

Family Matters

Part 11

Corrective “Discipline”

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,
but **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**”
Ephesians 6:4*

“Bring Them Up”

Usually by default, we bring up our kids in the same way we were brought up as kids – whether what happened was right or wrong. Many times we are blown like a leaf in the wind (*Eph. 4:14; Prov. 16:25; Col. 2:8; Rom. 12:2*) listening to every new psychological parenting trend on raising kids that presents itself in this fallen culture. Some parents just let their children persist in their own foolish bent without any real correction, and hope it all turns out ok in the end, which it doesn't. Without absolute truth to refer to, young parents are torn between friends, family, and even social media blogs who only present their opinions on how to raise up kids with no real guarantee of any results. Many parents have adopted a moralist philosophy thinking that if they can just get their kids to do “good” through whatever means, they will be good, and therefore be raising them “the right way”. Parents who simply try to control their children's outward behavior, will find they have completely missed the root problem; “the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (*Heb. 4:12*). Parents are the primary discipling agent in a child's life. It must be a joint effort between both father and mother together to raise children (*Eph. 6:1-4*).

Ephesians 6:4 says, “**Bring them up**” (“*ektrepho*”). This means to tenderly care for children, by providing a healthy environment to enhance their growth. Parents are to be active, not passive, and present, not absent, which is reflected in a continuous action throughout their child's life. Our short window with our children is basically 21 years before they are off and on their own. “Bring them up” gives the idea of a “tender shoot” – a young fragile plant needing close attention until it matures (*Is. 53:2; Prov. 4:3*) and is able to stand on its own. The idea is of nurture, to care for, to protect, and to provide for a child's basic needs. It is in the imperative voice which is a direct command. “Up” implies both formal

and informal training from birth to the day they leave our home. In *Ephesians 6:1* the Greek word translated “children” (“teknon”) is a broad term referring to the process from birth onward. Setting up structure early in an infant’s routine will set the course for his future disciplined life. The early years of correction and training are crucial for the later years. I will always be my children’s father and they will always be my son or daughter, even after they are out of my home, but the most crucial time in their development is their early formative years. I cannot go to sleep at the wheel. I must “bring them up” by God’s grace. John MacArthur said, “What ruins most children is not what their parents do to them, but what they do not do for them” (SCP, p. 147).

Discipline is primarily internal training dealing with the heart, not so much external training dealing with visible moral behavior. Many parents wrongly focus only on a child’s external obedience, conformity, or compliance and neglect shaping the child’s heart, which is the basis for those external actions and attitudes. Parents who concentrate all their energies on correcting external behavior, or staving off misbehavior with threats of punishment, may be doing little more than training hypocrites or good actors. If the threat of pain or the promise of reward is the only motivation for a child to obey, children will perform only in the presence of the threat or promise. Jesus spoke about this problem when He addressed the Pharisees in *Matthew 23* whose external obedience to law was only an outer facade which cloaked their wicked heart. *1 Samuel 16:7* says, “*Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” The goal is to move children from fearing the threat of punishment to a godly fear and desire to obey and please the Lord.

I don’t think that Christian parents intentionally set out to produce little Pharisees or children good at faking it, but they must address the heart of the matter. Getting control of your child and shaping his behavior is a great challenge, but we should be more concerned with the true condition of the heart. Sadly, some Christian parents think they are successful because they have taught their children to say, “Yes Sir” or “No Ma’m”, who demonstrate proper manners, who dress appropriately at church, who are polite, who serve others when asked, but behind the parents’ backs and out of the public eye, those same children are the most ill-behaved, unruly kids in the church. If you really want to know the truth, ask their school teachers or Sunday School teachers or youth leaders what their

view of the child is when you as their parent are not around. A momentary change in behavior will not fix the child's root problem. Depravity is a heart problem. A child will not outgrow his depravity. Behaviorism is not the answer, but the gospel is because it changes the child's heart from the inside out. New birth produces biblical morality (2 Cor. 5:17). If parents reach the heart through right discipline, the desired behavior will follow permanently and volitionally. The Bible highlights the heart.

Proverbs 4:23 "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life."

Proverbs 23:7 "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." (NKJV)

Luke 6:45 "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." (NIV)

Mark 7:21-23 "For from within, out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts... all these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

"In The Discipline Of The Lord"

The Board of Education Applied To The Seat Of Wisdom & Knowledge

A recent Fresno Bee headline on December 13, 2018 read, "California politician arrested after spanking his 7-year-old daughter." A Democratic assemblyman in California was arrested on suspicion of child cruelty after allegedly spanking his daughter. He claimed that he had only done so as a means of punishment. When his daughter went to school the next day, she allegedly told her teacher what had happened and expressed how she was upset about it, sparking an investigation by Child Protective Services (CPS). "I disciplined her as a consequence to something she did. This is something that's really rare for us. It's a tool of last resort but it's something that we do," the father said. The parent was arrested and accused of willful cruelty to a child. Barbara Greenberg, a Family Psychologist, said, "Anything that hurts a child physically and emotionally, in my opinion, is abuse and should be reported." "Nothing good comes from [spanking]." "There are much better ways to teach your children, and losing control and putting your hands on a child, there's nothing good that comes from it." "You don't create kids with self-esteem and with the ability to handle

frustration by spanking them.” If convicted, the assemblyman could have faced up to six months in jail and possible probation. What is this world coming to? What used to be seen as normal, acceptable parental discipline, is now viewed as dangerous to a child and possibly criminal. We sure don’t want to hurt a child’s self-esteem do we by keeping them from something they want? People now put spanking in the same category of child abuse. Yet we wonder what to do with little Jimmy who is an absolute terror and who will not obey us – or anyone else for that matter. Just ask a public school teacher about discipline in the classroom. Education has become survival and very little is being taught. Containment takes up most of the time in school, which is a mirror of the home.

