



## Foundations of Faith

### The Place of Discipline- A Biblical Approach to Parenting #5

After hearing several truths from God's Word regarding some specifics about discipline, a mother responded, "There is no way that I'm going to do that to my child." She was sincere and loved the Lord, but she struggled with Proverbs 13:24 "**He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.**" Another passage of Scripture that can be troubling to many is Proverbs 23:13-14, "**Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.**"

How are parents to respond to these and other verses that give parenting directives? Is God unreasonable? Does a parent simply ignore certain truths from the Word that he/she doesn't like?

Believers in Christ must be people of balance and not extremes. Any person seeking to obey God's Word must be sure to interpret each passage of the Bible in light of all the rest of Scripture. A parent shouldn't read Proverbs 13:24 without also understanding James 1:20, "**For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.**" To be certain, God hates child abuse, and so should everyone. However, biblical forms of discipline, properly carried out, are not abusive – they are very loving and helpful and can help mold a person's character for life! To neglect these God-given principles is to prepare a child for a life of selfishness and hardship!

In addition, a parent has to remember, God is our Creator and He completely understands the nature of every person. A parent must believe that God's plan is best! That's why Paul referred to this aspect of parenting as "the discipline of the Lord." These are not man's ideas. The principles presented in this lesson are biblically based. While the specific applications may vary from home to home, parents must carry out the principles and commands from the Lord if they expect God's blessings on their parenting and if they expect their Lord's approval at the Judgment Seat of Christ!

*"We and our children are bearers of the image of God. But the image that we now bear is not a true image: it is distorted. Adam, acting as the natural and federal head of the race of men, by one act of rebellion plunged all mankind into a state of sin and misery (Genesis 3). Now the image that we bear as Adam's descendants is like his after the fall, fractured and distorted (Genesis 5:1-3). Instead of being a true reflection, it is like the grotesque images seen in the curved mirrors of a carnival sideshow. This, too, must affect the way in which we regard our children and the methods we use to discipline them. We must correct them; we must strive to bring them back to their proper path as image-bearers of God." (Withhold Not Correction, Bruce Ray)*

What are some important points that Bruce Ray makes in this quote?

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As we begin our study, it is assumed that the discipline of the Lord includes the teaching of the Lord as mentioned in Ephesians 6:4 (Lesson #4). In addition, there are 3 other key principles to keep in mind if parents are to bring their children up in the discipline of the Lord.

#### I. Parents Must Avoid Wrong Ideas about Discipline.

##### A. Some parents think that correction alone is enough.

Although many believe that if a parent simply exercises strong discipline (or as long as you spank) a child will grow up pleasing God. However, correction alone will not change behavior or prevent a wrathful lifestyle.

Ephesians 6:4 "**And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**"

According to Ephesians 6:4, how do we know that discipline alone is not enough?

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B. Thinking that because many who were disciplined firmly, turned out badly.

A parent should be concerned about this, but should also ask, “Why did that happen? What other principles were neglected or wrongfully used?”

Here are a few reasons to consider why those who were disciplined firmly turned out “badly”:

1. Some parents discipline in uncontrolled anger.

James 1:20 *“The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”*

Explosive parents are never good disciplinarians! Why is that true?

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2. Some parents discipline because their children bother them.

What are some wrong goals that a parent who has this attitude might have?

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Note: Remember Ephesians 6:4 and the goal of parenting!

3. Some parents discipline their children without ever praising them.

Romans 13:7 *“Render to all what is due them: . . . honor to whom honor.”*

4. Some parents discipline without teaching.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 *“And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”*

5. Some parents will say, “We tried spanking, but it just teaches our children to hit” or “it doesn’t work.”

Why might believers have these conclusions?

- **Unbelief:** If as a parent you are not convinced that God’s instructions are adequate, and right, you will not carry them out.
- **Inconsistency:** A “double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8) An inconsistent discipline plan (or lack of a plan) trains children “My parents discipline by how they feel, not by biblical absolutes”.
- **Improper methods:** Spanking in uncontrolled anger, punching, swatting a diapered bottom, focusing on punishment -- these methods are ineffective (in terms of godly goals) because they are incorrect. Improper methods do not promise the benefits of Proverbs 22:15. Additionally, at times the spanking may be done right, but the teaching or “admonition of the Lord” is inadequate or incorrect.
- **Faintheartedness:** Parents must be “in it for the long haul”. Persistence is required, regardless of immediate results. This may be true of an isolated discipline encounter, or the long term.

C. Some parents believe that discipline hinders a child’s creativity and potential.

D. Some parents believe that discipline will warp a child’s personality.

What have we already studied about the nature of a child (i.e. how each person is born) that helps us to properly address this wrong idea about discipline?

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Psalm 58:3 *“The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.”*

## II. Parents Must Develop the Right Attitude about Discipline.

It is so important for parents to be thinking biblically about their responsibilities. It is also important for the parents to help their children to be thinking biblically.

