

# You are my father who disciplines me.

Message 7: [You are my anchor series](#).

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## Introduction to the message and these series

On 14 August 2022 when the word of the Lord came to me to preach a series of 12 messages called "You are my Anchor" I was to paint for the saints an intimate portrait of our God who loves us very much! Now it is the Lord himself who gave me the subject of the 12 messages I was to preach but this particular message on discipline seems strange to be in a series about God's love! How is discipline an example of his love?

Knowing that Christians like you and I would wonder the same or even struggle to understand how God's discipline is evidence of love, the Lord has provided us with such assurance when the Holy Spirit inspired this to be written in Hebrews 12:

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."*

*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? Hebrews 12: 5-7 (NIV).*

This verse shows that God disciplines the one he loves – who he accepts as a child, just like earthly children are disciplined by their earthly fathers. We should therefore not lose heart!

The verse then shows that one of the ways God disciplines his children is through hardship or suffering.

Now God, my father who loves me and thus disciplines me has done it in at least 3 ways:

1. Rebuke
2. Warning
3. Long suffering/hardship.

In this message I will share how the Lord uses these 3 to demonstrate his fierce love for us.

To however start to understand God's discipline, its purpose and eventually how we can endure during seasons of suffering it helps to understand the meaning of "chasten" used in Hebrews 12.

According to the dictionary, similar words, or phrases to help understand "chasten" include:

1. *Rebuke or misfortune that have a restraining or moderating effect on someone.*
2. *To subdue, to humble, to bring down, to deflate, to flatten.*

Thus, we can see that this discipline seems to be achieving an effect of humbling or bringing down someone from a high place. Now this is good news, great news if you know God and his ways for the Bible says: *God stands against the proud, but favors the humble. James 4: 6 (CEB).*

If you therefore want to participate in God's kingdom, be humble. One of the ways he uses to make us humble is through discipline – including hardship. Isn't this therefore good news, when God our father disciplines us, hard as it seems to take?

Many Christians of course struggle to understand how suffering can be an example of a loving God and some even wonder if all suffering is from God. This message will also cover that and then give us strategies on how to patiently endure during such seasons.

### **Three ways that the Lord disciplines us**

As I narrated in the introduction, God, my father who loves me, has disciplined me in a few ways and some three examples I can share for you to learn from are:

#### **1. Rebuke (from the Holy Spirit).**

"PUT THEM BACK!" I once heard the Holy Spirit tell me severely. Sometimes a rebuke from the Lord, painful as it might be - is the best medicine for a Christian. Now, some people do not know that Lord loving as he is, can also be severe or tough and he once told a church: *"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."* Revelation 3:17 NIV

Ouch - that has got to hurt! It was a rebuke, a tough one YET it was said in love because the person who hears the Spirit and humbles themselves and repents will find life.

I myself have been rebuked a few times by the Lord, who is the Spirit. For example, on 1 March 2023 I was quite angry at some 2 people in a Bible reading class I was leading. They had been privileged to be called by the Lord to read the entire Bible but they never responded to my messages, never posted updates, never communicated. I was basically wondering, why did they even join in the first place! So, I removed them from the class WhatsApp group! Oh oh! I have never heard the toughness of the Holy Spirit! He told me, "PUT THEM BACK!"

I was ashamed, and I repented. I thus learnt that if the Lord never judges something before it's appointed time, neither should I (See 1 Corinthians 4:5).

#### **2. Warning from the Lord.**

I once received a very scary warning from the Lord when I failed to do what he commanded me. I narrate it here:

*"After 20 years as a prodigal son, I had a radical encounter with Jesus and got baptized. I was then hidden for a few years, reading the Bible. Then the word of the Lord came to me: "Create a [global Christian testimony website](#), with verified stories." I got scared because the task was too big and so I procrastinated for 2 years until the word of the Lord came to me a second time: "Mamayi (my native name), what if this was the last Saturday you ever had to speak to my people?" Tears filled my eyes. I replied: "Sovereign Lord, If I had 24 hours before you called me home, I would weep. You told me to finish the testimony website and I have not finished it. Oh forgive! Give me more time to do this.""*

This story is showing that the Lord was warning me that if I did not do what he asked me to finish, he would take me away from this earth. This gentle warning had the intended effect - I woke up from my slumber to do the work I was privileged to have been called to by the Lord. Such warning as discipline is consistent with the Bible as an example, the Lord says:

*"I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference." Revelation 3:19 (NLT).*

### **3. Long suffering/hardship.**

Over the years that I have walked with the Lord, I have experienced several hardships. For example, it took over 5 years for me to live together with my wife as a family. During those 5 years, I had to endure the suffering of being separated from them. Then early on in my walk, the Lord deliberately emptied my finances – so he could teach me how to manage money better. Finally in some job roles, he sent a messenger of Satan to “torture me” so as to keep me humble. Such hardship, I could discern was not because of any sins, but it was part of my training in righteousness and this is why as an example, Paul while suffering several hardships said:

*We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. 2 Corinthians 1: 8-11 (NIV).*

In this passage we see that Paul endured hardship and this humbled him to rely on God – rather than on himself. It also helped him to have hope, not in himself and his abilities but on God – who brings dead things to life. This is the kind of fruit the Lord wants his saints to mature in.

