

## Do the Hard Things Levi Lusko

**All right, let's go. We're in a series of messages, if you're just jumping in, now is the perfect time, by the way. Glad to have you here, but the series is called "Some Assembly Required". And that's because our relationships, they don't work like they're meant to. They don't function like they're ultimately going to right out of the box. It takes painstaking work to assemble them. I think about when I bought my daughter, at the time I only had one daughter, it's crazy to think about that. Now, there's like 94 of them. I bought a little kitchen set, and it was a great thing to buy and bring home. And that was easy. I mean, I had to pay for it, but I didn't bring this thing home. That was easy compared to putting it together, because there was approximately 94 billion pieces to this thing.**

And I remember just so many hours, just hunched over, my back hurting, just all the work that went into assembling this thing that I had bought and brought home. But before it could work like it was meant to, it had to be assembled. And if I had stopped at any point in the process, it wouldn't have done everything that the picture on the box said it would, or that it ultimately could, had I stopped prematurely. And our relationships are like that. Some of us just, for years, have been limping on with relationships in our lives that are missing out on features that they could have, that they have within them, the capacity to produce and to function. But we're just keeping them in the state of arrested development because we're unwilling to move on to that next step.

So that's our goal. Each week of the series we're trying to receive tools, because you can't assemble something if you don't have the proper tools. And so we're not so much focusing on individual relationships, and saying, for this one you're going to need this, and a whole week on that. But I really made it my goal so that this can be universally applied, would be that every week we would walk away with a tool that could apply to any relationship in your life. So you could use that tool at work, use that to at school, use that tool on your soccer team, use that tool with any context, even a complete stranger in a customer service situation, or anybody that you meet. That's our goal. I really want this to be practical, and I hope you'll continue to come back, because the more tools you have, the better off you'll be.

And so the next couple of weeks, there's going to be some really super practical tools that, in your relationship, I wonder what new features might get unlocked if you could get a working knowledge of these unique tools. Well, last week we talked about the tool of alignment, and how to align our behavior with the outcome that we want, our intentions and the impact that we actually have. Because we said that your intentions don't really matter, quite frankly. It's the impact that you're having that actually is felt by the world. This week, I want to talk about the tool of embracing discomfort. That's the tool. It's not too late. You can leave. This is a tool we want to figure out how to get a good working knowledge of embracing discomfort.

If I do what I feel like God's called me to do this week, you're going to all walk out of here understanding, hopefully, a little bit better about how resisting the urge to resist discomfort will actually help your relationships. You need to learn how to embrace, this sounds counterintuitive, doesn't it, discomfort. If you have a Bible, Proverbs 3 is where we're going to begin. Every week in this series, we're really taking some principles from the Proverbs. It's been called a manual for skillful living, so that seems like it would be a helpful place, if we're going to assemble stuff, we need a manual. Make sense? So we're going through the book of Proverbs. It's so helpful in so many ways. You cannot read the book of Proverbs and not find things to apply or understand the reason you're getting so much difficulty in life. Oh, that explains everything. Dang it. I was way off. Samsonite, I was way off.

**So Proverbs 3. Title of my message is this, Do the Hard Things. I didn't go for clever, bee stings, and those. No, no. I just wanted to give you your assignment. Here's the whole, this is it, man. Do the hard things, because we're learning how to embrace discomfort as a tool for our relationships. It can make your marriage better, believe it or not. It's going to make your relationship with your third cousin twice removed, or the one that you wish would be completely removed, whatever. If you could embrace some discomfort, imagine how much further you'd go in this life. Do you feel at the outset, your relationships get better, like I do? Yes, approximately one fifth of the room are where I'm at, the rest of them aren't with me. It's cool. No, it's fine. No, it's good. It's OK. I asked for it, it doesn't count. I'm embracing discomfort, like preaching to you all. Just kidding, just kidding, just kidding. In Portland, they're going crazy. It's revival, I can tell.**

All right, so here's the deal. Proverbs 3, Do The Hard Things is the title. Do you like to take notes in church? I do. When I listen to messages, if I'm not preaching, I'm at a church, I'm listening. I'm taking notes. You want to know why? Because I do not have the memory I wish I had. I'll remember that forever, no I won't. But I know where to find it. And so I'm always writing stuff down. I listen to church messages. I'm a preaching junkie. I love a book that will help me, anything. I'm always trying to learn. And so I'll have a podcast on in the car. I'll have a teaching on here. I'll have a book by my bedside table, book by the coffee table. And I'm always writing notes down, and I try and compile them back to where I can find stuff.

