

The Challenge of God's Discipline

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1 and 2 Kings: Facing Life's Challenges

1 Kings 11:9-25

Almost every adult can look back on their childhood and recall some incident of unfair discipline at the hands of their parents. I remember when I was a child, maybe I was 8 or 9 years old, I was taking a bath and my two older sisters began fighting in their bedroom. I heard my father stomp up the stairs; I heard him smacking my two older sisters; and, then, I heard them crying. It was one of the truly happy moments of my childhood. There are few things that make a child happier than sitting in a bathtub and listening to your siblings getting spanked.

So, I got out of the bath, wrapped my little towel around me, happy as can be. I was walking to my bedroom when I encountered my father and he smacked me and said, "Here's one for you, too!" I burst into tears. I remember running into my bedroom saying, "I didn't do anything. I was in the bathtub. I didn't do anything." It was so unfair.

Most of us have parents who made mistakes, sometimes severe mistakes, in the way they meted out discipline. I was raised in a generation of parents where it was entirely acceptable to use an object, typically a belt, to administer punishment. I remember my dad on occasion taking what we used to call a strap off of his pants, folding it in two, and just whacking us with it. Back in the 1960's that was considered to be normal behavior. As for me, I can't personally imagine striking one of my children with a belt. Most of us can recall a parent using the wrong means of discipline towards us. Some of you may have been screamed at, or cursed at. You might have had a parent who withheld love, or abusively struck you.

And most of us have had parents who used not only the wrong means, but the wrong motives in exercising discipline. A parent was displacing anger from a hard day at work, or from an unhappy marriage. And so the discipline was out of frustration. Or maybe your parent was just exhausted and simply had no toleration for any question or response. They called it "back-talk." Sometimes parents have the wrong purpose in exercising discipline. There was no real end in view other than shutting the kid up so that the parent can continue watching TV.

Of course, today, the very common experience in the home is not overly harsh discipline, but no discipline at all. There are millions of children who are raised today without ever learning limits. They never have discovered the meaning of the word "no." If they heard the word "no" it was never backed up with appropriate consequences. There are millions of parents who do not have the

intestinal fortitude or backbone to stand up to their children, even when their kids are 3-4 years old. And so we have many, many children who are spoiled, or who have been ignored, become a nuisance to everyone else. These kids are likely to grow up as adults who cannot restrain themselves. They do not have any internal self-discipline. They cannot sustain healthy relationships with other adults because they do not respect other adults or their perspectives.

It is obvious to all of us that we human beings need discipline in order to function in a healthy way. But our experience of discipline is often a much distorted experience. The Bible teaches that God, our heavenly Father, disciplines us. God's discipline is unlike the discipline of even the very best parents. If you have a Bible, what I would like you to do, just by way of introduction, is to open to Hebrews 12:5-10.

SLIDE

How does God's discipline differ from our parent's discipline?

SLIDE – Heb 12:5-10

5 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as children? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his child." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate children at all. 9 Moreover, we have all had parents who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! 10 Our parents disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

I would like you to pay attention to Hebrews 12:10,

SLIDE – Heb 12:10

10 Our parents disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

Notice that it says: Our parents disciplined us for a little while as they thought best... In other words, our parents disciplined according to their own whims, according to their own moods, according to what they were comfortable with. But God, our Father, never disciplines us because he is in a bad mood, or because he is frustrated or exhausted. It says in Hebrews 12:10 that God disciplines us for our good. If you have a Bible, I would like you to circle that phrase: for our good – that we may share in his holiness.

God is perfectly loving all the time, even when he disciplines us. He is never less than loving, and he is never less than perfect. God's discipline is always for our

good. There is never a time where God does not intend good for you whatever your circumstances are in life – whether you are experiencing harsh circumstances, or good circumstances. God's ultimate goal in all circumstances is that you and I might share his holiness. In other words, God desires that we be like him. God wants you and me to be whole and healed and freed from all of our addictions. God wants us cleaned up. God wants to put peace inside of us. He wants us to live life the way Jesus did – not wracked with guilt or internal shame, or a divided soul. He wants us to share his holiness.

