

I'm not a child psychologist

And nothing I'm about to say has been vetted by the American Psych. Assoc.

But in 5.5 years of parenting

I've noticed a particular pattern of behavior

That keeps cropping up again and again with my own children

And this behavior happens so regularly

That for me it has come to constitute a general principle of life

That applies not only to kids (though kids have been the sample in my study)

But to all of humanity (irrespective of age, gender, class, nationality, etc.)

The Principle of Correlational Consequences

[Layman's terms: Sometimes You Get Hurt Doing Stuff You Shouldn't Do]

Correlational is different than Causation

Causation: Because I did "A", "B" happened. Predictable predicament.
I step on a mousetrap, I break my toe.

Correlational: After I washed my car, it rained.

Did washing my car CAUSE the rain? Of course not.

Not a causal relationship between car washing and rain

But there was a correlation between car washing & rain in this instance.

Let me give you a couple examples:

Ex. 1- My kids share a room, not long after bedtime, I hear screaming

Rush in, hear child A complain of being kicked in the face by child B

Child B is in bed, under covers & child A is sprawled out on the floor

I say to kid A, "If you stayed in bed, child B couldn't have kicked you..."

To which child A responds: "Well, yeah..."

But b/c kid A broke the rules, the principle of CC took effect

Does getting out of bed CAUSE face-kickings?

I sure hope not (though you know, sometimes it feels like it!)

But sometimes you get hurt doing stuff you shouldn't do.

The Principle of Correlational Consequences

Ex. 2 – I was moving some big things around the garage the other day

And I asked my kids not to come out (things I didn't want them to get into)

One of them came out, dropped a toy and it shattered all over the floor
Does walking into the garage cause toys to break? Of course not.
But sometimes you (or toys) get hurt when you do stuff you shouldn't do

Ex. 3—A Biblical example

God calls Jonah and tells him to go preach to the city of Nineveh
Jonah ignored God, hopped on a boat and headed to Tarshish
He ends up getting thrown overboard and swallowed by a fish
Does sailing to Tarshish always cause consumption by a fish? Of course not.
But sometimes you get hurt doing stuff you shouldn't do.

In line with *The Principle of Correlational Consequences*

This morning we are talking about the theme of suffering
But we aren't talking about suffering in general (sickness, loss, opposition)
But a particular kind of suffering or pain that we may experience in life
When we do things we know we shouldn't do
Or when we FAIL to do things we know we SHOULD do.

Open your Bible, if you will, to Psalm 119:25-32

Longest chapter in the Bible—the crown jewel of the Psalms
Acrostic- The first word of each stanza starts w/a letter in Hebrew alphabet
The chief subject matter of the Psalm is the Law/teaching/instruction of God

Tradition says David wrote the psalm to teach his son Solomon the alphabet
Not just the alphabet for reading/writing, but alphabet of the spiritual life
In the middle of this Psalm, as David is espousing/honoring God's Law
He becomes keenly aware of the ways in which he has not lived up to it

Psalm 119:25-32 (Pew Bible, p. _____)

I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word. I recounted my ways
and you answered me; teach me your decrees. Let me understand the teaching of your
precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders. My soul is weary with sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word. Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to
me through your law. I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws.
I hold fast to your statutes, O Lord; do not let me be put to shame. I run in the paths of
your commands, for you have set my heart free.

We can recreate a narrative behind the Psalm a bit:

David appears to have been rehearsing for God
Some of the choices he had made, ways in which he lived
And the verdict came back: David had bombed. He had blown it.
Compared to God's standards, David had so missed the mark
And God made this reality plain as day to David. He felt horrible.
He said: "I recounted my ways and you answered me..."
And then—verse 25 – "I'm laid low in the dust; preserve my life..."

Have you ever botched things up so badly

That you are overcome with guilt and shame and regret?
Thinking: "I'm the worst! I'm a worm. I can't do anything right!
I feel like my life is falling to pieces b/c of the things I've done!"
When David compares himself to the standard of God's Law
He is overwhelmed with his own brokenness and ashamed of his failures

David is experiencing a suffering of the soul

As a kind of spiritual consequence for his actions (guilt before God)
But we know there are also relational/emotional/political consequences
For a person like David

Why is he experiencing all of this?

