Hebrews 12:6-11 (MSG) It's the child he loves that he disciplines; the child he embraces, he also corrects. [7] God is educating you; that's why you must never drop out. He's treating you as dear children. This trouble you're in isn't punishment; it's training, [8] the normal experience of children. Only irresponsible parents leave children to fend for themselves. Would you prefer an irresponsible God? [9] We respect our own parents for training and not spoiling us, so why not embrace God's training so we can truly live? ...At the time, discipline isn't much fun. It always feels like it's going against the grain. Later, of course, it pays off handsomely, for it's the well-trained who find themselves mature in their relationship with God.

Nobody enjoys suffering, pain or hardship, not if we are truly honest. That is why Paul asking for his thorn to be removed three times is so refreshing it is what we all do. It is a great insight into his struggles. But the truth is God uses all kinds of unpleasant (from our perspective) things to shape and mold us.

Malcolm Muggeridge: "Supposing you eliminate suffering, what a dreadful place the world would be! Because everything that corrects the tendency of man to feel overimportant and over-pleased with himself would disappear. He's bad enough now, but he would be absolutely intolerable if he never suffered."

PRAYER: Lord, please help me to seek to see ALL the things You bring into my life as good. Help me to embrace even those hard things so that You can continue the process of making me more like Jesus.

Pastor Mark Kieft