A. Remember that our Lord corrects those He loves for their benefit.

Hebrews 12:5-9 **“And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM. FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”** It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?”

B. Be convinced that God’s way is best!

While it is true that no parent takes delight in administering any form of discipline, especially the “rod” or spanking a younger child, God’s Word instructs parents on the use of that form of correction.

- Proverbs 22:15 **“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”**
- Proverbs 13: 24 **“He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently”**
- Proverbs 23: 13-14 **“Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. 14 You shall beat him with the rod, And deliver his soul from Sheol.”**

Other verses to consider:

- Proverbs 19:18 **“Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death.”**
- Proverbs 18:19 (KJV) **“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”**
- Hebrews 12:11 **“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”**

List 4-5 reasons from the above verses for the proper use of the rod in biblical discipline:

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The Bible does not say “all behavior problems will be solved by spanking”. However, after reviewing the verses above, is there an option for the believer to NOT spank when a child has acted in such a way that the Bible defines as “foolish”? \_\_\_\_\_.

C. View biblical discipline as having the goal of correction, not punishment.

Punishment is looking back, correction is looking to the future. Parents should want their child(ren) to be developing the character of Jesus Christ so that, when the child is older and the parents are not around, the child will make the right choices based on internal convictions.

|       |              |                |              |        |
|-------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------|
| Past  | (Punishment) | <b>Offense</b> | (Correction) | Future |
| _____ |              | _____          | _____        |        |

Which focus do you read in the following statements?

- *“I told you not to do it, and now you’re going to pay!”*

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- *“I’ve had it, you’re grounded!”*

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- *“You did not listen to your Mother. Instead, you chose to disobey. You must learn to obey. Now, what does God expect your Mother to do when you disobey?”*

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D. Plan ahead and learn to communicate with the child(ren).

Giving expectations ahead of time is like God. Just as He clearly communicated with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, parents must clearly communicate with their children.

In order to *correct* and to set our children on the *proper path*, we *must* plan ahead. If a parent was God, he/she could administer the perfect discipline at the perfect time to the perfect degree, to the correct person, with pure motives. Since parents are not God, they should plan in order to avoid sin.

What cautions do the following verses give to parents?

- Proverbs 18:13 warns: ***“He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him.”***

Caution: \_\_\_\_\_

- Mark 3:25 ***“And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.”*** and Genesis 2:24 ***“And the two (husband and wife) shall become one flesh.”***

Caution: \_\_\_\_\_

- Proverbs 19:18 ***“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”***  
***“While there is hope” makes it clear that there is a time limit.***

Caution: \_\_\_\_\_

- Proverbs 22:15 ***“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.”***

Caution: \_\_\_\_\_

- Matthew 18:15 ***“And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”***

Caution: Discipline and spankings are to be done in private. That eliminates spanking in public and/or with others present (especially siblings, etc.)

- James 1:19-20 ***“But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”***

Caution: *“Slow to anger”* means not reactive or not impulsive. Parents need a discipline plan and routine, then carefully and thoughtfully carry it out. Seeking to honor God will avoid excessive force, or abuse.

- Matthew 7:5 ***“first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brothers eye”*** (or in this case, your child’s).

Caution: \_\_\_\_\_

E. Some additional study: What Scripture above would be helpful in the following situations?

| Situation   | Scripture |
|---|-----------|
| <i>“Just wait until your Father gets home!”</i>   |           |
| <i>“Do you intend to obey right away with a happy, submissive spirit?”</i>                |           |
| <i>“I don’t care what you did, you’re all going to get a spanking, NOW!”</i>              |           |
| <i>“You can’t spank a child his age... He’s too young.”</i>                               |           |
| <i>“Mommy never spanks me for that.”</i>  |           |
| <i>“I don’t know what happened... I just started to spank him and I couldn’t stop...”</i> |           |
| <i>“That spanking had to hurt- my hand hurts”</i>   |           |
| <i>“OK- you want to throw a fit in public? You’re gonna get a whipping right here.”</i>   |           |

“Nobody’s going to tell me what to do- I’ll raise my kids my way.”

**III. Parents Must Include the Necessary Ingredients for Effective Discipline.**

A lot of people want to have children, but they don’t want to be parents. Parenting takes wisdom from God, a standard of righteousness, a willing parent, and a lot of work. There are some “ingredients” for effective discipline.

A. A Parent needs to have some convictions.

- 1. That children are a gift from God.

Psalm 127:3 **“Behold, children are a gift of the LORD; the fruit of the womb is a reward.”**

- 2. That parents are God’s representatives and will someday give an account for their parenting.

2 Corinthians 5:10 **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”**

- 3. That God will give parents wisdom and guidance through His sufficient Word.

James 1:5 **“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”**

2 Peter 1:3 **“Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”**

- 4. That it is loving to give limits

Placing limits on a young person’s life (from a small infant to teens) does not cause or heal a problem. Limits simply reveal the need for teaching. Children not practiced at handling limits will not be prepared to handle life!

