WEEK 5: RESTRAIN OR PAIN

LIFEGROUP

STEP 1 SERMON RECAP

Sunday looked at how pain multiplies when the authorities God established won't restrain evil. Here is the sermon in five lines:

1. **The Big Idea:** Authority that won't restrain evil multiplies pain. When "the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily," people become bolder in doing evil (Ecclesiastes 8:11).
2. **Family government:** Refusing to discipline and instruct your kids sets them on a pathway to pain. Correct them in a loving, low-stakes environment, or life will correct them later. Stop rewarding and start opposing your kids' sin and folly.
3. **Church government:** A church that's more "compassionate" than God harms the sinner, the saints, and the seeker. Restore the repentant. Refuse to pretend.
4. **Civil government:** Governments that delay justice multiply victims. God appointed governing authorities to be "a terror" to bad conduct as God defines it (Romans 13:3). Protect victims, not villains.
5. **Where it lands:** When we ignore God's design, pain follows, and God is still shown to be wise. The bare-bones solution is to be a disciple who makes disciples.

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: Love disciplines.

> **Ephesians 6:4**
> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
>
> **Proverbs 13:24**
> Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Ephesians 6:4 starts with fathers, which means dads can't hand parenting off to moms. It also puts the guardrail first: discipline that provokes children to anger is outside God's design, and abuse is never acceptable. Proverbs 13:24 says the opposite error is just as unloving, because a parent who won't discipline is choosing the child's comfort today over the child's good tomorrow. Home is a loving, low-stakes place to learn that sin brings pain, and if parents won't teach that lesson, life will teach it later at a much higher price.

OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, LIFE APPLICATION:

- **Observation:** God is a Father who disciplines us "for our good, that we may share his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10), never to vent His anger.
- **Interpretation:** Refusing to discipline and instruct a child is not love. It hands the child over to a harsher teacher later.
- **Life Application:** I will name one behavior I have been rewarding or ignoring, in my own kids or in someone I influence, and respond to it with loving correction this 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: Restore the repentant. Refuse to pretend.

> **Galatians 6:1**
> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.
>
> **1 Corinthians 5:5**
> you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Galatians 6:1 tells mature believers to restore someone caught in sin, and to do it gently while keeping watch on themselves. In 1 Corinthians 5, a man in the church was sleeping with his stepmother, and the church was proud of how tolerant it was (5:1–2). Paul told them to remove him from the church, but even that drastic step aimed at restoration: "so that his spirit may be saved." A believer who hates his sin and asks for help needs gentle restoration, but a person who claims Jesus while refusing to repent needs the church to stop pretending.

OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, LIFE APPLICATION:

- **Observation:** God confronts sin in His people because He wants them back, not because He wants them gone.
- **Interpretation:** Grace that ignores sin is not more loving than God. It leaves the sinner in his pain and hurts everyone around him.
- **Life Application:** I will ask one trusted believer to hold me accountable in the area where I struggle most, and I will give them permission to ask me hard questions.

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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: Protect victims, not villains.

> **Proverbs 21:15**
>
> When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.
>
> **Romans 13:3–4**
>
> For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Right before Romans 13, Paul says, "never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God" (Romans 12:19). Then he calls the ruler "an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer." God forbids personal revenge because He appointed government to punish evil as He defines it, not as any political party defines it. When government won't do that job, victims get neither revenge nor justice.

OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, LIFE APPLICATION:

- **Observation:** God is just. He does not let evil go unanswered, and He appointed governing authorities to serve His justice.
- **Interpretation:** When justice is delayed or denied, victims multiply. Christians should vote, petition, and act to protect victims, not villains.
- **Life Application:** I will pray by name for one local or state official this week, and I will pray for one person I can invite into a discipling relationship.

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STEP 6 NOW DISCUSS

Go around the table.

1. Which of these three authorities (family, church, or government) has shaped how you see discipline the most, and how?

2. Where are you tempted to be more "compassionate" than God with someone in your life?

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.