

Series So Far: The Holiness of the Church

In this series of The Holiness of the Church, we have been discovering God's vision for a holy Church. Each study has built upon the last, revealing how God is calling, shaping and preparing His people to reflect His character and fulfil His purposes in the world.

Week 24 – Called Out, Set Apart: The Holy Assembly: God calls a holy people out of darkness and into His Kingdom.

Week 25 – Christ Loves a Holy Bride: Christ loves, cleanses and prepares His Bride.

Week 26 – Built Together as God's Dwelling: God builds believers together into His dwelling place

Week 27 – One Body, Many Members, One Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit unites every member with a unique place and purpose within Christ's Body.

Week 28 & 29 – Love: The Bond of Perfect Holiness: Love is the visible expression of genuine holiness and the bond that unites God's holy people. God's holiness gives love its purity and God's love gives holiness its beauty.

Week 30 – Holiness and Church Discipline: God's discipline is not rejection but an expression of His holy love, through which He corrects, shapes and restores His children.

Throughout this series, we have learned that holiness is not merely separation from sin. It is the character of God being reproduced within His people.

This week we explore how God's discipline contributes to that transforming work.

Holiness and Church Discipline

The idea of discipline is often associated with anger, punishment, rejection or shame.

In a culture where love is frequently understood as unconditional affirmation, correction and boundaries, can easily be viewed as harsh or unloving. Scripture however, presents discipline very differently—not as the absence of love, but as one of its clearest expressions.

Hebrews 12:6 declares:

“The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

The order of this verse is important. God does not discipline us because He has stopped loving us. He disciplines us because He loves us. His correction is not evidence that He has rejected us; it is evidence that we belong to Him.

To understand God's discipline, we must first understand His character. God is perfectly holy and perfectly loving. These qualities are not in conflict but have always existed together within His eternal nature.

John 1:1 tells us:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Jesus did not begin His existence at Bethlehem. He is the eternal Word who was with the Father before creation.

In John 17:5, Jesus prayed:

“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

Jesus shared the Father’s glory before the world existed and came into human history to reveal God to us. Through His life, we see that God’s holiness never exists without love, and His love never compromises holiness. Jesus confronted sin while welcoming sinners, spoke truth with compassion and corrected His disciples so that they could mature and fulfil their calling.

Because God is holy, He cannot simply ignore sin. Because He is loving, He refuses to abandon sinners. This is seen most clearly at the Cross. God did not lower His standard or pretend that sin did not matter. Sin was judged through the sacrifice of Jesus. At the same time, humanity was not abandoned. Through Christ, forgiveness, reconciliation and new life were made available.

God loves us exactly as we are, but He loves us far too much to leave us unchanged.

A loving parent does not allow a child to continually move towards danger without correction. Love establishes boundaries, teaches wisdom and sometimes says no.

A parent who grants every desire may avoid conflict for a time, but the child will not be prepared for responsibility, relationships or the challenges of life.

In the same way, God’s discipline demonstrates that He has taken responsibility for forming us as His sons and daughters. Hebrews 12 teaches that divine correction is evidence of sonship. The Father has not abandoned His work within us; He is committed to forming the character of Christ in our lives.

“God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.”

Hebrews 12:10:

God may correct us through Scripture, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the loving words of another believer, the consequences of our decisions, a closed door, a delayed answer or a boundary He asks us to accept. At times, His discipline may simply be His answer of “no” or “not yet.”

We often find it easier to trust God when His answer agrees with our desires. Yet God sees what we cannot see and understands what will ultimately produce life within us. His refusal may be protection. His delay may be preparation. His boundary may prevent us from entering something that would harm us.

Mature faith learns to receive both God’s yes and God’s no. Prayer is not a way of commanding God to fulfil our desires. It is bringing our desires honestly before Him while trusting His wisdom and authority.

Pastor Samuel used the life of David to demonstrate that difficulty does not necessarily mean we have missed God’s will.

