

A CARING PEOPLE

—WEEK 7—

“Don’t put your finger in the light socket.” This sounds so hateful to the ears of a 3-year-old son. This sounds so unloving to a son who obviously wants to electrocute himself. That’s why he falls on the ground upset when he hears the word “No!”

We live in a culture where authority seems so unloving. When telling someone “No!” feels like you don’t care for them at all. That’s why so many people get frustrated with authority in our culture. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, if you don’t tell a 3-year-old “No!” when he is about to hurt himself, it’s actually very unloving. If you don’t tell someone jumping off a cliff to stop, you are hateful. And if you don’t call a brother or sister to repent when they are walking in sin, it probably means you don’t care for them at all.

Our Church Covenant reads: “We will submit ourselves to the discipline of this fellowship as a testimony of our desire to always walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. And for our brothers and sisters we will seek their spiritual growth as dearly as our own.”

A healthy church is experiencing godly discipline all the time. All the members are being disciplined by the Lord and by one another to look more and more like Jesus. Christlikeness is our goal. This discipline comes in two forms: informal discipline and formal discipline.

Informal discipline is any time when God’s people are sitting under and being shaped by God’s Word. This happens on Sunday mornings when we gather and listen to the preaching of God’s Word. It happens when we read and talk about God’s Word right now in our Community Group. It even happens as we study God’s Word together over lunch or coffee.

Formal discipline is for times when God’s people are not living by God’s Word. It’s for the moments when God’s people are walking in sin. It’s for the moments when you simply don’t want to repent. It’s for the moments when you love your sin and you don’t want to let go.

And in these moments, it’s because of God’s good grace that you have a church family. He gives you a church family that hates your sin even when you don’t. He gives you a church family that is uncomfortable with you being comfortable with your sin. He gives a church family that’s not afraid to tell you “No!” when you are about to hurt yourself.

I believe the best summary of our whole church covenant is this: “for our brothers and sisters, we will seek their spiritual growth as dearly as our own.” It means I don’t just care that I am loving and looking more like Jesus myself. I want my brothers and sisters to love and look like Jesus too.

We all have blindspots that we can’t see. We all have sin that we don’t want to repent of. We have light sockets that we want to put our fingers in. Praise the Lord for gospel community that loves us enough to tell us “No” and that keeps reminding us to look to Jesus.

Meditate on God’s Word

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” - Matthew 18:15-20

“For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” - 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

Questions for Application

1. Why do we feel like authority and love don’t go together? How can we discipline our own hearts to desire godly discipline and correction within community?
2. Can you think of a time when someone called you to repent of a sin? How was it hard to hear their correction? Why was it good for you?
3. What would it look like for you to seek the spiritual growth of your brothers and sisters as much as your own spiritual growth?

Close by praying that we would not isolate ourselves but lean into gospel community.