

REFLECTIONS

April 10, 2005

**the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."
Hebrews 12:6**

God's classroom...

Continuing education was never very high on my list of most exciting things to do. But "CE" is a requirement for maintaining accreditation or licensure in most trades and professions. CE serves to refine how we apply what we already know, and to enhance our competence by teaching us new things that will prepare us for challenges that lie ahead.

I was never fond of CE because it required me to go to places beyond the comfort of my usual routines. I felt happy where I was. Why should I have to learn something new? In short, I did not like the classroom even though I knew the experience was necessary to prepare me for the challenges that I was yet to face.

God imposes CE on each of us also. These are the learning experiences we have from health issues, financial problems, relational challenges, loss of loved ones, and the like. Although they bring discomfort, the lessons from God's continuing education refine how we apply what we already know, and prepare us for the challenges that lie ahead.

When God imposes CE, He almost always removes us from our usual state of mind and takes us into places or circumstances that make us feel uncomfortable or even lost—a desert experience. God's most profound sessions are held in the desert. Moses was exiled to the desert for 40 years—and that was *before* he led the Israelites around in the wilderness for 40 more, finally guiding the them to the Promised Land. John the Baptist was in the desert for most of his adult life before anointing the Son of God. Paul was in the desert for three years sorting out the messages of his own conversion experience before sharing the love of God with the world. Even Jesus was in the desert for 40 days in preparation for his confrontation with Satan.

As God prepares each of us for the roles He has chosen us to play, we are called several times to a desert experience. It's God's classroom. But even as God uses desert experiences to refine us and reshape our lives, He also gives us victory from those trying times.

You are the light of the world.

Richard +