Every parent wants their child to obey them, yet they never seem to arrive at actually training their children in obedience. I am amazed the things parents say when they are upset. “Do you want a spanking?” What’s a child supposed to say to that question? Yes, actually I do? “You’d better do what I ask before I count to five!” The child is creative enough to ignore the 1-4 count, and only begins to respond when the parent finally gets to “5” with an angry, explosive, do-or-die tone of voice. Until that happens, the child knows he has all the time in the world. Is that obedience? I think not. “Don’t make me come in there...” “You’d better get your act together buddy, or you’re going to get it...” “I have had it up to here...,” where ever “here” is. Parents say some of the craziest things in their moments of desperation. All of these responses only hinder real discipline. Mark Twain said that parents should put their children in a barrel and feed them through a hole until they become teenagers, then they should plug the hole.

I can still remember in 5th grade joining in with a group of boys who got in trouble at school. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong group of people. *1 Corinthians 15:33* says, “*Bad company corrupts good morals.*” I wasn’t the guilty party, but I sure wasn’t innocent by association. That was the first and last time I ever was sent to the principal’s office. But when the news got home, my unhappy mother said those all familiar words which I dreaded, “Wait until your father gets home...” That was the longest day of my life as I waited for the unavoidable. Let’s just say that my father was not pleased either with me when he came through the door. He told me exactly why I was getting a spanking, and then reached above the door where the paddle was kept in my room, and he gave me just what I deserved on my behind. He put the fear of God in me that

day. Yes, I lived to tell it, but it was firmly imprinted on my mind and my behind, and I knew that I would never get in trouble like that again. The paddle actually had written on it, the “Board of Education applied to the seat of Wisdom and Knowledge.” I have a similar paddle like it in my office over my door to this day as a reminder of the value of correctly spanking. Looking back, I respect my dad (*Heb. 12:9-11*) loving me enough to do the hard thing of disciplining me in those moments I desperately needed firm correction. Effective discipline requires great resolve and perseverance. We grew up in a family that believed God had given parents the responsibility to spank their children, which resolutely taught me clearly what was right and wrong, and that type of discipline moved me to choose what was right. Those early years shaped my future in ways I only now realize how significant that discipline was in shaping my character and my values, and I deeply appreciate and respect my parents for training me by it.

Discipline

The Greek word “*paideia*” means “training,” “nurture,” “correction,” or “chastisement” through orderly structure, rules, and correction in wisdom. It involves developing good habits. (*Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 12:5-11*). The Greek word “*gymnazo*” (like gymnastics or gymnasium) means “exercise” or “training” (*1 Tim. 4:7*). It is a habit or practice which has been developed by continuous exercise. This training comes by practice (internship or apprenticeship). The word “disciple” is the root of “discipline.” Discipline is a form of discipleship. Discipline involves explanation, demonstration, observation, and practice. The Greek word “*nouthesia*” means “admonition” which gives the idea of rebuke, warning, or reprimand (*1 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 5:14*). Synonyms include: correction, disciple, chastisement, punishment, reproof, and rebuke.

Discipline is not based on one’s personal preferences of right or wrong or my likes or dislikes which my child may choose differently, but on Biblical absolute truth and training towards godly character. The ultimate source of authority is God. God said it, not just me desiring a certain behavior from my kids (God’s standard of behavior). Correction is not just punishing offensive behavior which I personally don’t prefer, but correcting an offence against our Holy God (*Psalms 51:4*). (Example: It should not be “stop arguing because it bothers me,” but that we should not argue because it is an offence against God. Sin is lawlessness or breaking God’s law (*1 Jn. 3:4*). The purpose of righteous law is to define right and

wrong, who says (authority), and reveal bad behavior which is in contrast to the nature and character of God. We correct to bring someone in line with God's character, not necessarily our own. God's commands are not burdensome (1 Jn. 5:3) because they are altogether right and true.

Disobedience in Old Testament Israel had serious consequences. *Deuteronomy 21:18-21* says, "...a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him... all the men of his town shall stone him to death..." There was very little juvenile delinquency in those days in Israel (*Deut. 27:16; Ex. 21:15,17; Lev. 20:9; Prov. 20:20; Matt. 15:4; Mk. 7:10*). The kids that rejected their parent's discipline didn't live long and usually had rocks in their head.

The Bible has much to say about corrective discipline.

Discipline:

Proverbs 3:11,12 "My son, do not reject the **discipline** of the LORD, or loathe His reproof. For whom the LORD loves He reproofs, even as a father the son in whom he delights."

Proverbs 10:13b "A rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding."

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

Proverbs 13:1a "A wise son accepts his father's **discipline**."

Proverbs 13:18 "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects **discipline**. But he who regards reproof will be honored."

Proverbs 13:24 "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him **disciplines** him diligently."

Proverbs 15:5 "A fool rejects his father's **discipline**, but he who regards reproof is sensible."

Proverbs 15:10 "Grievous punishment is for him who forsakes the way, he who hates reproof will die."

Proverbs 19:18 "**Discipline** your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death."

Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it."

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

*Proverbs 23:13,14 “Do not hold back **discipline** from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.”*

Proverbs 29:15 “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”

Proverbs 29:17 “Correct your son and he will give you comfort, he will also delight your soul.”

Psalms 39:11a “With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity.”

Jeremiah 10:24 “Correct me, O LORD, but with justice; not with Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing.” (directed at the sinful nation of Israel)

Jeremiah 46:28c “I will correct you properly, and by no means leave you unpunished.”

1 Corinthians 4:14 “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”

1 Thessalonians 5:14 “Admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

*Hebrews 12:7b,9,10,11 “...God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ...We had earthly fathers to **discipline** us and we respected them. For they **disciplined** us for a short time as seemed best to them; but He **disciplines** us for our good, so that we may share in His holiness. 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.”*

Parents tend to focus on their child’s outward behavior rather than what is happening on inside of the child. We spend a whole lot of time dealing with trying to control and contain our kids to the point of utter exhaustion. We spend most of our emotional energy on *what* they are doing, but not so much on *why* they are doing it or the heart that is producing it. The heart is what determines a child’s behavior (*Prov. 4:23; Lk. 6:45*).