So I think it's really helpful is all I'm trying to say. And I'll pull over. If you see me on the road, no police behind me, it's because I'm trying to write down a note before I forget it. Because I gave up on Siri. That was just futile. Siri, text me this. It's just nonsense. So it doesn't make any help. So all that to say, if you like to take notes at church, I have the title, which I already told you, which is Do the Hard Things, and the tool is embrace discomfort. I've also got a sneaky secret subtitle. So it's going to be one of those sermons. So if you do like to write that down, you can write in parentheses next to my actual title these four words, I am the lion. So just jot that down. Because that's our secret subtitle. And it's the path to doing the hard things. I am the lion.

All right, Proverbs 3, here's what we find in verse 11. "My son, do not despise", someone say do not despise, "the chastening of the Lord". In other words, don't despise something that naturally is despicable. "Do not despise the chastening," or the discipline, or the correction, oh, I love correction. I hate it. "Do not despise the chastening of the Lord". Or in other words, don't go with your natural inclination on this. "Nor detest his correction. For whom the Lord loves he corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights". To fight against, or to hate against, or to resist God's chastening, or to go with your gut on how it feels, like you should be responding, would be to keep you back from something that God wants you to experience. As we let that sink in, let's pray together.

*Jesus, thank you so much for this beautiful simplicity of what we just read, that how we feel in certain situations is not an indicator of what we should do. Thank you that as we see the invisible. It will give us the strength to realize this and to walk out of this reality. I pray you would help me to communicate what you've been showing me and speaking to my heart, and I pray you'd help us all to live out of this. Not just hear it, but do it. And I pray that you would draw people who are hearing this message who are far from you, who are hurting, who are empty, who are sad, who are lonely, who don't know you. I pray you'd draw them to yourself. And I pray you'd draw all of us closer to you. And I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The sort of big idea here in these two verses, and really what I want you to understand about this topic is that just because something's unpleasant, that doesn't automatically make it unprofitable. OK, just because something that you experienced in life, now, it can be, but just because something's unpleasant, that doesn't automatically make it unprofitable. And our tendency would be to see no

good in something that's unpleasant, and to miss out, potentially, on something that could actually help us, something, listen to me. Being hard doesn't automatically make it bad.

You know this is a principle that's bigger than just a specific instance, but it's very much true when it comes to God's discipline in our lives. God's correcting in our lives, God steering us in our lives, at times, dealing with things that hurt. But really, God's discipline isn't pleasant. We'd be lying to say it was, that when God works in our lives trying to steer us in the right direction at times, that means that we were taking some swats. And that's kind of the way he compares it. It's like a father that spansks his son. Do you think this sounds like, dad, that was great. Can we do that again tomorrow night? It's not pleasant. It's something that your initial response is to detest it. I hated every spanking I got as a child. I hated them all.

Does anyone want to be undisciplined when it comes to physical fitness and eating? Like, no one wants to be undisciplined, that you feel like you just eat without even thinking about it, or you eat emotionally. No, you would like to be a person who's disciplined: disciplined in body, disciplined in mind, disciplined in word, disciplined in finances, discipline in habits and choices and decisions that you make. We all want to be disciplined. I flew to Colorado Springs this week. And you land there, they make a big deal about the fact that the United States Olympic training center's there in Colorado Springs, where they train at a mile high. And you think about how, to be an Olympic athlete, what do you have to do? You have to be disciplined.

So we celebrate those who are disciplined, the master violinist, the master dancer, the master whatever, pole vaulter, right? So that's someone who's become incredibly disciplined. So we, deep down, respect the results of discipline. How do you get to be disciplined? You've got to get disciplined. So no one wants to be disciplined. We detest it when it happens. But the result of fighting against it and not leaning into it is ending up at a place that you don't want to be deep down. So discipline would then become an unpleasant means to a profitable end. Therefore, something being hard, can we agree, doesn't automatically make it bad.