Today I'm going to continue in a series that I started several weeks ago from the Old Testament book of 1 Kings. We've been looking at the life of King Solomon in a series I've called Facing Life's Challenges. I'm calling today's talk, "The Challenge of God's Discipline."

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:9-13

9 The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. 11 So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. 12 Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

Now in this text we are presented squarely with the issue of the discipline of the Lord against King Solomon for Solomon's sins. But before we look at God's discipline, I want you to get a sense of what was going on in Solomon's life. What we see is that Solomon was wildly successful in virtually every area of his life. He was insanely wealthy. Turn back one chapter to 1 Kings 10:14-18.

14 The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, 15 not including the revenues from merchants and traders and from all the Arabian kings and the governors of the territories. 16 King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each shield. 17 He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold, with three minas of gold in each shield. The king put them in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. 18 Then the king made a great throne inlaid with ivory and overlaid with fine gold.

We read about the gold in Solomon's kingdom. 666 talents, by the way, is according to my NIV text note about 25 tons of gold. I haven't taken the time to calculate the present value of 25 tons of gold, but it is a serious amount of money that Solomon had. He would have been considered like the author of Harry Potter, or the Oprah Winfrey of his day.

And he was not only wealthy, but he was famous.

SLIDE – 1 Kings 10:23-25

23 King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. 24 The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. 25 Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules.

And you could add political power to his wealth and fame.

SLIDE – 1 Kings 4:24-25

24 For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. 25 During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and fig tree.

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that he denied himself nothing by way of pleasure – women, wine, music. Solomon had it all.

But do you know that success in this world doesn't necessarily mean success with God.

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Does success in life mean that God won't discipline?

I simply need to pause here and reflect because we are so often deceived by the state of our relationship with God. Few of us ever ask: How am I doing with God? We think that good circumstances means that our lives are pleasing to God. We think that bad circumstances means that our lives must be displeasing to the Lord. Success in this world does not necessarily mean that you are a success before God. So often we are deceived here: if my job is going well; I'm making a lot of money; I just closed a big deal; I got a promotion; I just moved into the house that I really like; my ministry is expanding – therefore, God must be overlooking my sin. And you can have the whole world by the tail and still not be pleasing to the Lord.

When I tried to think about a contemporary illustration of King Solomon, I immediately thought of Ted Turner, who is certainly one of the most successful men of our generation. He definitely changed the landscape of television news by founding CNN. As a sportsman, Ted Turner won yachting's Americas Cup. As a team owner, his Atlanta Braves won the World Series in 1995 at Turner Field, the stadium named after him. As a philanthropist, he is at the top of the list. At one time he pledged a gift of \$1 billion dollars to the United Nations. Ted Turner is also the largest individual private landowner in the United States. No one other than the American government owns more land than Ted Turner.

Yet Ted Turner has no interest in being pleasing to God. According to a quote in one of my favorite books, *Authentic Faith: The Power of a Fire-Tested Life*, by Gary Thomas, Ted Turner said,

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I am not a religious person. I believe this life is all we have. I'm not doing what I'm doing to be rewarded in heaven or punished in hell. I'm doing it because I feel it is the right thing to do. Almost every religion talks about a Savior coming. When you look in the mirror in the morning, when you are putting on your lipstick or shaving, you are looking at the Savior. You don't have any Savior but you.

And in the same article, he confessed to this reported,

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I can do just about anything except have a successful marriage.

Ted Turner has been through three divorces. Ted Turner has experienced more success than but a handful of people in this country; yet, at a private relationship level and in his relationship with God, he is anything but a success.

And you may be experiencing more success than all but a handful of your relatives, a few of your friends, and yet what we learn from the life of King Solomon is the fact that if we are not currently experiencing God's discipline that God has forgotten. We are not immune from the consequences of our disobedience. Consequences of disobedience, though they are checked by God's grace, are nevertheless really severe.

The prophet Nahum in Nahum 1:3 says this: "The Lord is slow to anger but great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished."

One of the things about God's grace is that he warns us all the time before he exercises his fatherly discipline. We read these words in 1 Kings 11:9-10, "The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command."

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How does God warn us?

God had appeared twice before to Solomon. The first time he appeared to Solomon on Solomon's coronation day. He said to Solomon in 1 Kings 3, "Ask me for anything." There was unlimited promise and potential for Solomon's life on his coronation day. God's intention was to bless his life.