Ginger Plowman said, “Because God is concerned with the issues of the heart, Biblical discipline involves much more than outward behavior. If you can reach the heart, the behavior will take care of itself. In order for us to reach the

heart of our child, we must realize that there is far more to parenting than getting our child to act right. We have to get him to think right and to be motivated out of a love of virtue rather than a fear of punishment. We do this by training him in righteousness... which can only come from the Word of God. It is easy for us to tell our children that they have done wrong and chastise them for it, but it takes much more preparation, discipline, understanding, and self-control on our part to actually instruct them according to God's Word." (Plowman, p. 26) *"The rod and reproof give wisdom" (Prov. 29:15a).*

Biblical Discipline Is:

- **Loving discipline**

*Proverbs 3:11,12 "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD **loves**, He reproveth, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights."*

*Proverbs 13:24 "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who **loves** him disciplines him diligently."*

Dr. Ross Campbell in his book, How To Really Love Your Child, writes, "Discipline is immeasurably easier when the child feels genuinely loved... If a child does not feel genuinely loved and accepted... he has real difficulty identifying with his parents and their values." "Unless children feel their parent's love and acceptance, they will probably not internalize the lessons you are trying to teach them. Your worldview will not penetrate their hearts." (Ross Campbell, How To Really Love Your Child, Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985, pg. 80, 81). Parents need to balance between two extremes: love without discipline and discipline without love. Both are hazardous to a child's soul.

- **Painful discipline**

If it doesn't hurt, it will not catch their attention, nor move them toward doing what is right and good. I used to run cross country and I learned that you have to run through the pain because in the end, you will be much stronger and have greater stamina to face the real difficulties of life. No pain, no gain.

*Psalms 118:18 "The LORD has disciplined me **severely**, but He has not given me over to death."*

*Proverbs 20:30 "Blows that **hurt** cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the heart." (NKJV)*

*Proverbs 23:13, 14 “Do not hold back discipline from the child; although you **strike** him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.”*

*Hebrews 12:11 “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but **painful**.”
(NIV)*

- **Effectual discipline** (it produces an effect)

*Proverbs 19:18 “Discipline your son while there is **hope**; and do not desire his death.”*

*Proverbs 29:15, 17 “The rod and reproof **give wisdom**, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. Correct your son and he will give you **comfort**, he will also **delight** your soul.”*

*Hebrews 12:7b,9,10,11 “...God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ...We had earthly fathers to **discipline** us and we **respected** them. For they **disciplined** us for a short time as seemed best to them; but He **disciplines** us for our good, so that we may share in His **holiness**. 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**.”*

There is a direct connection between how a child is brought up and how they turn out. The early years are foundational for what is to come. *Galatians 6:7 says, “A man reaps what he sows.”* Look at the final results to evaluate if you are properly correcting your children. What is your discipline producing? The proof is in the pudding.

Parental Expectations When Disciplining Children Should Include:

“All the way, the right way, right away, with a right heart.”

1. Exact, complete obedience (partial obedience is disobedience)
2. Timely obedience (the first time asked/promptly) (delayed obedience is disobedience)
3. With proper respect of parental authority (“Yes, mom/Yes, dad”)
4. With proper tone, body language, and proper attitude demonstrating inward obedience.

Many children will tend to be spanked more for their wrong attitude than wrong behavior. When a child responds with a proper attitude and action, an appropriate emotion will usually follow. A right attitude comes from a right heart and is a choice of the will.

Questions Parents Should Ask Prior To Discipline:

- Is my child physically or mentally capable of doing what I have asked?
- Was I clear on what I expected and did the child clearly hear and understand what I was asking? (not problem of selective hearing/disability?)
- Are there any mitigating factors that might have caused the child not to hear or understand my requests? (example: an ear infection might affect hearing)
- Do they understand the levels of consequence for their choices of misbehavior?
- Do I have all the facts right as to what has happened and who did what to whom? Is there a clear line between who is in the right and who is in the wrong? (*Prov. 17:26; 18:13, 15, 17; 21:15; 29:20*)
- Is this an issue of rebellion, disobedience, lying (deception), or disrespect which demands the rod/spanking immediately?
- Is this a lesser offense where there are other consequences for correction?
 - Do they acknowledge what they should/ought to have done/said instead?
 - Do they need to restate something they said now rightly in a Biblical way?
 - Do they need to lose a privilege, redo a task again rightly, or finish a task they started and did not complete because of partial obedience?
 - Was it an issue of timing or follow through? (delayed obedience)
 - Do they need to reconcile with another person?
 - Do they need to make restitution for their actions?
- Have I clearly labeled their sin as God sees it, explained what God expects, and stated how their actions, speech, or attitude was wrong?
- Have I required the child to acknowledge his sin, accept responsibility, ask forgiveness, or communicated how to make things right (oughts)?
- Was there any attitude or non-verbal response which must be confronted or changed? (stubbornness, pouting, sulking, haughtiness, unrighteous anger, irritability, grumbling, complaining, shifting blame, or giving excuses)

