

Snakes On A Plain

DÉJÀ VU

Numbers 21:1-9

God gives us salvation and freedom.

God's people are impatient and complain.

God disciplines us in order to bless us.

God's people repent.

God saves those who believe.

RANDOM LESSONS FROM A BIZARRE STORY:

1 Corinthians 10:9-10, Philippians 2:14-16, Matthew 11:28-30, John 3:1-21, 2 Corinthians 5:21

- ▶ There will always be something to complain about.
- ▶ It's ok to complain to God, but not against God.
- ▶ There is a huge difference between knowing the truth and believing the truth.
- ▶ There are some things only God can heal.

Growth Group Homework

For the week of April 26, 2009

QUICK REVIEW: Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching on *Snakes on a Plain*, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. As you think back on the discipline you experienced in your home growing up, which of these descriptions best characterize the discipline you received? (Choose as many as apply.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent | <input type="checkbox"/> Closely tied to family rules |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent | <input type="checkbox"/> Random |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrequent | <input type="checkbox"/> Done out of love |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harsh | <input type="checkbox"/> Done out of anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lenient | <input type="checkbox"/> Strict |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Given mostly by one parent | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

How did you respond to discipline/correction as a child? How do you respond to it today?

2. As much as we don't like to be around complainers, too often we find ourselves being one. What in your life do you have a tendency to complain about?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Chris mentioned that "it's okay to complain to God, not against God." The Psalms are full of David's complaints to God. What can you learn from the following passages about what acceptable complaining to God looks like?

Psalm 6:1-10

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.

[2] Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint;
O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony.

[3] My soul is in anguish.
How long, O Lord, how long?

[4] Turn, O Lord, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.

[5] No one remembers you when he is dead.
Who praises you from the grave?

[6] I am worn out from groaning;

all night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.
[7] My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
they fail because of all my foes.
[8] Away from me, all you who do evil,
for the Lord has heard my weeping.
[9] The Lord has heard my cry for mercy;
the Lord accepts my prayer.
[10] All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed;
they will turn back in sudden disgrace. [NIV]

Psalm 142:1-7

A maskil of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer.

I cry aloud to the Lord;
I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.
[2] I pour out my complaint before him;
before him I tell my trouble.
[3] When my spirit grows faint within me,
it is you who know my way.
In the path where I walk
men have hidden a snare for me.
[4] Look to my right and see;
no one is concerned for me.
I have no refuge;
no one cares for my life.
[5] I cry to you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."
[6] Listen to my cry,
for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me,
for they are too strong for me.
[7] Set me free from my prison,
that I may praise your name.
Then the righteous will gather about me
because of your goodness to me. [NIV]

In these passages we see that David is very free in sharing a variety of strong emotions with God. Do you feel the same freedom he did? Why or why not?

2. God is still involved in disciplining His followers. In Hebrews 12:5-11 we read about some of the reasons for His discipline. After reading the passage, jot down a few of the reasons why God disciplines us.

Hebrews 12:5-11

And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

[6] because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

[7] Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? [8] If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. [9] Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! [10] Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. [11] No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. [NIV]

This passage compares God's discipline with parental discipline. Is there anything you can learn from your own experience of being disciplined as a child or, if you're a parent, disciplining your own child/children that helps you better understand God's discipline of us? If so, explain.

3. In the Book of Proverbs we see that God often uses the input of other people to discipline and correct us. How do the following verses characterize the kind of person who is open to correction and the person who isn't?

Proverbs 10:17

He who heeds discipline shows the way to life,
but whoever ignores correction leads others astray. [NIV]

Proverbs 12:1

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but he who hates correction is stupid. [NIV]

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool seems right to him,
but a wise man listens to advice. [NIV]

Proverbs 13:18

He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame,
but whoever heeds correction is honored. [NIV]

Proverbs 15:31-32

He who listens to a life-giving rebuke
will be at home among the wise.
[32] He who ignores discipline despises himself,
but whoever heeds correction gains understanding. [NIV]

Why do you think it's hard for a lot of people to receive input from others?

How could the verses above help a person be motivated to be open to others' input?

TAKING IT HOME

1. Is there any complaining or grumbling going on in your life that you could ask God to help you give up?

Often we grumble and complain because we are too focused on what we don't have rather than on all the things God has provided for us. Make a list of the things you have and take some time to thank God for them.

2. Do you think you are experiencing God's discipline in your life right now? If so, what do you think He wants you to do differently?