WEEK 4: SELF-INFLICTED SUFFERING

LIFEGROUP

STEP 1 SERMON RECAP

Sunday looked at the pain we bring on ourselves through our own sin and folly. Here is the sermon in five lines:

1. **The Big Idea:** Some of the pain in your life is self-inflicted. Owning your part is the first step toward healing, but blaming God pushes you away from the One who can rescue you (Proverbs 19:3).
2. **Sin and weight:** Hebrews 12:1 tells us to lay aside "every weight, and sin." Sin is rebellion against God's commands. Weight is folly, the choices the Bible may not forbid that still slow you down.
3. **Radical ownership:** Reject blame-shifting and a victim mindset. Own your choices for what was inside your control (Psalm 107:17), and own your response to what was outside it (Genesis 50:20).
4. **Cause and effect:** God built the world on cause and effect. Wisdom stretches out her hand to us, but if we slap it away, we live with the results (Proverbs 1:24–33).
5. **Where it lands:** God disciplines like a father who loves His children, and the pain is meant to produce something good in your future (Hebrews 12:6, 11).

STEP 2 ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHECK-IN

Go around the table for the accountability and check-in. In order to avoid over-talking and dominating conversation, keep each answer to about one minute.

- How did it go with the "I Will" statement you made last week? What were the key ingredients of success or failure? (1 minute)
- What is one thing you are thankful for this week? (1 minute)
- What is one challenge you are facing right now? (1 minute)

STEP 3 ONE PERSON READS IDEA 1 ALOUD

While this is read, circle or star anything God points out (John 16:8, 13).

Each idea below ends with three things: (1) an observation about God from the passage, (2) the principle the passage teaches, and (3) a sample "I Will" statement showing one way to apply it.

IDEA 1: Own your part instead of raging against God.

> **Proverbs 19:3**
>
> When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the LORD.
>
> **Psalm 107:17–20**
>
> Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; [18] they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. [19] Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. [20] He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.

Proverbs is a book of short wisdom sayings, most of them from King Solomon, about how life usually works. In Proverbs 19:3 the "heart," where your thoughts and desires come from, "rages against the LORD" over a ruin the man's own folly caused. Psalm 107 describes several groups of people in trouble, and this group got there "through their sinful ways." Radical ownership means owning your choices for what was inside your control and owning your response to what was outside it. That is not a call for real victims to blame themselves, but it is a refusal to hide behind a victim mindset when we have actually brought chaos and suffering into our own lives.

OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, LIFE APPLICATION:

- **Observation:** God did not cause the ruin in Proverbs 19:3. In Psalm 107, He delivered the very people whose own sin had put them in distress as soon as they cried out to Him.
- **Interpretation:** Blaming God for pain your own choices caused drives you away from the only One who can rescue you. Owning it is the first step back to God and out of the chaos.
- **Life Application:** I will name one area where I have been blaming God or someone else for a mess I helped create, own my part in prayer, and tell one person in this group by the end of the week.

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STEP 4 A SECOND PERSON READS IDEA 2 ALOUD

While this is read, circle or star anything God points out (John 16:8, 13).

IDEA 2: God disciplines actively and passively.

> **Psalm 81:11–13**
>
> But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. 12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. 13 Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!
>
> **1 Corinthians 11:32**
>
> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

God disciplines in two ways. Sometimes He acts directly, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). Other times He steps back and lets people have what they insisted on, which is what happened when Israel refused to listen in Psalm 81. Hebrews 12 says His discipline is a sign that you belong to Him, and that it "yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" in this life (Hebrews 12:11). Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 11:32 to Christians who were treating the Lord's Supper carelessly, and he shows what discipline protects in the life to come. Not all pain is discipline, and discipline is never condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, LIFE APPLICATION:

- **Observation:** God loves His children too much to let them walk toward condemnation without resistance. Even when He gives His people over to their own counsels, He still cries out, "Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!"
- **Interpretation:** God's discipline aims at two outcomes: the peaceful fruit of righteousness in this life and salvation in the life to come.
- **Life Application:** I will ask God to show me one place where He has been actively opposing my pride or passively letting me have my own way, and I will take one specific step of obedience in that area before we meet next week.

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STEP 5 A THIRD PERSON READS IDEA 3 ALOUD

While this is read, circle or star anything God points out (John 16:8, 13).

IDEA 3: Choose your hard.

> **Proverbs 1:31, 33**
>
> therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. … [33] but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.
>
> **Galatians 6:7–8**
>
> Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. [8] For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

In Proverbs 1, wisdom stretches out her hand like a woman calling in the street (Proverbs 1:20–24). Holiness and wisdom are hard, but so are the consequences of sin and folly, both in this life and in eternity. Jesus said anyone who follows Him must "deny himself and take up his cross" (Mark 8:34). That does not earn salvation, but it is what allegiance to Jesus looks like.

OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, LIFE APPLICATION:

- **Observation:** We reap what we sow, and God promises security to those who loyally submit themselves to Him and His reign.
- **Interpretation:** The pain of sin and folly in this life previews a permanent, catastrophic destruction for those who never deny themselves and turn back to God.
- **Life Application:** I will pick one area where I keep choosing the easy road of instant gratification and take the first step of repentant obedience within the next three days.

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STEP 6 NOW DISCUSS

Go around the table.

1. When you bring suffering on yourself, do you tend to blame others or take ownership so you can fix it?

2. When has choosing the easy road cost you later, or choosing the hard road paid off later?

3. Which item that you circled or starred stood out to you most and why?

STEP 7 WRITE YOUR "I WILL" STATEMENT

What is a practical, measurable, tangible step you can take to apply this information this next week?

STEP 8 PRAY

Pray for the person on your right by name and for the "I Will" they just wrote, or the facilitator prays for the whole group.