- Am I in a right place where I can administer discipline rightly or righteously (my attitude, controlling my anger, my own heart/emotions, my location)
 - Why am I so angry right now? (Do I personally need time to regroup?)
 - Why did what they did or said bother me so much?
- Is this the right timing for discipline? (*Prov. 15:23; 25:11*)
- Do I have other children to take into account?
- How should I communicate this discipline situation to my spouse?
- Am I being consistent in my application of discipline?
 - Do I tend to make threats and not follow through?
 - Am I lenient one time and harsh another which causes confusion?
 - Do I issue a warning or just come out swinging?
 - Do I consistently expect instant obedience or tend to give passes?
 - Do I say it once or say it multiple times before I take action?
 - Do I have to raise my voice several levels before the kids take action?
 - Am I consistent with each child?
- Am I doing or saying this in love? (*Eph. 4:15; Prov. 15:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8*)
- Have I prayed about this situation and is my heart right? (*1 Thess. 5:17*)
- Is this a case of blatant rebellion or disrespect, or just laziness or a bad attitude that needs redirection?
- Does the consequence change with the age of the child?
- Is this a first-time mistake or is there a continual unacceptable pattern in my child's life?
- Does my child need a gentle reminder to finish what has been requested, or additional consequences be added, or is a spanking in order.
- Is any reward appropriate for those who obeyed and went beyond what was asked?
- Rather than focusing on the symptomatic or surface problems, what is the root cause of my child's unwanted attitude and behavior that I need to be addressing Biblically? (pride, selfishness, laziness, greed, anger, idolatry, lying, rebellion, unbelief, false teaching)

Discipline Must Be Done:

- **Because the parent loves**

Proverbs 3:12 "For whom the LORD loves He reproveth, even as a father the son in whom he delights."

Proverbs 13:24 "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly." (NKJV)

Proverbs 27:5 "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed..."

Revelation 3:19 "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, therefore be zealous and repent."

A parent must love his child enough to give him what God says he needs, even if it is not what the child wants to hear or experience.

- **Using self-control**

A parent should never overpower a child or use brute force to pin a child down. If a child is squirming or resisting, you must make it clear that his punishment will be greater if he continues to resist correction. You must not fight with your child. If you do wrestle with your child, there will be a day when they are bigger and stronger, and then you will have a serious problem. *Exodus 21:15 says, "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death."*

Another problem is if a child turns discipline into a game of "catch me if you can." Again, the same rule applies, either he stops running or he will get greater consequences. That usually causes a child to pause to count the cost. Remember, if you say it, mean it, and then do it. *Proverbs 28:23 says, "He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue."* Don't be guilty of giving empty threats you don't apply or just yell with no consequence. Children learn quickly that you don't mean what you say and they have nothing to worry about when you blow up.

- **With clear explanation & understanding**

Effective disciplinarians are clear on the issues of sin and authority. Wise parents aim their discipline at the heart. Christian parents discipline heart attitudes, not behaviors. A child needs to know what they have done wrong, why you are spanking them, what God expects of them, and what they should have done that was right instead. "What could you have done differently in this situation that would have brought about a different conclusion?"

- **Controlled**

All discipline must be done with righteous anger and under control. *Ephesians 4:26* says, “Be angry, and yet do not sin...” You cannot correct your child rightly if you yourself are out of control.

- **Age appropriate, moderately measured, carefully considered, reasonable, and repeated until desired results are accomplished.**

Each child has a different level of pain tolerance. We don't need to exert the same force with each child. Some children require five spankings in a lifetime, others require five every morning. Dads usually apply more strength to spanking than mom. Be careful if you choose to tell your child what to expect in the number of swats that are coming (conditional on a right response). You may need to add to the total because of the lack of change in the heart of the child. A question to ask is, ‘Does the nature of the offense require more than just a little correction? To what extent? Biblical corrective discipline should be firm, consistent, steady, effective, unwavering, and always done in love.

- **Proportionate, sufficient to fit the crime**

The spanking must always be proportionate to the offense. It should not be disproportionate, nor hasty, nor over or under corrected - similar to driving and staying in a lane on a highway. If you over correct, you may be in a ditch. If you under correct, the object you meant to avoid may be through your front window. The time should fit the crime.

- **With the right method or means**

Use a proper instrument (rod) that correctly accomplishes the desired result, and which does not physically harm or scar the child. The Bible does not specify what the “rod” should be, nor does it state that the open hand should not be used. I believe God gave us two hands for a reason, and we carry them with us wherever we go.

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

Proverbs 23:13,14 “Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt strike him with the rod and shall deliver his soul from Sheol.” (LSB)

- **Intentionally and effectively**

A parent should inflict a painful consequence which is thorough enough to cause pain, grief, sorrow and bring about a repentant heart change (“no pain no gain”), but not to the point of harming the child. Is your use of the rod yielding any positive results? If your kids are laughing through your correction or acting like nothing just happened, then the spanking was not done correctly or effectively. Did the child stop moving long enough to know he had been spanked? If not, possibly they never felt the correction because it did not do the job. Did you try to spank through clothing or use an instrument which caused little or no pain? Do your children quickly return to the same sin? If so, then the correction was not done rightly. You have not been firm enough if rebellion is still in a child’s heart.

Proverbs 15:10 “There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way, whoever hates reproof will die.” (ESV)

Proverbs 19:18 “Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.”

Hebrews 12:11 “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. But afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

- **Consistently applied**

Parents who consistently discipline when a child is young, will find that a child will respond positively later in life, and the necessity to discipline will decrease over time because the battles were won early. Parents who fail to consistently apply the Biblical principles of correction will find the need for discipline becomes more frequent and difficult as the child gets older. The beach-head for parental authority and honor has not been established, and the child’s heart has not been adequately addressed. Every time your child rebels and you ignore it, you are training your child. Have you tolerated consistent disobedience through the years (*Hag. 1:6*)? If you keep doing what you are doing, you will only get what you get. This is consistency in the wrong direction. Many parents were baking a bitter pie and now are eating crow. Faithful correction will yield a good fruitful harvest of righteousness (*Gal. 6:9; 2 Cor. 9:10; Heb. 12:11*).

- **Applied quickly after an offense**

Correction should be applied soon after the offense (timely, immediate, decisive) without delay. If you are at a location where discipline is inconvenient or difficult to apply free from the public eye, go home where it can be administered timely, appropriately, privately, and effectively.