But Solomon did not want blessing solely from the hand of God. He didn't want to do life God's way. So he began to carve out his own path. And the Lord appeared to him again. The second time God's appearance was by way of warning. We read in 1 Kings 9.6: "But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them."

God is saying, "Watch out! You are in danger." God in his grace warns us before he finally executes his judgment and his discipline.

We read these texts about God's anger and we say: Well, that was the Old Testament. That doesn't apply to believers today. We are under a new covenant. As a new covenant believer, I am immune from the consequences of my disobedience and the discipline of the Lord.

Really? Have you considered New Testament texts like:

SLIDE – Galatians 6:7-8

7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. People reap what they sow.

8 Those who sow to please their sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; those who sow to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Or how about:

SLIDE – Ephesians 5:5-6

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

You say: Well, that's the apostle Paul. Paul was sometimes in a cranky mood when he wrote these letters. Clearly, Jesus, who was gentle and meek and mild would never threaten us with discipline for our disobedience.

Really? If we go to the central teaching for Christians in the bible, a portion of scripture that formed the heart of what we Christians ought to be like, the Sermon on the Mount, listen to what gentle Jesus, meek and mild, says to those who are living in disobedience.

SLIDE – Matthew 5:29-30

29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Jesus threatens us with hell. That is not very nice. That is not particularly politically correct. In the same Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us: If we don't forgive, we will not be forgiven by God. And he says that if we judge others, we will be judged.

You say: But, Rich, I am born again. I have prayed the sinner's prayer. I'll get into heaven even if I live a totally selfish life. So what if I never give anything to the poor and I consume all of my money on myself. Are materialism and greed really that bad? Do I really have to forgive everyone for everything – even really bad things, or do I just have to forgive minor things that I don't really care about?

Some of us would be wise to examine the reality of our Christian profession. Saying that we believe does not necessarily mean that you are a saved person. If you do not find in your heart a desire to serve God; if you do not regularly see yourself wanting to obey what God says; if there is very little evidence in your life that you love Jesus or are endeavoring to do his will, then friend, you need to go back to the drawing board and ask yourself: Am I really a Christian?

I think Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount shoot straight at millions of people sitting in evangelical and charismatic churches in America. And Jesus said:

SLIDE – Matthew 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

But let's say you look at your life and you say: I do want to obey God. I am endeavoring to follow Jesus in most areas of my life. I do try to obey the commands of God. But there is this one area that is out of control. There is this one thing that I've not given over to God. There is this big issue that really is unresolved in my life. Does sin really make that big of a difference? I mean, we'll get into heaven anyway, right?

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What difference does sin make in the life of a Christian?

What happens when a Christian sins? When you sin as a Christian, you do not stop being a child of God. In theological language, we would say that your legal standing before God doesn't change. Your status as an adopted child of God doesn't change when you sin. You still retain your membership in God's family. When a Christian sins, we keep our salvation and we keep our adoption.

But we can displease the Lord we claim to love. He tells us that it is possible for us as Christians to grieve the Holy Spirit of God that we claim to want to bless.

SLIDE – Ephesians 4:30

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Even more, we can cause God to be angry.

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:9

9 The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

When a Christian sins against God, we damage our relationship with God and we can lose a sense of God's presence. Have you ever felt, as a result of your disobedience, that your relationship with God has suddenly grown absolutely cold or distant? Some of you are in that position today. As a result of your disobedience to God, it feels like God is a million miles away. See, you cannot enjoy a warm relationship with God while you live in conscious disobedience to God's commands.

SLIDE – 1 John 1:5-7

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

So whatever else you say about your relationship with God, if you are living in conscious disobedience to God, you are lying if you say you feel relationally connected to God. You cannot walk in darkness and say, "I feel the presence of God, who is light."

We do not only displease the Lord, we not only can make God angry, and damage our relationship with God, we can do damage to our Christian lives and fruitfulness, Jesus told us in John 15:4, if you don't stay connected to God, you won't bear fruit

SLIDE – John 15:4

4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

And a Christian who sins can become a slave of sin. Friend, you could be a child of God; you may experience in the end eternal life, but right now you can live as a slave and an addict when you open the door to disobedience. There are many, many consequences for the believer who ignores the warnings of God and

continues to be disobedient. And God does discipline his children for our disobedience.

