipline makes sin less desirable.

When we get in trouble, it can be serious and crushing. It can be some of our toughest times and darkest days. Yet, it’s a continual reminder that God’s discipline and chastening are always based on the fact that sin can never be overlooked by a holy God. When we sin, God responds. God disciplines those He loves. Repentance is His clear goal. Consequences are a great teacher and a powerful tool to deter us from further sinful choices.

*Have another student read Hebrews 12:11 again.*

B. Chastening perfects us.

Although chastening is no fun, and we might not like it, it has clear benefits for us. This verse shows that when we experience chastening, it increases our understanding of God and develops character. Our desire for sin lessens and the...
passion for holiness grows. God never wastes pain because God’s loving punishment brings your lasting perfection.

What chastening looks like (Galatians 6:7)

A person convicted of murder does not get the same penalty as a person caught going five miles over the speed limit. The crimes are not equal and neither are the consequences. It is much the same in regards to God’s chastisement of sin in the lives of His children.

- **Natural** Consequences.
  - When you kick a wall in anger, you may break a toe. A kid who eats too much junk may get sick. The consequences in some situations could be obvious. Galatians 6:7 warns us that whatever we sow, we will one day reap. *(Read Galatians 6:7.)* We cannot plant a bean seed with hopes of getting a watermelon. We cannot plant bad choices in hopes of getting God’s blessing. We get what we plant. Some of the consequences are obvious and undeniable.

- **Other Varied Consequences**
  - God’s discipline shows up in the lives of His children in a variety of ways.
  - Peter’s denial of Christ – Luke 22:60-62

When Peter caved under the peer pressure and denied he even knew Jesus, Peter was not kicked out of the disciples’ group. His consequence was a night of tears and regret. He left the scene weeping uncontrollably, aching with the thought of his failure *(Luke 22:60-62).* He possibly missed an opportunity to be a witness and testimony of Christ to others.

  - Jonah running from God’s clear command – Jonah 1:1-10

Jonah given clear directions from God to go and preach in Nineveh, went the opposite direction, and God sent a huge storm that could have killed him and everyone on board the boat, but instead he was thrown overboard, swallowed by a huge fish, and had a few days to think things over. Eventually he came to his senses and did what God told him *(Jonah 3:1-4).*

Sometimes it seems like people get off the hook for stupid choices. The length and severity of chastisement is totally up to God. One thing of which you can be sure: God’s loving punishment brings your lasting perfection. He cares for us each individually and so chastens us individually.

The Connection: Receiving Correction Can Protect Me from Future Poor Choices.

In the midst of being disciplined by God, our best plan is not to stiffen up and resist, but to have a teachable spirit. Too often our pride protects us from learning our most important lessons. On the other hand, a teachable spirit can shelter us from broken relationships and countless regrets.

- Rather than boiling in anger at your coach, prove your value to the team by leading the way in sprints.
• Instead of slamming the door in anger at your parents, find an extra job you can do to lighten their load.
• Choose to not bad mouth the teacher for calling you out, but rather humbly apologize for being rude.

While discipline can be discouraging, if we recognize that it can actually make us better people, we will have the ability to endure it with joy. Discipline gives a sense of safety. Its intended result is to detour us from future bad choices. If we embrace the fact that there will be positive results, our whole attitude in the midst of discipline will change. Receiving correction protects you from future poor choices. God’s chastening is in our lives to confirm His great love for us. Let me remind you of one last verse (read Job 5:17-18).

This verse tells us that when we are being disciplined by God, it is always to strengthen us. Don’t ever forget that God’s loving punishment brings your lasting perfection! If we keep a humble attitude and seek to learn what God is teaching us, we will always benefit. Being teachable is critical in life. If we learn to be teachable when corrected, we will find ourselves in some of the most meaningful times in the presence of our Heavenly Father.

The Decision: Will you choose to receive correction?

Remember God’s loving punishment brings your lasting perfection as does most loving discipline in our lives, as long as we have the correct attitude. The only way anyone benefits from discipline in their life is if they will in humility seek to see how it can help them mature.

As you face correction from an authority in your life—whether from parents, teachers, youth leaders, coaches, or God Himself, make it your goal to focus on how it will protect you from future poor choices and cause you to grow.