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."

- **In a proper area**

I recommend spanking on a child's bare bottom or back of their hand. I do not believe it is appropriate to start swinging anywhere. God created the gluteus maximus for this purpose.

Proverbs 10:13 "A rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding."

Proverbs 26:3 "A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools."

- **By both husband and wife** (being in agreement)

Both husband and wife must be working together as a team.

Ephesians 6:1-4 "Children... obey your parents..."

Proverbs 19:18 "Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death." (Discipline given by someone not the parent is completely different.)

Proverbs 13:1 "A wise son accepts his father's discipline..." (15:20)

Proverbs 23:24,25 "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad and let her rejoice who gave birth to you."

Proverbs 1:8 "Do not forsake your mother's teaching." (6:20; 31:1)

- **In private**

Do not discipline to embarrass or humiliate a child in public. (*Matt. 18:15*)

- **In a way that shapes the heart without breaking the spirit**

Our goal is heart change, not just causing pain. Please keep this in mind.

Proverbs 4:26 "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

- **Followed by a time of reconciliation and reaffirming love**

How can I reaffirm my love for my child after I discipline?

2 Corinthians 2:6-8 "Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary, you should rather

forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.” (Col. 3:13)

- **Followed by a repentant heart and desire for restitution**

Is there anything that must be done to make things right? (2 Cor. 7:11)

- **Courageously and graciously**

Parents must courageously correct with much thought and prayer and do so in Godly fear. Raising kids is a huge responsibility before God. It literally can make the difference between life (heaven) & death (hell).

James 5:20 says, “He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

Jude 23 “Save others, snatching them out of the fire, and on some have mercy with fear hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.”

Proverbs 23:13,14 “Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.”

Questions To Consider After Correction:

(Adapted from Lou Priolo, Teach Them Diligently, p.67)

- Does my child need to still change his thinking (or attitude) about anything?
- Have I probed the possible heart motives behind my child’s actions (*Heb. 4:12*)?
- Has my child asked for forgiveness or confessed his sin to those he has offended?
- Is restitution appropriate to make everything right? What still needs to happen?
- Is there anything that should be removed to prevent further temptation?
- What additional accountability should be put in place?
- Does my child know and understand what God expects of him the next time he is in a similar circumstance? What is the right thing to do?
- Is there something he must do or redo now to learn to practice righteousness?
- Have I reaffirmed my love for my child and clarified the reason for his need for correction, and my acting in obedience to God?
- Has the correction resulted in a restored relationship and peace in our home?

- Is there anything, I as the parent, needs to do differently, to be more Biblical in my responsibility to correct my child, or in my attitude portrayed in the discipline of my child?

The Goal Of Biblical Discipline

The goal is to correct, not merely to punish. The Bible not only has the power to convict of sin, but the power to correct sin. **Correction** (Gk. “*epanorthoso*”) “means to make something stand again” or to “rectify” or “make right” what is or has gone wrong. **Admonish** (“*nouthesis*”) means to “straighten out what is wrong” gives the idea of resetting the bone that is broken. It involves chastisement for wrongdoing (lawlessness/or breaking law). Law always brings wrath when it is broken (*Rom. 4:15*).

*2 Samuel 7:14 “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will **correct** him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men.”*

*Proverbs 29:17 “**Correct** your son and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul.”*

*Jeremiah 10:24 “**Correct** me O LORD, but with justice; not with Your anger or You will bring me to nothing.”*

*Jeremiah 46:28 “...I will **correct** you properly and by no means leave you unpunished.”*

*2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for **correction**, for training in righteousness...”*

*1 Corinthians 4:14 “I do not write these things to shame you, but to **admonish** you as my beloved children.”*

*1 Thessalonians 5:14 “**Admonish** the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak...”*

Parents are God’s instruments of correction for a child. We are to train our kids to practice the correct Biblical alternative to their sinful behavior or attitude, and do so until they get it right - even when they may not be repentant. The correct process is to identify the sin, repent of that sin, ask forgiveness, understand the correct behavior, and respond and practice what is right. The ultimate goal is to clear the guilty conscience through true repentance, and to be reconciled with God and man. Right discipline will shift the child’s obedience motivated from fear of punishment, to the desire to obey his parents and to

please Christ, solely because it is the right thing to do. It will train children to think Biblically and truthfully. When a child comes to a saving knowledge of Christ, they will have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

*Ephesians 6:1-3 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, **for this is right.**"*

J.C. Ryle said, "Parents, determine to make your children obey you, though it may cost you much trouble and cost them many tears. Let there be no questioning and reasoning and disputing and delaying and answering again. When you give them a command, let them see plainly that you will have it done... It ought to be the mark of well-trained children that they do whatsoever their parents command them... cheerfully, willfully, and at once." "Teach them to obey while young, or else they will be fretting against God all their lives long and wear themselves out with the vain idea of being independent of His control." "You must not wonder that men refuse to obey their Father which is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is upon earth." (The Duties Of Parents, p. 19-21)

Charles Spurgeon in his book Come Ye Children said, "If (a child) learn(s) obedience and submission early, it may save a thousand tears from the child's eyes, and as many from the mother's heart."

A child must know there are legitimate consequences to his chosen action, and he has the freedom to choose accordingly. Correction is attached to every choice. No child should be punished unless he understands when he chooses to do wrong that he thereby chooses the penalty of that wrong action. Remind the child that rewards or consequences are the result of their personal choices.

When Should Parents Spank Or Use The Rod?

