

## God's Discipline

*This is a teaching written several years ago by Chaplain Bess Maloy ("Mom," to many inmates). It is still just as relevant as ever.*

As God's children, we all need to learn that God disciplines those whom He loves, and He punishes everyone that He regards as His Child. If you turn to the book of Revelation you will see that the Lord says, "I continually discipline and punish everyone that I love, so I must punish you, unless you turn from your indifference and become enthusiastic about the things of God" (Rev 3:19 TLB) If we examine the text, we find that these are words that the Lord spoke to the "lukewarm" church at Laodicea.

Does this statement sound strange and out of keeping with your idea of the character of God? Sometimes I hear people say that God is love, and He would never punish people, but this is not true. *God is a loving Father, and He corrects His children. Only irresponsible parents leave children to fend for themselves.*



*Would you prefer an irresponsible God? God is doing what is best for us, training us to live God's holy best. At the time, discipline isn't much fun—but later it pays off handsomely, for*

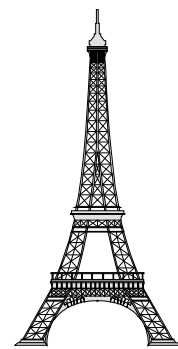
*those who are well trained find themselves mature in their relationship with God and other people.*

The previous words were taken from Hebrews, in The Message Bible. The Living Bible says, *Let God train you, for He is doing what any loving father does for his children. Whoever heard of a son who was never corrected? If God doesn't punish you when you need it, as other fathers punish their sons, then it means that you aren't really God's son at all—that you don't really belong to His family. (Hebrews 12:7-8 TLB)*

If we slip off the straight and narrow path that the Lord has called us to walk on, the Holy Spirit will

give us a warning signal that we need to draw closer to the Lord. My aunt used to say to us when we got out of line, "You get three blows on the wrist," which was a very light punishment that she used to give her students when she was a school teacher. However, we will find that if we don't straighten up and fly right, God will send us through a much harder trial to help us learn what His will is for us. If we want to stay in the will of God, we have to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and obey what He commands us to do.

In my life I have found that God has a very subtle way of showing me the faults that He wants me to get rid of. He does this by placing me with people who have the same bad habits that I have. Even though I like these people, I have difficulty getting along with them. The similar faults that we share keep us from having a peaceful relationship. For example, my friend Ruth and I were traveling by car together with a group of other friends in Europe. Time after time Ruth would run off by herself on some adventure, without telling anybody, and we would be left marking time, unable to continue with our trip for the day. This was a selfish and inconsiderate way for her to act, because it upset everybody's plans. We would fume and fuss at her, but still she continued acting in this way. Through her behavior, the Lord began to show me that I had a tendency to act this selfish way, and He did not want me to continue to do it. Due to my continued relationship with Ruth, I was able to recognize several faults I had that were hindering my walk with the Lord Jesus. Gradually I was able to learn, as God showed me through others, where I needed to change. Sometimes I was placed with people who wanted to take charge and have everything done their way. These people were hard for me to get along with. It seemed that the Holy Spirit was saying, "Of course



you can't get along with that person because she is bossy, just like you are. You both want to control everything and have things your way." He reminded me that I had asked Jesus to be Lord of my life, and I needed to surrender more completely to Him, to change myself, and not let people like this bother me so much.

If you will watch carefully the kind of people the Lord puts you with, and which ones are difficult for you to get along with, you can learn in what areas you need to change. Look at such relationships as a challenge. Ask the Lord to show you what it is in the person's character that rubs you the wrong way and ruffles your feathers so much that you are ready to fight and argue. God has placed you in this situation for a reason. He wants you to overcome that particular fault that is being revealed to you. I have found that if I do not listen to what is being revealed to me and obey what God is trying to show me, He puts me in increasingly difficult situations until I get the point and obey His command to change.



However, this isn't the only way God helps us to change. He invites us to spend time with Him each day in prayer, worship, and reading the Bible. As we spend more and more time with the Lord Jesus we gradually become more like Him, until our lives begin to reflect a little of the glory of God. We pray that someday we will be completely renewed from the inside out, so that people will see Jesus in us. As for me, I don't profess to have arrived. God is still working on me.



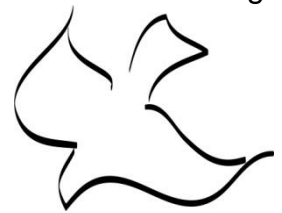
Jesus says, *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."* (John 15:1-2 NIV).

Just what is this fruit that Jesus is talking about? Part of it is described in Galatians 5:22-23, *...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law.* Turn back in your Bible to the analogy about the vine in John 15. You will see that it says, *"Abide in*

*me. and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in me."* We have to stay firmly attached to the vine if we want to produce fruit, because fruit does not appear instantly. It has to develop slowly from the bud to the flower to the fruit. That is why we have to abide in Jesus, so that the fruit has time to grow and develop. I like the comment Joyce Meyer makes about this Scripture. She says, "The verse says, 'Abide in me.' That means live in me, not just go for a visit once in a while."

If we choose to abide in Jesus, and continue to look into His face through His Word, we will grow more and more like Him and even reflect a little of His glory. It is then that people begin to see Christ in us. I have to admit that I haven't yet arrived. God is still working on me. He shows me new things every day.

