

WORDS OF LOVE CASE STUDY No. 8

This study is going to depart from our usual pattern of using a newspaper item because I want to tie it in a little more closely with the lesson topic of Lesson No. 8: LOVE AND PAIN.

This is not a pleasant subject (as the title clearly implies). I don't like pain. Neither does anybody else I know. But pain is a fact of life and we all experience pain at various points in our life.

There are various causes and reasons for pain. As our missionary, Jerry Love from Mexico expressed from the pulpit a Sunday or two ago, much of the pain we encounter is brought upon us by our nemesis, Satan. And our Father, God, grieves with us when we undergo the kind of pain that Jerry described; the sudden and tragic loss of a loved-one who was so young and full of life and full of the Lord. Other losses we suffer and pain we endure fall into this category too.

Sometimes, we suffer pains of small or large magnitudes that are seemingly just random accidents that are uncaused and impossible to see a clear reason for. A windblown stick hits us and causes a bruise or perhaps even puts-out an eye. These are just part of the fallen human condition.

Sometimes pains come because we are foolish or imprudent or because someone else was. We aren't thinking and we put our hand on a hot stove. Or maybe a careless worker drops a brick off a building that hits us. These can be part of the fallen human condition.

Often, however, pain is intentionally inflicted. The mugger who hits us on the head and grabs our money didn't do it by accident; he meant to hurt. This is intentionally inflicted pain which is intended to damage us and make it easier for the evil man to accomplish his purpose. Sin is at the root of this cause of pain too.

But God inflicts pain on us for our good. Before we become christians, he may inflict various forms of pain on us in order to call our attention to our need for him. And, after we become christians, Proverbs 3:11,12 and Hebrews 12:5-11 clearly tell us that the Lord reproves, disciplines, punishes, and chastises those he loves and accepts as his children in the same way that an earthly father spanks his children when they need it.

These passages of scripture painted a much more vivid picture when they were written than they do today. The reference to human fathers in Hebrews 12:7 ("...for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" - KJV. The word chasteneth is paideuo in the Greek. It literally refers to physical discipline, i.e. spank) really meant something because there weren't any children whose fathers didn't spank them (if they were beloved children and not bastards). But today, the imagery is lost on most people because spanking has "gone out of style".

Which brings us to the question: Is it more loving to spank or not to spank? There are those who say spanking is unthinkable child abuse and should never be permitted under any circumstances. There are those who say spanking should only be used as an outlet for parental anger and should never be done "in cold blood". Some would allow its use but only in emergencies such as when the child runs out into the street. Some would only allow it up to age 5, others up to age 12, others to 19, others for as long as the child is under the parents' control. Some think it is the only answer for the disasterous state our children are in. (into drugs by 8 or 9 in some rare cases; 50% or more have tried marijuana by 18; heroin, cocaine..20% of 13&14 year-olds have tried sex; 55% of those between 15 and 19; 1 million get pregnant each year... good, old fashioned spankings are the only answer).

Is it more loving to spank or not to spank? What is your opinion and why? What does the Bible say? Does the fact that "child" in Proverbs 22:15 is the Hebrew naghar which almost invariably refers to older children, teenagers, and even adult children (rather than little children) effect our thinking on this?