- (1) For willful, deliberate acts of rebellion or disobedience (defiance or challenging parental authority)
- (2) For dishonor or disrespect (talking back, sassiness, sarcasm, or haughtiness)
- (3) For lying (untruthfulness/falsehood/deceit) (*Ps. 10:7; 34:13; 101:7*)

Charles Bridges said, "Let it (the rod) be reserved, at least in its more serious forms, for willfulness. The rod is medicine, not food; the remedy for the occasional diseases of the constitution, not the daily regimen for life and

nourishment. To convert medicine into daily food gradually destroys its remedial quality.” (Bridges, Proverbs, p. 430; Withhold Not Correction, p. 95)

The Biblical References To The Rod Of Correction:

*2 Samuel 7:14 “I will be a Father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the **rod** of men and the strokes of the sons of men.”*

*Psalms 89:31,32 “If his son forsakes My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, Then I will punish their transgression with the **rod**, and their iniquity with stripes.”*

*Proverbs 10:13b “The **rod** is for the back of him who lacks understanding.”*

*Proverbs 13:24 “He who spares his **rod** hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” (NKJV)*

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

*Proverbs 23:13,14 “Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the **rod**, he will not die. You shall strike him with the **rod** and deliver his soul from Sheol.”*

*Proverbs 26:3 “A whip is for the house, a bridle for the donkey, and a **rod** for the back of fools.”*

*Proverbs 29:15 “The **rod** and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”*

*1 Corinthians 4:21 “What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a **rod**, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?”*

*Isaiah 10:5; Lamentations 3:1 describes God’s judgment as a **rod** of His anger/wrath.*

The rod is a tool. In *Proverbs*, Solomon used a Hebrew term that meant “branch” or “stick”. It could possibly be in the form of a ruler, switch, stick, paddle, or belt. Whatever tool you use, it should accomplish the same goal – effective, painful correction. A parent should find no joy in the application of it. On many occasions, I was crying as much as my children. It is a method of correction that should be used carefully, timely, measured, and controlled. My wife and I were given a plastic paddle that worked wonders. It covered the subject and caused a healthy godly fear of painful discipline.

Some resist using the open hand because they say it is connected to the parent and may be viewed as the parent hitting the child. Some say that it is inefficient because the force is spread out between the five fingers. I know my wife needed to exert more strength to generate enough force, which at times was discouraging. Others say it might result in a greater chance of careless spanking. However, the two hands God gave you are just right to allow one to hold the child, and the other to administer discipline. Personally, I believe the open hand is sufficient to get the message across and it worked just fine for our family – four boys & two girls. You take it with you wherever you go. It is available 24/7. The hand also allows the parent to feel a measure of pain that the child is feeling. The hand, like anything else, must always be used in love and with caution. Never use your fist. Personally, I would also never slap a child in the face.

I do believe a mother may need to re-evaluate the tool used and possibly try another item if she is not able to exert enough force to cause correctional pain. My grandmother used a switch on me which she had me pick out before she spanked me. (I remember the thicker ones were scary looking, but the thinner ones always seemed to hurt more – but I was responsible for choosing which one was to be used on my bottom). I think she was wise in making me choose my own correction, knowing either would make an impact on my life's future direction for good.

My father used both his open hand and a wooden paddle. My mother used a wooden spoon or coat hanger. My wife and I used several different methods on our children during their correctional years, and they have turned out to be godly, respectful young men and women as adults. Whatever the tool, it must be done effectively to change the direction of the child's heart, which was manifesting itself either in their sinful attitude or their sinful behavior. When used effectively, it changes the course of a little life and saves their soul from destruction.

How much should you spank? Well, is he or she sweet yet? "We have not been firm enough if there is still rebellion in his heart. Does he obey instantaneously and sweetly, or does he obey grudgingly, with that little bit of rebellion still present? A friend remembers his mother saying to his father when he was a child, 'Give him some more Dad, he is not sweet yet.' Biblical discipline has not been administered until the child obeys unhesitatingly and with the proper

attitude. If you have to spank him twice, you did not communicate the message the first time. Do it right the first time and you won't have to spank him again. Do it with sufficient firmness and the peaceful fruit will follow." (Bruce A. Ray Withhold Not Correction, pg. 80)

Each child has a different level of pain tolerance. Some children you have to exert more strength to get them to feel it, especially those little boys with muscular buns. Others you have to only minimally cover the subject and they are in tears (hopefully you are not being manipulated by crocodile tears). Some children you only have to look sternly at, and they are honestly undone. It is a fact that fathers tend to spank with more force than mothers. That is why most children would rather be spanked by mom than by dad. Kids aren't dumb. They know their own survivability. I knew if my dad spanked me, I could not sit down for a while, but if my mom spanked me, I would feel it, but I would live through the experience. *Hebrews 12:11* says discipline should cause sorrow. Is there any grief or sorrow shown in your child through the discipline process?

If a child is still angry or sporting an attitude after a spanking, you probably were not effective in your application of the rod because you did not possibly spank hard enough or long enough. Ineffective use of the rod or other implements leave a child sullen, angry, and more resistant to correction. A child can even learn what level of crying causes you to stop spanking and their wailing can be more manipulative than a true result of the spanking.

I remember one instance when I was spanking my son who had disobeyed and who seemed resistant to any correction. I spanked him several times and he continued to stand firm in his hard heart regardless of my attempts. His tight little buns seemed unscathed by my swats. I continued to give him several more knowing I had to win the battle of his strong will. After quite a number of strong applications, his rebellious body posture went limp. There was a break point in his attitude. For a moment, I thought I might have crossed the line and wrongly hurt my son. I took a brief pause to compose my tears and thoughts and returned to talk to him. He was crying when I returned. I began to ask his forgiveness for spanking him too much, but he said, "No dad, I deserved it, and I am so sorry for what I have done." I can't tell you what those words meant to me. I cried for quite some time after that event. I believed my role as his father before God was

to correct my son away from disobedience and toward righteousness, but to do so meant I had to use the rod in a difficult circumstance which would cause pain and a break in our relationship. There was a line of demarcation on the one side where his will was strong, and on the other where his will had to be broken and brought to repentance. If I had stopped just prior to that point, no net effect would have taken place in his heart. I knew I could not run from my responsibility even when my heart wanted to retreat or ignore his behavior. By God's grace those moments have shaped each of our children to right living and godly fear. As hard as those moments were, persistence and faithfulness did win the day, and our children's sinful wills were shaped for good. God will bless our obedience. We need to trust Him that he knows what our children and us as parents need in the correction process.