### **What is the purpose of discipline from God?**

1. **Humility.** It helps us achieve humility. This discipline keeps you reliant on God and is like purification, so you die, to yourself – that is relying on the flesh. It is why Paul says: *“But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”*
2. **Holiness.** God uses discipline to purify his saints to become like gold or silver which to remove the impurities, is taken through the refiner’s fire. He does this so we can be acceptable to him (see Malachi 3:3).
3. **Pruning - to bear more fruit.** Discipline through hardship/suffering is a form of pruning so that we can be more fruitful for God’s purposes (See John 15:2). This is critical for we know that anyone who does not bear good fruit, he will cut down and throw into the fire (See Matthew 7:19).

## Is all suffering from God?

We have seen from various scriptures presented in the previous parts of this message that indeed suffering or hardship can be discipline from God for a son in whom he is pleased, BUT is this always the case?

From reading the scriptures, some suffering is not always about discipline but:

1. **A global curse.** Some suffering we humans suffer is not discipline from God. It is simply a result of the curse of sin which came on this world at the fall and so is a sort of “punishment” or creation groaning under the curse (Romans 8: 22). This is how earthquakes, forest fires, famine, war, mass shootings and similar disasters come and affect both the righteous and the unrighteous and they have nothing to do with the righteousness of the individual suffering (see Luke 13: 1-5).
2. **Personal sin.** Some suffering is simply a result of your “own sin” rather than “innocent suffering” that many faithful saints suffer. Examples of this could be – when one breaks the law and gets punished, perhaps even jailed (See 1 Peter 4:15-16). In such cases, this is not necessarily the discipline or pruning the Lord is speaking about.

Considering the above and those Christians who particularly struggle with the concept of how a loving God can “punish” or discipline his children through hard ship and suffering, some of which goes on for years or even a life time, the comfort I can provide, as I received from the Lord is that:

1. In the beginning, when God created the Heavens and the Earth, everything was perfect and there was no suffering.
2. As a result of the fall of man, sin came into the world and with that, suffering came along and now ALL creation is under a curse – and part of the effects of this curse result in the suffering we see, including from Satan, the prince of this world.
3. God in his gracious kindness to sinful man has however provided that *all things work for the good of those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8: 28)* and so he uses suffering to purify the saints, to help them become humble.
4. At the end of it all there *“shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” Revelation 21: 4 (KJ21)* and so we can endure patiently, knowing that what we go through is only temporary.

Knowing that any discipline through suffering or hardship is temporary, even if as a result of our own sin, we can like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, pray for God to remove the cup of suffering. If it is not possible or within his will at the time, we should then patiently endure it – for God is pleased when you and I endure unjust treatment (1 Peter 2:20).

## How do we endure through seasons of suffering?

Some of the ways the Lord has taught me to endure suffering are below:

### **1. Have a correct theology or understanding about suffering.**

This entire message has been to give you a correct understanding or theology of suffering. Many Christians for example get angry at God and thus lose faith in him when they do not understand the role of suffering as a form of discipline from the Lord. Suffering CAN be good news – for it teaches one humility, it prunes one to bear more fruit and it helps one to be purified like gold and silver in a refiner’s fire. Many righteous men and women of God suffered – through no personal sin. Job is one

example. David suffered for a long time under the hands of Saul. Jesus also suffered for our sakes, even if he knew no sin.

## **2. Pray expressive prayers.**

Because Christians are not fully immune to the curse in the world and the suffering which comes, it is why we need to continually pray. Scriptures like Psalm 91 are our prayer to God and can be a basis for asking him to come in to protect us when the enemy comes. We can also have comfort that the only assurance of 100% removal of suffering will come at the end of time when God makes all things new and that is why in the meantime we pray as the Lord taught us: *“let your kingdom come.”*

When suffering, pray your sorrows, with expression. As an example, Jesus offered **loud** prayers to God and because of his deep reverence for God, God heard him (See Hebrews 5:7).

What did Jesus pray? He prayed angry psalms or psalms of lament like psalm 22 and many other psalms of David like psalm 56 and psalm 143.