What are some examples of the “limits” that each young person will face in his/her lifetime?

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It is a part of life to allow a young person to learn from his/her mistakes. However, parents are wise to be very selective in which mistakes they allow their child to make while that child is a part of their home.

What criteria could a parent use to determine what kind of a “mistake” a young person would be allowed to make?

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B. A parent need to give careful attention to the “rules” which are to be used for correction and guidance.

- 1. Rules should be *reasonable*

Even God’s commands are reasonable for us (1 John 5:3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome**).

- 2. Rules should be *definable*.

How a parent defines a “clean room” and how a child defines it are quite different!

What are some of the consequences of failing to communicate clearly about the definition of terms?

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- 3. Rules should be *enforceable*.

What are some ways to be more balanced and present consequences that are more “enforceable”?:

*“Go to your room. You’re grounded for life!”*: \_\_\_\_\_

*“Don’t ever talk that way again.”*: \_\_\_\_\_

*“Sit in that chair and don’t you move till I come back.”*: \_\_\_\_\_



C. Parents need to establish appropriate rewards and corrections as a part of the discipline process.

1. All the way through the Bible, God uses “*cause and effect*” as a part of correction for His people.

List some specific examples or specific references where this is true.

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2. Consider the following observations regarding the use of “cause and effect” for correction:
  - a. It is more immediate for small children. Consider Ecclesiastes 8:11 ***“Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.”***
  - b. It is focused on a daily habit that needs to be changed.

No child (or adult) can change ten things at once. Select two or three of the areas that need the most work and concentrate on those particular habits.

While changing behavior is important, what are some proper motives that should be producing change?

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***IMPORTANT:*** Even in the use of “*cause and effect*,” a child focus must be drawn to pleasing God by being like Jesus Christ. While there are a variety of motives presented in the Scripture (blessings for obedience, discipline for disobedience, rewards or the loss of them at the Judgment Seat of Christ), each motivation eventually points to the glory of God and the work of Jesus Christ as the Son of God!

D. Parents must follow through in love as correction is carried out.

1. Teach the child to ask forgiveness (not saying, “I’m sorry” – that simply expresses an emotion) from the appropriate person(s) involved [the individual(s) and God] and take responsibility for the sin committed.

1 John 1:9 ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”***

2. Reassure the child of your love for them and your commitment to help them be pleasing to God.
3. Give them help and assistance where needed. Sometimes a “warning” (if not abused by overuse) can be used as a teaching tool and lets the child know you want to help them to obey God.
4. Remember that a parent’s ***ACTIONS*** speak louder than his/her ***WORDS!***

What are the parenting implications of Paul’s words to Timothy?

1 Timothy 4:12 ***“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”***

(See handouts on “*Suggested Steps When Spanking*” and “*An Abbreviated Plan for Child-Rearing*”)



### **Suggested steps when spanking:**

1. Give clear expectations ahead of time. Do not repeat warnings. If a single warning is given don't threaten- rather *inform*.
2. Determine if an offense has been committed. If so, proceed to private setting. En route parent is to check self control, review discipline plan, and pray. (*"Remove log"*)
3. Discuss *"What was the expected behavior, attitude?" "What did you do?" "What should you/could you have done?" "What does the Bible call what you did?" "Who chose to do wrong?" "What does the Bible tell Daddy to do when you disobey?"*
4. Have the child assume a proper position. For the smaller child across the lap is appropriate, for the larger child leaning over a bed is safe. For a child who is out of control restraint by the parent may be necessary until control is achieved.
5. Slowly, lovingly, prayerfully, and thoughtfully proceed with the spanking. Use a rod, predetermine the number of spanks, use the wrist rather than a full arm swing, see that contact is made with the child's hindquarters.
6. Stop, and give the child an opportunity to regain composure. Then discuss with the child how they did with the spanking- *"You did a good job", "You did not stand still",* etc. Ask the child the diagnostic questions in question 5, and assess for a "change in direction". If he is still rebellious, disrespectful, belligerent, and without repentance discuss that the facial expressions, tones, words, or actions are not showing the fruit of repentance and that another spanking will be necessary. Repeat the above steps.
7. If repentance is evidenced discuss plans for forgiveness and restoration, pray for forgiveness and give thanks. If repentance is not evidenced pray that God will bring conviction, and that the child will be protected from danger. Encourage the child to choose to please God by obeying. Be careful to not bring up the disobedience wrongly when forgiveness has been granted.
8. Lastly, show love to the child. Hug, give a kiss, remind them of the purpose of discipline.

### Encourage a right attitude about discipline:

Proverbs 1:7 *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

Proverbs 12:1 *"WHOEVER loves discipline loves knowledge, But he who hates reproof is stupid."*

Hebrews 12:7-8 *"It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons."*

Hebrews 12:11 *"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."*

*"Don't just keep slapping them back on track, go ahead of them and lay some good track."*