Let me ask you a personal question: Has God been warning you about any area of your life? Has God been putting his finger on some area of disobedience and saying to you, "I want you to clean this up?" Has the red light on the dashboard of your conscience been flashing, "Danger, danger – if you keep driving in this direction you are going to destroy your life." Is there any red light on the dashboard of your conscience flashing at the warning messages: You have become bitter. You need to let the sin that was committed against you go. You need to open up your hands and your heart and release that offense before God because you are in danger of losing the experience of God's forgiveness altogether. God is going to more and more feel like a stranger to you unless you repent of your bitterness and forgive.

Danger! Danger! It is not just that your emotional affair with someone who is not your spouse might be exposed. It is that God sees you and God is warning you. Your behavior is grieving him and will make him angry enough to discipline you.

Now, you know that one of the ways that God warns us through the correction and confrontations of other people.

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How does God warn us through others?

God does warn us directly by his Spirit; and, God does warn us through his written Word. But one of the chief means that God uses to tell us we are getting off track; we're on the wrong road; there is something that needs to be corrected in our lives is that he speaks to us through other people. And the way that we respond to the correction of other people is, according to the book of Proverbs, a fantastic test of the reality of our faith, and the content of our characters. Someone comes up to you and says, "You know, I'm concerned about your health. You seem to have put on a lot of weight. You don't seem to be paying attention to what you are eating. I'm concerned about you."

"I'm concerned about your drinking, or your use of alcohol. There doesn't seem to be any night where you are not drinking alcohol."

A friend comes up to you and says: "I'm concerned that you are hitting on all the single women in our small group."

Or you are a woman and another woman comes up to you and says, "I need to talk to you about your dress. You are dressing really immodestly. You are drawing undue attention to your body. You are not dressing the way a Christian woman ought to dress."

Or you are flirtatious.

Or a coworker who is a fellow believer says: “You say you are a Christian, but I need to be honest with you and tell you that you are hardly a model employee. You actually work way less hard than lots of people here at work, who are not professing Christians.

Or you are a student and a friend who may not profess to know Christ says: you sure goof off a lot.

A friend says: “You know, you complain a lot about your husband. That is not a good thing. You are dishonoring him.”

“I’ve called you four times; you never call back.”

One way that God warns us about something that is displeasing to him is through your Christian brothers and sisters in the church, through a family member – maybe your spouse or your parents or a sibling, through a coworker or through someone who is not a Christian. Sometimes God gets our attention by someone else coming to us with a word of correction. Are you a correctable person? Can you be approached about a fault and not chew the other person’s head off? Can you be approached about a fault and not sink into depression or sulk or become passive aggressive – smile and be sweet and then get even. Can you be corrected without gossiping about the person who came to you, or making that person pay?

If you can’t be corrected, friends, by another person, if your spouse, or boyfriend, or girlfriend can never say anything to you that calls attention to a fault, if no one else can ever approach you and say, “Here is an area of failing,” then you have become deaf to one of God’s major ways of warning you that there is an area of your life that is displeasing to him.

There is a word that appears in the Old Testament book of Proverbs over 100 times. It is dropped out of contemporary language for the most part. But there is a word that appears over 100 times in the book of Proverbs. It is the word “fool.” In fact, the concept of being a fool is so significant to the authors of the book of Proverbs that they use a number of different Hebrew words to deal with the issue of being a fool. There is a Hebrew word,

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Peti = Simple

Sometimes the Bible writer speaks about Proverbs making wise the simple. This kind of foolish person is a naïve person, a gullible person, a person who is easily fooled by others. The root of this word “peti” connotes the idea of being open, of

being spacious or wide. The idea is that the “peti,” the simple person is still able to be educated and corrected; they welcome instruction. A simple person is trainable, not closed off to the wisdom of God.