If Jesus prayed expressively, do not be afraid to pray psalms of lament or even to express your anger to God. Expressing your feelings during prayer is thus a great start to eventually overcome.

## **3. Get wisdom and discernment about your hardship.**

If you are struggling to see why you are suffering, you might need the Spirit and the help of people full of the Spirit and Wisdom. This is to help you discern within which category your own suffering falls (e.g., discipline from God – even when righteous, a global curse or personal sin).

**4. Sing songs to God.** The songs you sing are one way to come out of the pain of disappointment. Examples of songs to sing are not only songs of lament but also songs of joy for the scriptures say: *The joy of the Lord is your strength Nehemiah 8:10*. During time of sorrow, it is okay to rejoice always. Not about the suffering, but about God – who makes all things new in his time.

**5. Memorize an anchor verse.** The word of God about a particular situation or to help you endure should be an anchor, a sure foundation for you when you are going through pain/suffering/hardship.

Examples that have helped me include:

- **Psalm 56:3:** *When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.*
- **Joshua 1:9:** *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*
- **Isaiah 40:31.** *but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

The purpose of these anchor verses is just that – they ANCHOR you or stabilize you in a storm such that in a spiritual battle (which takes place in your mind) you can raise them as your shield of faith (see Ephesians 6) when the attack of the enemy comes – such as to falsely claim that perhaps God is not as good or merciful as he says and is the one punishing you.

These anchor verses should ideally be part of your regular Bible reading for we know that *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10: 17)*.

## **6. Financial hardship: Plan, diversify, have an emergency fund.**

Many of us face suffering because we do not plan when we for example undertake business, then we suffer the consequences. Others do not think about preparing during seasons of bumper harvest for the lean years of famine. The Lord once even gave me a warning dream about this – about the need to create an emergency fund. Still others do not think to diversify their investments – so when their one investment fails, they suffer the consequences of financial hardship.

As I said earlier, we live in a fallen world which is under a curse and so to help us, the bible shows as an example that we can manage the suffering, particularly of financial hardship. We could do some of the following:

- **Plan.** Before you undertake something, “count the cost.” *For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? – Luke 14:28*
- **Diversify.** You cannot tell which business will prosper and which one will fail so expand/diversify your business ventures and do not put all your eggs in one basket. *Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land. Ecclesiastes 11:2.*
- **Emergency funds.** Many Christians suffer because during “good times” or “summer” they do not put in place wise measures to save and thus reduce the impact of suffering during the “hard times” or “winter.” Examples of such wisdom mean one should get life insurance, get medical insurance, save 3-6 months in a rainy-day fund and set aside money for disasters and other people’s welfare. The Bible says this: *Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest. – Proverbs 6:6-8*

## Conclusion

God as a father who disciplines you and I might be the BEST thing the Lord does for you. Often this discipline comes through hardship. Through discipline he is confirming you are a beloved son, so REJOICE when you pass through this testing.

A son who has been disciplined is even more grounded or anchored in God and his love because it helps that son to be humble and to rely on God alone - not on themselves. When humbled through the refiner’s fire, you will truly say: “God ALONE is my anchor” not “God is one of my anchors.”

Humility and discipline going hand in hand help you know you have no other help but God in this temporary tent of a body. Until then, we look forward to the ultimate comfort - when God will wipe away every tear and thus whether we are disciplined as a child of God or it is the result of our sin and that of our forefathers- we hope in God our anchor who will eventually remove this curse.

Oh Lord Jesus, surely, we cry, Maranatha!!

## The Message Jesus wants me to pass on to you

In this world where creation is under a curse and is groaning, we the sons of God must often endure suffering as part of our discipline from God the loving father. We can however take comfort that our Lord Jesus suffered to give us a pattern for enduring patiently.

Jesus came to this earth as a human being like us. He however lived a perfect and holy life, doing everything in accordance with God's will for him – this included suffering at the hands of sinful men and dying a shameful death on the cross.

This Jesus however did not suffer forever because after being dead for 3 days, he rose again by the power of the Spirit and he went up to heaven, where he is now seated at God's right-hand side, having successfully endured and won the victorious crown. While we wait for him to come and restore all things, as he promised, he has given those who believe him, the gift of his Holy Spirit – as a deposit and a guarantee that he will come again and take us to himself. This is the hope we hold on to – like an anchor.

Do you believe this? If you believe this and want to make the Lord your anchor even in suffering as a form of discipline, then pray this prayer to become a Christian:

*"God of heaven, I confess that I am a sinner and have been one since birth, but I have heard that you can make me new, and you sent your son Jesus to die for me. He rose again and it is he who can give me his Holy Spirit. Please forgive me and welcome me into your Kingdom, teach me how to follow you. In Jesus' name, Amen"*