So we bring this now (this construct) to our relationships. And in relationships, I don't care if it's a co-worker, or in-law, or a spouse, there are things that don't feel good. There are things that are uncomfortable about being in relationship. There are things that are uncomfortable about keeping a relationship healthy. And our unwillingness to embrace discomfort keeps the relationship from becoming the mature, healthy, vibrant source of life that it's meant to become. What sorts of things would we be tempted to withdraw from? Well, I don't know your triggers. I know mine. But I made a little list, and maybe this will hit you. Maybe it won't. But here's some of them, certainly not exhaustive, things tha

**Here's the thing. When you did this, it didn't make me feel well. Now, how do you respond to that? Do you love confrontation? Do you love someone, even when they do it lovingly? Coming to you and, here's what happened. Here's how that made me feel. Not blowing up, but actually confronting you in the right kind of way. Or any kind of conflict, correction, or criticism. Maybe that's what you withdraw from. The moment someone tries to correct you, the moment someone tries to help you see life through your eyes, all of a sudden, you resist that because it's uncomfortable to go there. Or just difficult conversations of any depth at all that's beyond anything superficial. How about vulnerability? Feeling exposed, feeling like someone can see you on the inside, being honest. Maybe that kind of depth scares you off. But it's necessary to achieve intimacy.**

How can you have intimacy without vulnerability? Showing weakness, is that difficult for you? Do you resist that because it's not comfortable to you to show weakness? Here's some. Being caught off guard, surprised, scared, guilty, feelings of guilt, this comes up feelings of shame. Moments where you have to apologize. How about success? Some people, they withdraw from relationships when

they're going well, because they start to feel this fear, and so they want to almost self-sabotage it because it's going well. Or feeling like there's the need for commitment, and the inability to handle a conversation that's meant to define the relationship and move it towards commitment. Or how about things not going your way? Or how about when someone that you're trying to speak to on something needs time to process?

This can be difficult if you're a, let's sort this out, let's hash this out now. But now they're saying, hey, let's sleep on it. Let's give this some space. I'm not ready to talk about it. How do you handle that? The point is, there are things that are uncomfortable for you that are going to be completely fine for me. And there are things that are going to be, then, the source of discomfort for me that, perhaps, won't be for you. The same trigger doesn't apply to every single person. But what is universally true is if we're going to be in a relationship with someone, there are going to be necessary moments of discomfort, necessary moments of pain, find myself wanting to pull back from this.

I think back to when I was in third grade. When I was in third grade, I found out that I don't like environments where I walk into them that are new, the first day of school type environments, or really any situation where I walk into a room and a ton of people's eyes all go to me at the same time. I realize that's an ironic thing for me to not like, but I've had time to acclimate to this environment. The perfect example. When I would get late to school, it was one of my biggest fears in life, would be being late to third grade. And everyone's in the desk, and everyone's sitting there, and the teacher has already done roll call and is beginning the class.

And for me to walk into that and swing that door open and have everyone's eyes look at me, you are literally defining hell for me. I hated that. A little bit about my mom. She's never been on time to anything in her life. Doesn't even know what that means, right? So there was a lot of moments where there was tension between me and my mom because I'm late walking in this room and I just wanted to write the day off. Let me just try again tomorrow. I'll just stay here now, I'll be early for tomorrow. The way she tells it, I don't remember this exactly, but she says I was standing in the hall fighting, trying to pull away from her, biting her hand. And she would make me like, go into class. I'm like, no.