Now, we don't know the specific situation David is alluding to in the Psalm
But we know about OTHER situations like this in his life:

2 Samuel 11:1 - In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army...

You may know the story. Instead of going to do his job, David stayed behind.
And b/c he stayed behind, he found himself one night up on the roof.
And b/c he was up on the roof, he happened to see a woman below bathing.
And b/c he saw a woman bathing, he desired her... and b/c he desired...
He sent for her...he slept with her...impregnated her... he killed her husband.
These decisions deeply fractured not only his family, but the nation of Israel.

Does staying home from war CAUSE adultery/murder/national division? No.

But sometimes you get hurt—and you hurt others—

When you do things you shouldn't do
And when you fail to do the things you SHOULD do.

There are two ways that we invite this kind of suffering and pain into our lives:

1.) Misaligned w/God's Law

The Gospel teaches us that we all screw up. We all miss the mark.

We all get out of alignment w/God's Law.

Romans 3:23- "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

We know this from our own experience.

We all sin & we all face consequences –spiritually, relationally, financially
For the choices we've made.

Young couple in my office

What do we do when we break God's Law?

Consider David's words in the Psalm:

Preserve me, teach me, let me understand, keep me, be gracious to me

David expresses a deep hunger to know/understand/love the ways of God

But then he expresses his intention to obey what God has taught him

[v30] "I've chosen the way of truth. I set my heart on law. I hold fast to statutes."

As a father, David is going to BY NATURE teach Solomon how to sin (we will too!)

But if it's true David wrote psalm for Solomon (the CHILD of his mistress)

He is ALSO going to teach Solomon what to do when you DO screw up

David is showing his son how to repent.

We can't deliver on perfection to our kids, to our friends, to our spouses

But we *can* show each other how to repent.

1 John 1:9- "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

The Scripture says if we confess our sins

Our faithful God will not only FORGIVE US, but he'll PURIFY us

When we are misaligned w/God's law, what are we to do? Repent.

This morning, if you are ashamed of the things you've done
If you feel stained, guilty, conscience-stricken
Confess your sins to God w/full confidence he will both forgive/purify you
You were loved before you blew it and you are loved even still.

The 2nd way that we invite the kind of pain/suffering David experiences here:

2.) Misaligned w/God's Will

The Jonah story that I referenced earlier gets at this point beautifully
Jonah knew that God had a purpose for his life
He was to be the evangelist to Nineveh, but he didn't want to go.
He wanted to be in charge of his own calling & control outcomes
But you can't simultaneously trust God to steer your life
And keep both hands gripped firmly on the wheel

To tell you the truth, this is my story.

7.5 years ago I came on staff here at Asbury
And I'll tell you: When I started on January 12, 2010
I KNEW I had hit the jackpot (and I really had)

I was so embraced by this congregation – given such tremendous opportunity
To grow and develop and try and fail, but with a strong safety net
In my first few years here, I felt like I was just blossoming in ministry

And so, when I began to explore pastoral ministry and entertain elder vs deacon
Elders get to administer sacraments + are often senior pastors (itinerant)
Deacons on the other hand are free agents
"I'll be an elder, but I'll just do all I can to stay at Asbury FOREVER."
Here I was, telling God and others that I was trusting God with my life
But in my own heart I'm clinging to the steering wheel with both hands

You know, that lack of trust & open-handedness caused a great deal of anxiety
About 4 years ago, I shared with some advisors/mentors my
And they counseled me that I simply HAD to stop trying to control outcomes
If I was going to trust God, I had to let go
And so I began to slowly unclench my fist

And do you know what happened when I did?

God began to quietly impress on my heart the idea
Of starting a new church in midtown Tulsa
I have journals from 2013 where I record
How God was surprising even me w/this idea
I've never church planted, never been part of one
Never been part of a church that planted a church, but here I was.