David was chosen and anointed to become king, yet the path towards the fulfilment of that promise involved rejection, danger, betrayal and waiting.

David could have concluded that his hardship proved God had not called him. Instead, he learned to strengthen himself in the Lord. The wilderness did not cancel his calling; it prepared him to carry it. Through those difficult years, David learned dependence, perseverance, restraint, mercy and trust. God was not only preparing a throne for David; He was preparing David for the throne. In the same way, God may use uncomfortable seasons to form Christ within us. Trials reveal what is in our hearts.

Not every hardship is a direct result of sin, and we should be careful not to assume why suffering has occurred. Nevertheless, God can use every circumstance to mature His children.

Hebrews 12:11 acknowledges:

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.”

God does not ask us to pretend that correction, disappointment or waiting feels easy.

The question is not whether discipline is painful, but whether we allow ourselves to be trained by it.

We can resist correction, defend ourselves and blame others or we can humbly ask:

- Lord, what are You teaching me?
- Is there something I need to confess?
- Is there an attitude You are changing?
- Is there a boundary I need to accept?
- How are You forming the character of Jesus within me?

God also forms us through the Body of Christ. A holy Church is not maintained only through inspiring sermons or passionate worship. It is strengthened through loving accountability, biblical correction, repentance, forgiveness and restoration.

A holy Church is not maintained only through inspiring sermons or passionate worship. It is strengthened through loving accountability, biblical correction, repentance, forgiveness and restoration. These are among the means God uses to shape His people into the likeness of Christ.

A Church that refuses to acknowledge sin will eventually struggle to clearly proclaim salvation. If sin is never recognised, the necessity of the Cross becomes unclear. Yet correction must never be harsh, proud or controlling.

Biblical discipline reflects the character of the Father. It tells the truth with compassion and seeks restoration rather than humiliation.

Spiritual maturity is not simply measured by how much Scripture we know, how gifted we appear or how confidently we speak. It is revealed in our willingness to remain teachable and allow God to transform us.

Hebrew 12:6 declares, “Whom the Lord loves He disciplines.” God does not discipline because he has stopped loving. He disciplines because He loves.

God’s correction is not rejection; it is His loving investment in our future.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus is the eternal Word who shared the Father's glory before the world began.
- Through Jesus, we see the holy and loving character of the Father.
- Because God is holy, He cannot ignore sin.
- Because God is loving, He refuses to abandon sinners.
- Discipline is a meeting place of God's holiness and love.
- God does not discipline us because He has stopped loving us; He disciplines us because He loves us.
- Divine correction is evidence that we belong to the Father.
- God disciplines us for our good so that we may share in His holiness.
- Grace does not lower God's standard; it raises us towards it.
- God's no, not yet or closed door may be an expression of His wisdom, love and protection.
- Hardship does not necessarily mean we have missed the will of God.
- God may use trials and waiting to prepare us for what He has called us to carry.
- Discipline becomes fruitful when we allow ourselves to be trained by it.
- The intended result of God's discipline is righteousness, peace and Christ-like character.
- A holy Church practices loving accountability, correction, repentance, forgiveness and restoration.
- Spiritual maturity includes remaining humble, teachable and willing to receive correction.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Hebrews 12:5–11. What does this reveal about the purpose and motivation behind God's discipline?
2. Hebrews 12:6 says that the Lord disciplines those He loves. Why do we sometimes interpret correction as rejection? How does this verse challenge that understanding?
3. How can we respond when the Holy Spirit, Scripture or another mature believer reveals an area that needs to change? What attitudes help us remain teachable?
4. Is there an area of your life in which God may currently be saying no, wait, stop or change direction? What might it look like to receive His direction as an expression of love?

This Week's Challenge

Each day this week, set aside a few quiet moments and pray:

"Father, thank You for loving me enough to correct me. Show me where You are forming the character of Jesus within me."

Scripture Memory Challenge

"The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."
Hebrews 12:6 (NIV)