Let me give you an example, from the Bible, of what living with Jesus can do. When Peter and John were brought before the leaders and elders of Israel because they had healed the cripple at the Beautiful Gate, the elders noticed how confident and bold they were and what a great command they had of the Scriptures. The Bible says, *When the Council saw the boldness of Peter and John and could see that they were obviously uneducated nonprofessionals, they were amazed and realized what being with Jesus had done for them.* (Acts. 4:13 NIV). We too will grow just as the disciples did, if we take the time every day to draw close to Him. As the character of Jesus gradually begins to develop in us, we will be able to proclaim the Good News boldly, and the Holy Spirit will begin to give signs and wonders to strengthen our ministry.



May God be with you as you seek to determine His will for your life.

In His love,

*Mom & Dad*

Chaplains Ray and Bess Maloy



# Why Love One Another

By Mary Carothers

**In John 5:12, Jesus commanded us to love each other.** Have you ever wondered why He did so? He didn't *suggest* that we care deeply about our brothers and sisters in Christ, He commanded that we have love for each other. Jesus felt it was so important that He repeated the command in verse 17. The apostles also spoke of this need to love other Christians (see Paul in Galatians 5:14, John in his letters, and Peter in I Peter 4:8).

This command was stressed, I believe, for several reasons.

**For one, love is to be the hallmark of Christians. This is how the world — the unsaved — will know that we are Jesus' followers. This is the proof, as it were, that we are part of God's family. Our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ is evidence that Christ is being formed in us.**

Another reason is that we get enough hate from the world. Jesus told us plainly in John 15 that since the world hated Him, it would also hate us. By "world" Jesus meant the unsaved, particularly those who scoff at the need for salvation — those who feel they are as good as anyone in the church. (And, you know what? They are as good. We all are in need of redemption). Sometimes this hate is evidenced in something as simple as scornful laughter at Christians.

At other times it can be violent abuse, sometimes even mob spirit. Wherever hate is manifested toward Christians, we can be sure that Satan is behind the words and actions, energizing the attack.

Still another reason Jesus commanded us to love one another is that it is so much easier to criticize and find fault with others than to cover them with the love of Christ.

Too often I hear wives criticizing their husbands, or husbands making fun of their wives. Whatever the reasons, when we criticize our spouses, we are doing exactly what Satan wants us to do. **Jesus, on the other hand, wants us to love *all* of God's family, and that includes our husband or wife, parents, children and siblings. He wants us to cover each other with His love. Above all else, love one another, for love covers many sins (I Peter 4:8).**

Jesus told us that a divided kingdom *cannot* stand. This is true in our local church body, our family, or our nation. Satan wants to divide us with criticism and gossip. But God wants to strengthen us and build us up. He wants Christ to be formed in us.

We are engaged in spiritual warfare. The slogan, "The devil made me do it," may be humorous, but it is not completely true. We are not helpless pawns, moved against our wills by master players. We are created in the image of God, with the ability to make choices and decisions. The devil is against us, but God is FOR us. We must choose whom we will follow. We will cast the deciding vote. Whom will we obey? The father of lies, who comes to deceive and to destroy us? Or will We obey the One who created us in love — who promises to always be with us — who loves us with an everlasting love? His command is that we love one another, and He stands ready to help us.

**Open our eyes, Lord, to know when we are bringing glory to You, or being tricked by the devil to sow seeds of discord.**

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Always remember —  
God loves you!

Send Bible questions or updated mailing address information to  
Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222  
Inmates -- include name, DOC No., and SID with your address.

# God's Discipline

A wise preacher said, "God didn't save you from Hell so you could continue to live like the devil." He saves not only from something (eternal punishment), but for something—God's plan for our lives. It starts now, and it starts with His loving discipline. How fast it goes depends on how ready we are to be shaped and changed and used by God. How far? Until the character of Jesus—the fruit of the Spirit of God—is manifest in us!

## Puzzle:

G E N B J N D O S T Y E S E Z P F H K Y X F R E B G U S K X E B  
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## Words:

### **Without God's loving discipline we have:**

ILLEGITIMACY  
NO STANDING

### **With it we have:**

REBUKES  
PUNISHMENT  
HARDSHIP  
PAIN

### **But we also have:**

LOTS OF COMPANY  
ENCOURAGEMENT  
TRUE SONSHIP  
ACCEPTANCE  
TRAINING  
HEALING  
RIGHTEOUSNESS  
PEACEFUL LIVES  
HOLINESS  
LIFE

### **God requires of us:**

RESPECT FOR GOD  
TAKING HIM SERIOUSLY  
SUBMISSION  
REPENTANCE  
GOING STRAIGHT  
BEING STRENGTHENED  
ENDURANCE  
CARING FOR OTHERS  
WITNESSING  
NO BITTERNESS  
NO DEFILEMENT

### **Producing Fruit in us:**

LOVE  
JOY  
PEACE  
PATIENCE  
KINDNESS  
GOODNESS  
FAITHFULNESS  
GENTLENESS  
SELF-CONTROL

### **Enabling us to:**

BE LED BY THE SPIRIT  
HELP SAVE THE LOST