But there is a very different kind of fool that we could describe as the “hardened fool.” There are two different Hebrew words that describe the “hardened fool” in the book of Proverbs. One is the Hebrew word:

SLIDE
Kesil

The second word is:

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Ewil

And the picture behind these words seems to be thickness, or fatness. What the writer of the book of Proverbs is getting at is there is a kind of fool that you can describe as thick-headed, or a fat-head, one that you can’t get through to. Proverbs is talking about the hardened, stubborn, obstinate person who will not change her ways; a person who is defending against correction and words of the wise. Proverbs warns against the closed-minded. In the Hebrew Bible the Kesil is the person who is brimming over with self-confidence and self-importance so much so that they refuse to listen to anyone else. They are so sure of the rightness of their position that they can’t hear the voice of God through that other person.

There are many, many warnings in the book of Proverbs against being a fat-head, a hardened fool, an uncorrectable person who is full of themselves. We read about this kind of fool in:

SLIDE – Proverbs 12:15
15 The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Also,
SLIDE – Proverbs 18:12
12 Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.

SLIDE – Proverbs 27:22
22 Though you grind fools in a mortar, grinding them like grain with a pestle, you will not remove their folly from them.

SLIDE – Proverbs 17:10
10 A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool.

The person who will not be broken; the person who will never admit that they are wrong. Know anyone like this? Know any fat-heads? Sometimes we're like this.

What happens when we ignore God's warnings? We just ignore the warning light on the dashboard of our consciences that is flashing, "Danger! Danger!" We refuse to listen to the words of scripture. We will not hear God's gracious warning through friends, family members, coworkers, roommates, or Christian brothers and sisters. We reject prophetic warnings that come to us through dreams, or prophetic words. What happens to us? How does God discipline us?

God is infinitely creative in exercising fatherly discipline. He has everything at his disposal. He can take our peace away. He can take our mental health away. God can touch our bodies. God can touch our finances. God can touch nature itself; he can discipline a city or a nation. And if you want a good scriptural example of the creativity of God's discipline, take a look at Amos 4:6-11.

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How does God discipline us?

One of the greatest tragedies, though, concerning God's discipline is that our kids suffer.

SLIDE

Our children suffer

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:11-13

11 So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

12 Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

We certainly see the negative impact of a parent's undisciplined life on their children. Some of you were raised by parents who were alcoholics. And of course that has had a really big impact on your life – having a mother or father who is an alcoholic. Or having a parent who is undisciplined in their spending habits. You grew up in a home where bills were not paid and you suffered through a foreclosure of your home, or a repossession of your parent's cars or the shutting off of the electric or gas; or not having any food in the house. That was my situation growing up. I can remember going outside and saying, "Dad, where's the car?" And our electric and gas were shut off in the winter and our house was foreclosed on. Parents' lack of discipline does negatively impact kids.

Or if you grew up in a house where dad's pornography was left around the house. That impacted you and your sexuality.

But this principle of kids suffering for a parent's lack of discipline is not just seen at a personal level, it is seen at a societal level. When we lack discipline as a country, it is our kids who experience the harshest consequences.

SLIDE



Let me show you how this works. American society has lost all restraint with respect to our sexual behavior. Pornography is everywhere. Virtually every single television show and movie and magazine article takes it for granted that if a man and a woman are attracted to each other, they will tumble into bed. And there are virtually never any consequences for unrestrained sexual activity on TV or in the movies. Of course there is no mention of God or what he thinks about sex. As a result of this pervasiveness of sexual promiscuity and permissiveness, our kids get involved in sexual activity. Then we bring the hammer down on children. Right now in many states a child can be labeled as a sexual offender at ages as young as 10 and their picture will be put on the Internet for life.

We certainly need protection from all sexual predators, but the age of being labeled as a sexual predator is getting younger and younger in many states. So, for example, in South Carolina pictures of 10-year olds, who are sexual offenders, are on the Internet. There are 3400 pictures of children on the Internet in Texas.

There are tragic stories of this labeling of children. One girl was 11 years old; she fondled her 7-year old brother and was labeled as a sexual offender. Her photo is on the Internet and it will be there for life. An 11-year old boy who completely inappropriately touched a cousin is suicidal. Even though he has been through therapy and the recidivism rate, the repeat rate of sexual offense for children is virtually nil. Unlike adult sexual offenders, the recidivism rate is very, very low. Nevertheless, this 11-year old boy's face is on the Internet. The kids at school make fun of him. He has tried to commit suicide several times.

