
Helping Sons and Daughters

Hebrews 12:12-17

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Introduction What follows are talking points that form a skeleton of discussion as we think together over application to this morning's message. The talk is given not to answer all our questions over parenting and assisting our children away from hell. Rather, it is given to stimulate thought and generate commitments. We want to be inquiring over this topic. And we want to be applying what we see from this topic.

Therefore, our time tonight will be shaped by scripture and aimed at practical implementation.

As you may remember, this morning we taught on Hebrews 12:1-11 to make plain the reality in which our children live. We said that to help keep our sons and daughters from hell would require us to teach them about pain and persecution. In that message, we wanted to clarify and then confront each of us with the truth that all our suffering is under the banner of God's loving discipline. Our pain and suffering in this life are not accidents God responds to and uses somehow. All pain is lovingly designed by our Heavenly Father to discipline each of us unto holiness. That is the reality in which our children live. We must teach them carefully and prayerfully the biblical notion of suffering. We are to do this in order to help our children forge strong convictions concerning God's wise and gracious sovereignty in our pain. This will lead them away from hell and into the arms of the Heavenly Father.

Tonight, we pick up where we left off by offering some practical applications to the above teaching.

Helping Sons and Daughters from Hell

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. Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" spring up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexual immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (Hebrews 12:12-17)

From this text we can glean exhortations and applications that will assist us in helping our sons and daughters.

By helping to strengthen their walk

v.12

- ❖ Weariness in the walk happens and is serious.
 - Notice discouragement when it's present.
 - How do vv.3-11 help us understand the difficulties we/they experience?
 - Talk with your children about God as the loving heavenly Father. Help them to talk about lessons they may be learning through difficulty.

- Help them to understand God’s design for pain.
 - When we settle for less God’s love actively takes away what minimizes our desire for the best.
 - Get a good sense of the biblical teaching of idolatry. Read again James 4:1-10
 - Pray often as you see “drooping” children. Use vv.3-11 as a map and fuel for your prayers.
- ❖ We are to encourage our children when they undergo discipline.
- Consider ways of encouraging your children.
 - One by one, take a walk with your children. This is a great time to consider the difficulties and God’s design in the difficulty. Help them to talk in biblical categories as learned this morning.
 - Play a game with your children. Simply entering into their likes can create opportunities for talk (either then or at a later time).
 - As you hear disappointments, suspend quick fix answers. Learn how to ask your children heart-revealing questions.¹ Aim not to fix their problems but to hear their hearts. Love them, get to know them and then talk with them over the theology of v.3-11 and how it may map over their issues.
 - Peruse the book of Proverbs. Insights will be found like “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad” (12:25) or “a joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (17:22). See “a crushed spirit” as an occasion to get closer to your son or daughter.
- ❖ All our fatherly discipline must reflect our Father’s heavenly discipline.
- Read Ephesians 6:1-4. See the “circle of safety” in the text; “obey...honor...in order that it might go well for you”.
 - Fathers, carefully understand your role according to Ephesians 6:4. We are to “bring them up”. Be active in your children’s lives. Don’t lean unnecessarily on surrogates; youth group, religious schools, grandparents, etc. Watch out for excessive TV viewing, video game playing, etc. as a way to keep your children occupied. Something or someone will “bring them up”. THIS MUST BE YOU.
 - Fathers, also care much over Colossians 3:21 that says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged”. Sinful use of power and authority will hurt and not help your children. Watch your patterns when disciplining. Do they reflect selfish living – “I just want peace and quiet”. Remember; the strong will not love the weak with their strength unless they become mastered by the rule and love of Christ.

¹ D. Powlson’s x-ray questions are most helpful. Ask for a copy of the questions and their related references from the office or talk with your elder.

