

## Sermon: The Test of Truth

Text: Revelation 2:18-29

### Introduction:

A good place to begin our discussion today is with the word—and the practice—of **discipline**.

- When you think of the word “Discipline”—what comes to mind?
- Do you think of discipline as an essentially good thing, or a bad thing?
- WHO do you think of when you think of discipline?
- When you think of disciplined people (or a disciplined person), who do you think of?

The actual definition of discipline is:

***The practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.***

This is what comes up when Googling the question, “What is the role of discipline in our life?”

***Discipline brings stability and structure into a person's life. ... If there were no discipline, people would do whatever they wanted and make mistakes without putting the consideration of others first and foremost. It promotes good human behavior to better society and make it a more enjoyable place for everyone to live.***

- Do you agree with these definitions?
- What runs through your mind when you read these statements?
- We would all probably agree that we’re living in a world where, in increasing measure, people are wanting to “do whatever they want”—and face no consequences (or discipline). How have we seen this in our nation even these past few weeks?
- How does discipline help us learn to “put the consideration of others first and foremost”?

Think about what happens when you plant a small tree in your yard. The trunk is only an inch in diameter. This sapling is very vulnerable to winds and storms.

- What is the BEST way to insure that this young tree will grow straight and true?
- When you see a tree that is staked and supported by corrective cords—does it work for those cords to be in place for a few days or even a few weeks? How long should those cords be kept in place? When do you know it’s OK for those cords to be removed?
- Draw some comparisons between these corrective cords that help a sapling tree grow straight and true—and the role of discipline in our lives.

All of these things make discipline sound like such a very good thing in our lives. Why, then, are we so averse to discipling? Why is it so hard to give and receive?

### Examination:

- Read **Hebrews 12:4-13**

- It is plainly stated in verse 4 that sin is a struggle. Why do you think that is? What is it about sin that makes it such a struggle? Why can't we just come to the conclusion that sin is a bad thing—and then simply be done with it for the rest of our lives? What is it about us that, in using the metaphor of the tree and the cords, makes us keep wanting to “grow crooked”?
  - Verse 5 begins with a question: “Have you completely forgotten?” Forgotten what?
  - What does the father say to his son?
  - What is one of the ways that we know for certain that God loves us? (v. 6)
  - HOW, according to verse 7, does God discipline us?
  - Do you respect your father for the way he disciplined you? (v. 9)
  - What is the ultimate result of the Lord's discipline in our lives? (v. 10)
  - What do you think it means that discipline produces a harvest of righteousness and peace in our lives? (v. 11)
- Read **Revelation 2:18-29**
    - Several other times in the Book of Revelation, Jesus is called the **Son of Man**. This (v. 18) is the only place He is called **Son of God**. What is the difference between the two? How is Jesus described in this letter?
    - What positive things does Jesus have to say about the church in Thyatira?
    - According to verse 20, what lies at the heart of Thyatira's problem?
    - We first find a woman named Jezebel back in 1 Kings chapters 16-21. What do we learn about her from these verses in **1 Kings: 16:31; 18:4; 19:2; 21:25**
    - It seems clear that there is a woman in the church in Thyatira who is also causing a whole lot of trouble! Her actual name probably wasn't Jezebel—but Jesus gives her this nickname. According to verse 20-21, what is she doing and teaching?
    - What does verse 21 tell us about how Jesus deals with people who are walking in the wrong direction, or doing things He opposes?
    - Verses 22-23 are admittedly very difficult to interpret. The gist of it seems to be that this false prophet Jezebel will suffer—but those who FOLLOW her teaching (“her children”) will be held to an even greater standard. What happens to those to those who are led astray and give in to false teaching?
    - What does Jesus say to those in the church who aren't being fooled by Jezebel's false teaching? (v.24-25)
    - What is the “Greater Reward” that awaits all who remain faithful and do the will of God “to the end”?
    - What phrase from **Psalm 2** is repeated here in Revelation 2:27? What do you think it means that we will “have authority over the nations”?

### **Application:**

This is most certainly the most difficult of the seven letters to understand and apply. We don't know who this woman (Jezebel) was—we only know that she had a great deal of influence, and was leading many people in the church astray. It can be SO EASY to get caught up in false teaching—with disastrous results! Each of us must KNOW the Truth, and LIVE the Truth! Be open to the Lord's DISCIPLINE in your life—helping to keep your life “growing” straight!