



A SURE SIGN OF LOVE

KEY SCRIPTURE | Habakkuk 3:16–19

SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 2017

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Though the words are often used interchangeably, there's an important distinction between discipline and punishment that can help make sense of how God is working in our lives.

Punishment is God acting as judge. It's the ticket you got for speeding, the grounding your kid got for sneaking out, the reason the Israelites who left Egypt never entered the Promised Land. It's the direct result of disobedience. You did something wrong, and you need to face the consequences.

Discipline is different. It's God acting as father. It isn't a result of His anger—it's proof of His love. It's the strength you gain from struggling with mental illness, the faith you build by trusting God when your son has cancer, the reliance on God you develop when you lose your job. God is using difficult circumstances to refine your character, to make you more like Jesus.

Whether your circumstances are due to punishment or discipline, God can use them to teach you a lesson, to make you a better version of yourself—closer to the man or woman He created you to be. But it won't happen by accident. When you're in that place, seek Him. Ask Him to show you what He wants you to learn. When you're looking for the answer to that question, your focus shifts. You become aware, expectant, and ready to see how God will redeem your situation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Looking back at your notes from Sunday's message, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Talk about why kids need punishment and discipline.
3. Have you ever used your circumstances as a measure of God's love for you? Is it a good gauge?
4. How can you tell the difference between discipline and punishment?
5. Read Hebrews 12:4–11. How does God use discipline and punishment to grow us?
6. Read Genesis 42:36. How did Jacob view his situation? Read Genesis 50:20. How did he view the situation? Why is your attitude important when you're being disciplined or punished?

CHALLENGE

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where there's disobedience in your own life. If He shows you something, write it down, confess it, and ask Him to help you be obedient.