I was in the middle of seminary, middle of ordination, not time to act on it
So a few years pass and still, this quiet command is pulsing in my heart
This became a matter of serious prayer and discussion for Emily and me
We even thought there was an open door a few years ago
But it wasn't the time, God was just getting us ready

As we came into the winter of last year
There's a growing restlessness inside of me
Because I have increasing clarity about what I feel God is calling me to do
But no clue about when, where or HOW it's all going to come together

On the one hand, it didn't make any sense
I found myself preaching at Asbury – loving it
Working with a great team—learning, stretching, growing
And yet it was becoming unmistakably clear God was doing something
And I needed to say yes to God by taking a step of faith

So on January 3rd of this year, I sat down with Pastor Tom
And told him: "This idea of church planting is not going away
And I feel like this is the year where I have to take a step of faith."
And Tom took some time to pray and think and came back and said:
"Jon, let's do this together."
So we've been talking / praying / working with District/Conference/YOU

And it's all really happening.

Asbury is launching a satellite congregation in midtown Tulsa
And I'm so humbled to say that I get to be part of it
And we get to do this together.

Some of you are wondering— “When’s this going to launch & where & what?”

We are aiming to launch by Advent of this year

And I can now tell you that 3 weeks ago we signed a rental agreement

At the Lutheran Ministry Center (48th & Lewis), previously Ascension **[Pic]**

Beautiful little church property on the south edge of midtown—so excited

What’s it going to look like?

As a satellite of Asbury, this new congregation will have the essential DNA

Of Asbury, but its own unique fingerprints (not video venue, not a clone)

It’s going to look a little different, have its own style, I’ll preach most weeks

It’s probably going to have a new name (not Asbury midtown), but be family

We’re launching this to reach new people for X

We don’t want to shuffle the deck, relocate a ton of Asbury members

We want to reach NEW people & planting is one of most effective ways

It’s a bittersweet transition for me b/c I love this congregation

But you know what has surprised me in all this process?

The longer I was actively/passively saying ‘NO’ to the prompting from God

The more I felt like David in this Psalm- “I’m laid low in the dust.”

At times when I was not fully trusting God and controlling my own outcomes

I’ve felt depressed, anxious, insecure—all over the map emotionally

But as I’ve taken steps to align with what Emily & I feel is God’s will/plan for us

The unmistakable byproduct for us has been JOY

A deep gratitude and excitement, welling up within us

Fueling us up for this new, great, intimidating work that lies ahead of us

And I keep calling to mind that beautiful passage in Hebrews 12

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Fixing our eyes

on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the JOY set before

him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

It was the JOY set before him that enabled Jesus to endure the pain of the cross
The cross was 'the race marked out for *him*'
Now, I've said throughout the morning
That sometimes we get hurt doing stuff we shouldn't do

And sometimes we get hurt avoiding the stuff we SHOULD do
But the life & ministry of Jesus shows us
That sometimes you get hurt doing the things you SHOULD do.

There *is* a suffering that leads to death, but there's a suffering that leads to LIFE
Jesus said: If anyone wants to *save* their life, they'll lose it.
But if anyone *loses* their life for my sake will find it."

Jesus: "If anyone wants to come after me, they must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me."

Paul: "I have been crucified w/Christ & I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

Bonhoeffer: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."

For the Christian, there is LIFE in death, there is JOY in suffering
We FIND ourselves when we LOSE ourselves for Christ's sake

What do we do when we find ourselves misaligned with God's will?
We get back on the track
And we 'run w/perseverance the race marked out for us.'

That's how David ended this passage
He repented, realigned and got back on the track
[v 32] "I RUN in the path of your commands for you've set my heart free."

After my junior year of HS, I quit the basketball team and signed up for XC
I hated running previously – don't know why I did it
But as I went out running w/the team
I found a unique kind of joy and belonging running w/the group

I found I could run farther and faster with the team than I ever could by myself
I could endure & build tolerance to the CHOSEN pain of suffering in exercise
Because I knew we were all in this together

“Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let’s throw off everything that hinders (the mistrust, the anxiety, the control, the fear) and the sin that so easily entangles and let’s run with perseverance the race marked out for us...

And church, let’s fix our eyes on Jesus – the pioneer—the pacesetter – the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

May God give us the grace, the courage and the strength to run the race marked out for all of us.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.