- Work hard at developing your vision for God-given authority. In light of 2Cor.9:2; Eph.6:4 & Col.3:23, our authority is to stir people to do and be what otherwise would never have been achieved. Be for and not against your children when disciplining.
- Corporal discipline is not to expel anger. If you find yourself out of control over your children's sin, get help. Attend next week's Family Enrichment Retreat. Read the speaker's book "Uprooting Anger". Pick up a copy of *Shepherding a child's heart*; part 2 – *Shepherding through the stages of childhood*. An excellent resource over both objectives and procedures in disciplining your children.
- Rid yourselves of the destructive nature of endless criticism and harsh punishments. Read much the gospels and see Jesus. Watch how he talked and walked with his people.
- Stay consistent in your discipline while staying affectionate in your interactions.
 - After spanking, hold them affectionately, talk to them tenderly, pray with them compassionately. Make sure your children understand their specific sin, their stupendous Savior, what repentance is and how to rest in, rely upon and rejoice over the gospel.²

By helping to steer their way

v.13

- ❖ Correction along the way is crucial.
 - Help your children see that the "path" in which to walk is not a mere set of rules or principles. The "way" is a Person; Jesus Christ our Lord (cf. Jn.14:6). Help them connect their rebellion not to breaking rules but to the beautiful Redeemer. Talk like this. Pray like this. Live life like this. They will begin to see (if it is the Lord permits) what they are missing. This is correction biblically.
 - Insist that you correct yourself first before correcting sons and daughters. Read and think upon Matt.7:1-12. Notice carefully why and how to discipline yourself first.
 - Be cognizant over your children's specific vulnerabilities. Correction removes as much as possible temptations from children. For example, if they are demonstrating insubordination, quick temper, mean spirit and the like – watch their video games as they play (or their DVD's). Notice their assumed identities in the games. See how the characters get their way. Talk about this with them. Remove the video games for a season. Help them focus on others by giving them opportunities to serve others.
 - Develop good ways of accountability. Making straight paths will require hard work. Write out on a 3x5 card disciplines both of you are pursuing. Ask lovingly how your son/daughter is doing. Ask them to ask you the same set of questions.

² Pick up a copy of "The Gospel Primer" by V. Milton. Pastor Dan still has a few copies left. An excellent tool to help us rehearse the gospel to our own hearts first and then to the hearts of our children.

By helping to stimulate their witness

v.14

- ❖ Peacemaking and pursuing holiness are a large part of our witness.
 - Model this for your children. Humble yourself and confess your sins to your children asking them to forgive you. Teach through example. Keep your heart close to Christ in your relationships. If you've been visibly sinning at home in your position as authority (i.e. demanding, harsh, ruling, yelling, sarcastic, aloof, absent, etc.), call for a family gathering in which you confess your sin and seek their forgiveness. Take harmonious relationships and holy living seriously.
 - Help them pursue their own peacemaking attempts. When there is a squabble in the toy room, don't shrug it off as if it doesn't matter. Help them reconcile. When there is a broken relationship at school, help them think carefully over whether or not they have contributed to it. Teach them to go to people and talk about what happened. Help them to take responsibility where needed and don't take responsibility where it is not needed. Teach them that "if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceable with all". Use Romans 12:9-21 as a map to navigate difficult relationships.
 - See conflict as an opportunity to disciple your children rather than a threat to dismantle your ease. Don't love anything more than the Savior. Don't see your life as yours. Rather, you are an ambassador to represent Christ to those who need to reconcile with Him (cf. 2Cor.5:10ff). Your children's conflicts are invitations to get closer to them. Use them this way.

By helping to sober them through warnings

v.15-17

- ❖ Warnings are a means of grace for the elect.
 - Illustrate how warnings help those who pay attention. An example: *caution; slippery when wet*. The wise heed and are safe – the foolish proceed and pay.
- ❖ Discern and discuss the warnings seen in v.15-17.
 - Beware if you think "I'm at peace with God even though my heart is far from God" (v.15). Should you see your children just shrugging off the small sins as though it is no big deal, help them see otherwise. Don't teach them that salvation is merely a decision in the past that has little to do with the present. Teach them lifestyle repentance.
 - Beware if your earthly values eclipse heavenly values (v.16-17). When your sons or daughters chief concerns are material interests and living for the moment, discuss the warnings with them. Watch for flippant attitudes toward the things of salvation. Esau had so little value for the birthright that when he got hungry he sold it for a bowl of cereal.

Undoubtedly, much more could be said over this topic. I'm simply going to ask us to ponder this day of *Keeping our Sons and Daughters from Hell*. Allow it to sober you. Allow it to govern your parenting. Allow it to shape your convictions. Allow it to move you closer to your children. Allow it to clarify your thinking and correct your living.

Conclusion