I would recommend only spanking on the bare bottom and not through several layers of padding, clothing, or a diaper. For a young child in diapers, you might need to spank the back thigh near the bottom of the diaper (rather than remove a dirty diaper), or on the back of their hand. The best position for applying a spanking is to lay the child across your lap. I do believe we should be cautious that we don't carelessly jar the child's spine which might cause serious injury or bruising. As a child grows, they become more self-conscious and their privacy and personal dignity should be a consideration. This might mean spanking through their underwear rather than pulling their underpants down and exposing a bare bottom. A parent needs to understand a child will feel shame or embarrassment for their being de-robed, especially if they are now responsible for their own bathing and dressing. The rod takes less force to administer and is more genuinely felt if it is not applied through clothing. I have found a plastic flat paddle has been the best tool in correction. Never use excessive force which would be physically abusive. The Bible uses the word, "strike" which implies a forceful action on the part of the parent which should bring about a sorrowful response in a child. Our goal is to heal and bring lasting heart change, not to physically harm. Other psychological methods (appeasement, bribery, time outs, negotiation) do not accomplish what a good spanking (application of the rod) will accomplish.

*Leviticus 26:24 God said, "I, even I, will **strike** you seven times for your sins."*

*Proverbs 19:25 "**Strike** a scoffer and the naïve may become shrewd."*

*Proverbs 20:30 "**Stripes** that wound scour away evil, and **strokes** reach the*

innermost parts.”

*Proverbs 23:13,14 “Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you **strike** him with the rod, he will not die. You shall **strike** him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.” (“beatest” KJV, or “to smite”)*

*Hebrews 12:11 “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but **sorrowful...**” (This implies both the child and the parent are both crying after a spanking), “yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”*

Why should a parent use the rod? The use of the rod demonstrates a trust in God’s Word to be true. The use of the rod as a disciplinary tool demonstrates a faithful obedience by the parents who properly use the rod in their correction. A use of the rod demonstrates a faithful love towards the child knowing it is the means that will drive foolishness from a child’s soul (Prov. 22:15; 23:13,14; 26:3). Using the rod will teach, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness. It imparts wisdom (*Prov. 29:15*). It humbles the heart. It shapes the will. Although it brings pain, it also results in holiness. The rod causes a child to be more receptive to the Word of God and helps him see his sin and need for God’s forgiveness. Do we honestly trust God to know best?

If a parent realizes too late that they have given their teenager too much freedom throughout his life and suddenly try to pull in the slack, it will be extremely difficult to sow correction where only weeds have been allowed to take root and grow. Anyone who tells you that the “terrible twos” are normal, unavoidable behavior in children at that age, is wrong, and just as wrong are those who say it is natural for the teenage years to be marked by rebellion and family turbulence! Rebellion is never just a phase a child or teenager goes through. Adolescents don’t have to rebel to “find themselves.” Rebellion is self-rule which resists correction and protests any attempt by another authority to rule over them (*Ps. 2:3; 12:4*). It is a heart issue and at the heart of each of us. Cultivated rebellion is a lifestyle of a sinful heart raised up against God. Teenage rebellion is the results of years of neglected discipline as a child that should have been addressed early on in the child-raising process. What you neglect in the early years follows you in the later years. If a lesson in right behavior and attitude is not learned as a child, it will not be learned later as an adult, but only magnified in

adulthood. Biblical corrective discipline separates foolishness far from a child and a future teenager.

Parents who enjoy a good and peaceful relationship with their children during the teenage years laid a good foundation of correction in the early years. Jesus said in *John 15:14*, “*You are my friends if you do what I command you.*” If the rod was used diligently and effectively in the younger years, it will not have to be applied as much in the later years. The rod will be used less the older your children get, and eventually only verbal reproof will be needed because they have been trained to obey by loving, firm, consistent, and effective correction in their childhood years. Praise God! This has been my experience and can be yours as well. Do not neglect the early foundational years. Be courageous to discipline.

What about alternative forms of correction – such as time outs, putting kids on restriction (grounding), isolation, or denying privileges - where there was no disobedience, disrespect, lying or deception involved? Well, is it painful enough to cause the child not to return to that action or attitude? Most alternative forms of discipline have a minimal effect and can be endured without any painful consequences. Sometimes parents send their kids to their room, which is exactly where they would prefer to be – free from responsibility, with privacy to do whatever they want (music, gaming, TV, social media, mischief). Sometimes parents restrict kids from going to youth group as a form of punishment (In my mind a good Biblical youth group is where they ought to be). Sometimes parents remove an item for a specific time, actually the child is still allowed to have other things they can do so the net effect is minimal and no pain is really felt. So you take away his computer for a few days, but he still has his smartphone or gaming devices – how is this corrective discipline? You take away his use of the car, but he has a bike and skateboard to go wherever he desires. The child just has to temporarily weather the storm (outlast painless consequences) and then he can return to business as usual. Remember, grounding is basically unenforceable. The child still maintains some level of freedom. You can't lock him in a closet and throw away the key. Isolation is not always good, especially if you allow him complete privacy in his room with a locked door and no parental oversight to what is going on behind closed doors. This is a failed attempt at correction and only emboldens the child in his wrong attitude or behavior. Think through the

alternative consequences before you apply them and make sure the child feels the sting of loss so that he or she thinks twice about doing that wrong behavior again.

