

church of Christ at Greenwood

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Preschool

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“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

It is sometimes through hardship that God gets our attention and prepares us to learn from Him. Not everyone has to experience hardship in order to become receptive to God, but many of us do. Many of us have to be “trained” by God’s chastening. And while this is not “joyful for the present,” it later “yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness,” as the Hebrew writer said.

Often it is our attitudes that need adjusting before God’s word can have much influence on us. If we’re accustomed to thinking in worldly terms, we’re simply not open to God’s perspective. We have to learn the hard way that we’ve not been taking enough of reality into consideration. Our minds have to be pried open by trials and tribulations, and sometimes we’re not receptive even then.

One of our most hindering attitudes is the insistence that we already know what we need to know. We’re not teachable because we see no need to be taught. Rather than be taught, we’d rather be the ones doing the teaching, and we expend the biggest portion of our energy trying to get the world around us to adjust itself to our thinking. We have no time to listen, as busy as we are.

And so, through the Psalmist, God says to us: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). We won’t have the proper reverence for God until we’ve gotten still, and stillness in God’s school may not be something we’re willing to accept. We may have to be forced to be still by the “preschool” of pain and suffering.

But if we have trouble being still enough to hear God, we also have trouble being quiet. Rather than shutting our mouths and listening, we talk and talk and talk: informing God what we’d like to have done, explaining to Him the uniqueness of our situation, and sometimes even calling into question His management of the universe. Is it any wonder we can’t hear the truth? Is it any wonder God has to confine us to a corner and clamp His loving hand over our mouths, until we stop squirming and listen?

“When God gets us alone through suffering, heartbreak, temptation, disappointment, sickness, or by thwarted desires, a broken friendship, or a new friendship — when He gets us absolutely alone, and we are totally speechless, unable to ask even one question, then He begins to teach us” (Oswald Chambers).