

40.day 2020

IN THE LONG RUN

WEEK 5: FINAL LAP

JULY 28

DIVINE DISCIPLINE

Hebrews 12:6-11 | For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. ⁷ ...What son does a father not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, in which all have shared, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ We had fathers in the flesh who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more submit to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed right to them. But he does it for our good that we might share his holiness. ¹¹ All discipline seems painful rather than pleasant for now. But later on, it produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who have been trained by it.

Pain is gain. The school of suffering educates for eternity (SØREN KIERKEGAARD). But the Hebrews are so weighed down with care that they have forgotten that familiar proverb on Divine Discipline: *My son, don't take the Lord's discipline lightly, and don't lose heart when you are corrected by him* (PROVERBS 3:11-12).

Reasons for Divine Discipline: One, because we are God's children. Two, because he loves us. Three, because discipline is an essential part of any training. God is raising up many sons and daughters in the same way he brought up his Firstborn Son: *Via Dolorosa*, the way of suffering (HEBREWS 5:8-9). God uses suffering to train us in his righteousness (PROVERBS 22:6). There is no shortcut to glory. If we suffer with Jesus, we will be glorified with him (ROMANS 8:17).

God didn't engineer the coronavirus. It's a corruption of his good creation (ROMANS 8:20-21). Nor did God instigate the persecution of the Hebrews. But when such things happen, God uses them to train us in his holiness. And to spank us when we need it—for our own good. Because he loves us.

Rewards of Divine Discipline: One, eternal life from the Father. Two,

a share in God's holiness. Three, the peaceful produce of right-living (HEBREWS 12:10-11). *Those who suffer best will enjoy the most peace, for they are masters of themselves, lords of the world, with Christ for their friend, and heaven for their reward* (THOMAS À KEMPIS).

In other words, the reward of discipline is character. *The object of life is not prosperity as we have been made to believe, but the maturity of the human soul* (ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN).

Responses to Divine Discipline: One, take it to heart. Two, endure it patiently. Three, submit to the Father. We respected our fathers in the *flesh* who gave us biological life and disciplined us in ways that seemed good to them. Much more then, let us submit to the Father of *spirits* who gave us spiritual birth and trains us to live in the City of God. Therefore, flex those flabby muscles. Firm up those feeble knees. And pace yourself—for the long run.

PRAYER TRACK

■ Grow up. *My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him... God is treating you as sons* (HEBREWS 12:5, 7). Be humble. Be broken. Be teachable. Ask for wisdom to recognise the fatherly love of God expressed through painful discipline. *As many as I love, I convict and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent* (REVELATION 3:19).

■ Line up. Divine discipline is God's way of training us in holiness and righteousness. To whom much is given, much more is required (LUKE 12:48). Stand in identification with our Father's beloved sons and daughters serving in key arenas of public influence such as Government and Leadership, Communications and Media, Economy and Business, Arts and Entertainment, Culture and Youth, Education and School, Church and Community. Face the music: Have we ignored the plumbline of Truth? Have we played the games of the godless?

Have we opened the door for evil to undermine public morality? Have we compromised our values of integrity, service, and excellence? Have we boasted in our own reasoning and resources? Have we rightly represented God *who delights in and practises steadfast love, justice, and righteousness* (JEREMIAH 9:24)? For our own good and for the long-term good of Singapore, ask God to step in and chasten where chastening is needed.

■ Straighten up. *Singaporeans excel in many things. Top on the list is government bashing! Nobody in the world can beat us on that one* (LAWRENCE CHUA). This chronic murmuring must stop. Ingratitude turns us into abusive rebels. Ingratitude leads to reprobate minds. Ask God to do what he must to save us and future generations from toxic ingratitude. He knows the state of every soul. Trust his Father heart to prescribe the disciplinary action that best suits each precious child he loves so dearly. Pray.

■ Wake up. You've seen it with your own eyes. Digitally-distracted parents, indulgent and permissive, let their kids rule the world. You've heard it with your own ears: Free the young to do their thing. May we discern their real need for discipline more than their felt need for freedom. Neuroscience tells us that up until age 25, young people do not have the ability to *curb impulsive behaviour, assess risks, exercise good judgment, and make long term plans* (BIGTHINK.COM). The Hong Kong anarchy led by defiant youth, in the name of freedom, is a case in point. Beware laissez-faire parenting. Beware casual Christianity. When we fail to discipline misguided youth, we grieve God. We destroy their lives. We wreck society. We bring down a nation. May we all come to our senses. May we prove our love by disciplining our sons and daughters. May the Church fulfill this sacred trust with the Father heart of God. This is Discipleship 101. No apologies. Pray strong. Act in love. *Love never fails* (1 CORINTHIANS 13:8).