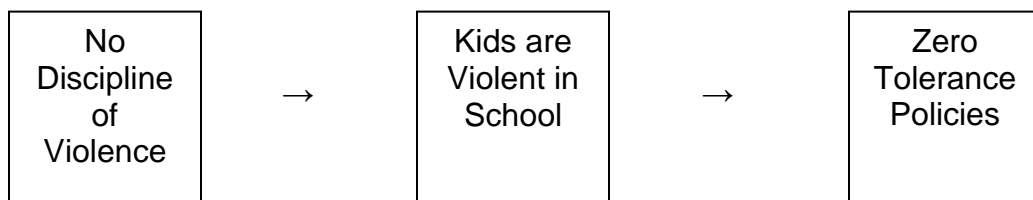
Adults don't discipline our own sexual appetites, so we bring the hammer down on that group in our society that we can control – our children.

Many of you have probably read or heard about the case of Genarlow Wilson, who is serving an 11-year old prison sentence in Georgia for having consensual oral sex with his girlfriend, who was a week shy of 16-years old and he was 17-years old. They sentenced him to prison for 11 years.

There is a court case now involving 12 and 13-year old boys who were running down the hallways slapping girls on their bottoms. They were adjudicated to be sex offenders and their photos were placed on the Internet.

The same thing is true with respect to violence.

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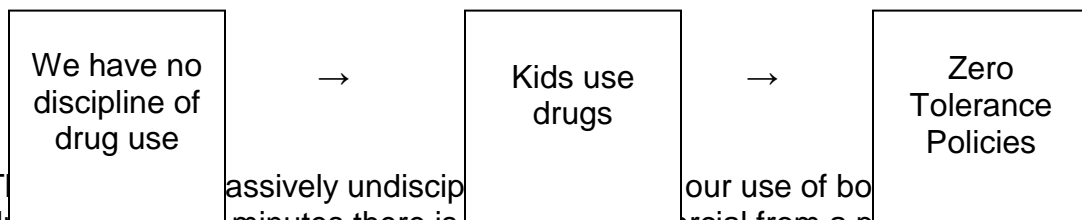


As adults we have absolutely no discipline as a society regarding violence. If you have any sensitivity at all, you can hardly walk into a Blockbuster Video Store any longer. My wife and I love watching movies. But if you just look over the covers of the boxes at Blockbuster, you will see the dominate theme of movies is of the satanic genre, of movies with snakes coming out of people's mouths, with 666 carved into their foreheads with lots of gore. We as a country watch violence as entertainment. We have unrestricted access to guns. We resolve our conflicts through violence. Our kids become violent.

And what do we do? The one place where we can bring the hammer down is on our kids. And so that is what we do. We have zero tolerance policies in school. And we suspend 6-year olds who bring plastic knives to school to cut up their PB&J sandwiches.

Likewise, with respect to drugs:

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There is absolutely no discipline regarding our use of both legal and illegal drugs. Every five minutes there is another commercial from a pharmaceutical company telling you why you need their particular drug in order to live a happy,

healthy, fulfilled life. Kids grow up in a drug-saturated society. They use drugs which leads to a zero tolerance policy in our schools. And children are suspended for giving an aspirin to a friend.

When we adults ignore God's warning, it is not only we who suffer, but our children. Do any of you see that in your lives – that your kids have suffered for your lack of discipline, or for the broader society's lack of discipline?

We can't live with the massive amount of chaos that our actions produce. So we bring the hammer down on our kids.

How does God discipline us? Not only by the pain of watching our kids suffer, but

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Adversaries are raised up against us.

We read in 1 Kings 11:14-18,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:14-18

14 Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom. 15 Earlier when David was fighting with Edom, Joab the commander of the army, who had gone up to bury the dead, had struck down all the men in Edom. 16 Joab and all the Israelites stayed there for six months, until they had destroyed all the men in Edom. 17 But Hadad, still only a boy, fled to Egypt with some Edomite officials who had served his father. 18 They set out from Midian and went to Paran. Then taking people from Paran with them, they went to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house and land and provided him with food.

