

When Hurting Helps

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God is in the helping business. He has always acted in such a way as to help and benefit mankind. To be true to Him we must seek to be helpers of others. It should never be our desire to cause hurt for the sake of hurt.

However, some exceptions to this necessary principle exist. Hurting and helping are not always mutually exclusive. The Lord reminds us that we prune the tree or vine that it may bear more fruit (John 15:2). Our willingness to undergo bodily surgery illustrates the same concept. An immediate hurt is exchanged for a long-range help.

Wise parents recognize the validity of this principle in proper rearing of their children. In the long run, we seriously hurt our children when we neglect to properly discipline them. Such discipline will often cause unpleasantness or even physical pain to the child, yet it is a hurt that helps:

All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness (Heb. 12:11).

Solomon also teaches us on this subject:

Withhold not correction from the child; For if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, And shalt deliver his soul from Sheol (Pro. 23:13-14).

Parents who withhold appropriate discipline from children for fear of hurting them withhold a hurt that helps.

The principle also applies to the church. A failure to practice corrective discipline in the church is frequently on the grounds that it will hurt the church by driving members away or that will adversely affect the financial contributions (or both). Such an approach denies the wisdom of God, for one thing, but it also evidences the “short range” approach. It must have hurt the Corinthian church for a while to withdraw from the immoral brother, but it was a hurt that would help (1 Cor. 5:1-7). It is not a pleasant task to expose a brother as a false teacher, but it is a hurt that helps and that is absolutely necessary (Rom. 16:17-18). Preachers do not enjoy pointedly rebuking sin and sinners, but it is a hurt that may help. May we never rely only on our own wisdom for things that will help or hurt.

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