**There was one moment when I asked permission to go to the bathroom. And I don't know why or how this happened, but on my way out... did your parents always tell you to turn the lights off when you left the room? One time in third grade, I was going out to the bathroom and out the door, I just shut off walking out the room. And everyone started laughing, but I didn't know what happened, honest to God. So I go to the bathroom and I come back in the room. When I come back in the room, my teacher is boiling red, and everyone's clapping and laughing at me. And I was just so bewildered, just had no idea what was happening.**

I think about another time, I was preaching a sermon. And I'm preaching a sermon, and I'm just preaching my heart out, just trying to remove the devil from the atmosphere, and I don't know how this happened, a dog got out on stage and walked out. Like, how does this even happen in a church? And I'm preaching this sermon, and everyone in the room is just laughing at me and pointing. And I was just, like is this not a good idea? And I didn't know. So people could tell I didn't know, so they're laughing harder. So finally, I turn. But just before I turn, the dog ran off stage. So I turned, there's no dog. And so now I'm just so confused. If you watched the video, which I've deleted from the internet, as far as I can tell, then the first thing I did was I think, is my fly down?

So I looked down at my fly, and I'm just perplexed. I have no idea. And literally, it was one of those moments in life, I felt myself just all the blood running to my face. And those are really difficult moments for me, being a shy, kind of introverted person. That's very challenging for me to walk into a situation like that. So I know my triggers. I know what is uncomfortable for me. The key is to figure out what's uncomfortable for you. And how are you, potentially, being held back from somewhere

that God, and you, if you're honest, want to go. Somewhere that God and you want to go by things that you're resisting.

Listen to me very carefully. The reward for avoiding pain is remaining the same. That's the first thing I want you to really take to heart on this subject. We're talking about how something being unprofitable doesn't automatically make it unpleasant. And if you resist the triggers that you know it's hard for you to deal with this, and so you just pull back and every time, you shut down. Every time the conversation gets to a subject you don't like, tears come up. You're like, call your sister, call your sister, call your girlfriend. You just can't handle emotion. You can't handle a coworker bawling. And you're like, what's going on?

**Well, they start opening up to you, telling you how hard her hard life is. And you're just like, uh, well, I hope everything just goes better for you. Good luck with that, and you run off. You can't handle any kind of emotional vulnerability, or someone being candid, or any discussion about things of death, where you just automatically shut down. Listen, the reward for avoiding that pain, congratulations, you'll remain the same. And if that's all you want, that's great. But if you want to grow, if you want to become something different, if you want relationships to mature, and to be transformed, and to be a source of joy, if you want to be a blessing to your coworkers, and a blessing to the waitress, who you can tell has had a hard life, and you had a moment there.**

If you don't want to stay the same, like I don't want to stay the same. The don't want to stay at third grade level. I don't want to be still struggling with these things. I want to see growth and see myself become all that God sees is deep down inside of me, then we have to embrace that pain, embrace that discomfort. We have to do the hard things. That's what it's going to take. What is it with us hating pain so much, and hating discomfort so much?

I was reading an interesting interview with someone who seems to love pain. His name is Dean Karnazes, and he's been nicknamed the Ultramarathon Man. Get this guy. One time ran 50 marathons in 50 consecutive days in 50 different places, 50 marathons, 50 days in a row, in 50 different places. He's run marathons in places like the South pole and Death Valley. This guy clearly loves pain. But he says something interesting, Dean Karnazes did, in an interview with Wired magazine.

Listen to what he said. I thought it's very provoking for our subject. "Western culture has things a little backwards right now. We think if we had every comfort available to us, we'd be happy. We equate comfort with happiness. And now, we're so comfortable", quote, unquote, "we're miserable. There's no struggle in our lives. No sense of adventure. We get in a car, we get in an elevator, it all comes easy. What I've found is that I'm never more alive than when I'm pushing and I'm in pain, and I'm struggling for high achievement, and in that struggle I think there's a magic". Come on, that's good. There's an embracing the struggle, because he doesn't want to stay the same. So he's not going to avoid the pain. And I'm not saying you need to go run a marathon on the South pole, but what I am saying is that Scripture tells us pain is not all bad.

**Proverbs 20 verse 30, look at what this tells us. It says, "blows that hurt cleanse the way evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the heart". What do you need to know? You need to know that comfort zones don't keep your life safe. They keep your life small. You see, when I talk about resisting discomfort, I'm only talking about living in a safe comfort zone. I don't go there. I don't open up. I don't talk emotions. Or I do, that's all I talk about. Or I can't give people space. Whatever it is for you that makes you uncomfortable that you tend to avoid because of what you've gone through pain previously, the family you had.**