And in 1 Kings 11:23-25,

SLIDE – 1 Kings 11:23-25

23 And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah. 24 When David destroyed Zobah's army, Rezon gathered a band of men around him and became their leader; they went to Damascus, where they settled and took control. 25 Rezon was Israel's adversary as long as Solomon lived, adding to the trouble caused by Hadad. So Rezon ruled in Aram and was hostile toward Israel.

You know, one of the ways that God can get our attention is by taking away peace in our relationships. If you look around and you say, "You know, I'm experiencing so much conflict in my work relationships, in my home relationships. There seems to be an unusual amount of strife in my life," it may very well be that God is raising up adversaries in order to discipline you. He wants to speak to you about an area of your life.

And you know, friend, again, this does not just apply to us personally. It also applies to us societally and nationally. With respect to this man Hadad from Edom, we read in 2 Samuel 8 that Solomon's father, King David, in the previous generation had slaughtered thousands of Edomites. Here was a young man who had escaped and who was filled with resentment and bitterness towards Israel. When he had an opportunity, he gathered an Army and struck back.

Has it ever occurred to you as an American that some of the world's resentment and attacks on America are the result of American actions a generation ago much as Hadad was avenging the deaths of his countrymen suffered at the hands of King David? For example, we Americans wonder why it is that many citizens of Iran call us "The Great Satan." What's the matter with those folks? Why don't they like us as Americans? We're nice people.

But did you know that back in the early 1950's Iranians in a democratic election voted in a man by the name of Mossadegh as Prime Minister. Mossadegh was a European-educated lawyer. He proceeded to nationalize the Iranian oil fields so that Iran would retain the oil profits of its own fields for themselves. The British, who were going to lose a lot of money, persuaded the Eisenhower Administration to over-throw Dr. Mossadegh. So the CIA engineered a coup and the US installed the Shah of Iran, who over the next 26 years abused, tortured, imprisoned, and killed many, many Iranians. It was not some far-left conspiratorial thinking. This was widely published. In fact, Madeline Albright all but apologized to the nation of Iran for our over-throw of their democratically elected government back in the early 1950's.

In the 1960's, the US engineered a coup in Iraq and through the CIA we brought in the Baathist Party into power. In 1968 after yet another CIA-engineered coup, we set up a man named Ahmad Hassan al Bakr into power. Al Bakr's right-hand man was a young man named Saddam Hussein.

Sometimes God can discipline not just an individual by raising up adversaries, but God can discipline a nation by raising up adversaries. Is God trying to get our national attention?

And finally,

SLIDE

We can lose God's best

God had so much in his heart that he wanted to give King Solomon. Surely, Solomon started so wonderfully. God said to Solomon, "Ask me and I will give you anything that you want." It was in the heart of God to bless King Solomon. But because of Solomon's disobedience, he lost the presence of God in his life.

Piece by piece the kingdom was torn away. And he ended his life far from the Lord.

It is the heart of God to bless you. There are so many great and precious promises in the Bible concerning you, concerning your family, concerning God's loving intention towards you. For example, Jesus said in John 10:10,

SLIDE – John 10:10

10...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

The reason God sent his Son into the world is so that you and I might enjoy a full life in which we experience God's love, God's joy, God's blessing. But we can only experience that kind of life when we live in a surrendered yielded way to God. When we finally come to the place of saying, "Lord, I repent of my disobedience. I don't want to experience your discipline anymore. I yield to you. I surrender to you. Do with my life what you will." Let's pray.

The Challenge of God's Discipline

Rich Nathan

July 28-29, 2007

1 and 2 Kings: Facing Life's Challenges

1 Kings 11:9-25

I. How Does God's Discipline Differ From Our Parent's Discipline? (Heb. 12.5-10)

II. Does Success In Life Mean That God Won't Discipline? (1 Kings 10.14ff)

III. How Does God Warn Us?

A. Old Testament Warnings (1 Kings 9.6, 7)

B. New Testament Warnings (Gal. 6.7, 8; Eph. 5.5, 6; Mt. 5.29, 30)

IV. What Difference Does Sin Make In The Life Of A Christian?

V. How Does God Warn Us Through Others?

A. The Open Fool

B. The Hardened Fool

VI. How Does God Discipline Us?

A. Our Children Suffer

B. Adversaries Are Raised Up

C. We Lose God's Best