John MacArthur in his book Successful Christian Parenting comments about current psychological labels placed on children. “I do not personally buy many modern clinical excuses for childhood rebellion. (Many) parents of unruly children are being told that their kids have afflictions such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD), Histrionic Personality Disorder (HPD), and Bipolar Disorder (manic depression). I know of no known organic or biological cause for any of these disorders. Many such diagnoses seem to be little more than high-sounding clinical terms that have been applied to lazy, selfish, defiant, or otherwise sinful conduct (in children and teenagers). Many doctors automatically prescribe drugs for treatment... now being taken by more than 2 million children... for the purpose of suppressing misbehavior. Drugs have thus replaced discipline for millions of parents. (There is a) myth that misbehavior patterns in children are always pathological rather than sinful foolishness in the heart of the child. As soon as the drugs wear off, the misbehavior returns... Learning difficulties are not a moral issue. Disobedience, cruelty to other children, and disrespect for adults are. To attach a clinical name to chronic misbehavior and use it as an excuse for sinful behavior is a serious mistake. There are few excuses for a rebellious child. Scripture indicates that parents can and should teach their kids to obey. It is never the parents’ prerogative to drug an unruly child in place of disciplining him, no matter how many modern doctors are willing to classify chronic misbehavior as some kind of medical pathology. No matter what the child’s reason for misconduct, rebellion and disobedience are ultimately a moral malady – sin – and Scripture itself lays the responsibility for the correction at the parent’s feet” (p. 86-88).

I have seen several boys who were classified as ADD or ADHD and observed their behavior over a period of time. Their lifestyle consisted of high sugar snack foods, volumes of candy, hours of watching TV, computer gaming, and daily consuming cans of caffeinated soda or high energy drinks. If I lived that way constantly, I would be unable to concentrate or think straight – or even walk for that matter. I rarely saw their parents carry out any form of discipline. I have also seen boys labeled as hyperactive who, in my mind, were just boys who needed to run and jump and allow their testosterone to do what God made it to do in a

young man. They didn't need drugs to sedate them or make them docile, they needed parents to allow them to play hard and be boys. Some of my sons were like that. They just needed to go outdoors and conquer the world, rather than be expected to sit and be quiet for long periods of time. They needed adventure and physical challenge. If I let them stay in the house, we would have cracks in the walls from them wrestling each other. God called them to be strong and protect, so who do you think they are going to listen to, if we tell them they are to be soft, still, and quiet? We are feminizing our young men. They are men in the making.

If our boys, in their aggressive play, accidentally break things (and believe me, they will), the Bible calls them to make restitution and make things right when wrong has been done (*Ex. 21:30-36; 2 Sam. 12:6; Philm. 1:18,19*). It does not mean just to apologize or say "I am sorry." It does not mean just returning or replacing the item in its broken state, but restoring it (*Ezek. 33:15,16*) many times over for what was misused or broken (*Ex. 22:1-4; Lev. 6:5; 24:18; Num. 5:7*- the guilty party restored it and paid 20% more; *Proverbs 6:31*- guilty party paid 7x more for stolen items; *Lk. 19:8* - Zacchaeus returned 4x the amount of what he stole). I once loaned a relatively new book to a teenager who returned it a year later with a ripped cover held together barely with duck-tape (*Lk. 16:12*). The youth said, "I am really sorry that I wrecked your book..." He never offered to get me a new one and in his mind apologizing was sufficient. We need to teach our kids to do whatever it takes to make things right (*2 Cor. 7:11*). Reconciliation always comes with a cost. "You break it, you buy it." Leave or return things in better condition than they are found or loaned. A simple question, "What can I do to make things right between us?" This would be a preferred response allowing the wounded party to set the terms of reconciliation.

Verbal reproof should always be combined with physical correction. *Proverbs 29:15* says, "The rod and **reproof** give wisdom..." (*Prov. 3:11; 12:1; 15:5,31,32; 2 Tim. 3:16*). Never apply the rod without giving reproof. Don't chastise them for wrong without teaching them what is right. The child must know why what they did was wrong, what they should have done instead, and ultimately who they have sinned against (*Ps. 51:3,4*). Ask them to be specific in identifying their sin and what they are feeling, using Biblical terminology. If it is lying or anger, call it so. Don't allow them to be vague or untruthful. Ask them the reasons they did what they did and what they were feeling when they did it. Ask

them what they think God thinks about what they did. Failing to clarify the offense or giving a child the silent treatment falls short of Biblical discipline. A parent can help a child identify particular patterns of sin which reoccur in a child's life, and bring Scripture to bear on those struggles (*Ja. 1:14; Prov. 5:22; Heb. 12:1*). Reproof is our life. Address their specific sins with specific Biblical passages that address their unique sin (anger, selfishness, falsehood, etc.). Have them practice the right Biblical alternative response or action – whether it be a more appropriate respectful choice of wording, a kinder tone of voice, or a more honoring non-verbal way to communicate. Ask them, “How could you say that differently so that it is not demanding or disrespectful to me as your mother?” Train them, “Now let's pick up your room just as I had asked you to do the first time.” Reinforce the right attitude or action in your reproof. Help him to do right until he gets it right. Practice makes (almost) perfect.

Appeal to a child's guilty conscience. Their conscience will either approve or condemn their behavior (*Rom. 2:15; 2 Cor. 4:2*). A child cannot escape the implications of their sinful words, actions, or attitudes. The conscience confronts both the surface issue and the root heart problem behind it. Remember, the conscience is God's mercy which drives us toward the cross and awareness of our need for God's forgiveness (*1 Sam. 24:5,10 “conscience stricken” NIV*). We can hide from others, but we cannot escape our own thoughts and guilty conscience. A child who has been truly saved, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, will first feel conviction over his own sin before a parent can show him how to correct his attitude and actions. Only true repentance and faith can clean a guilty conscience before God (*Ps. 32:5; Heb. 9:9,14; 10:22*). Our hope is to encourage our children to pursue a clean conscience before God and men (*Acts 23:1; 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; Heb. 13:18*). The gospel is the doorway to a clean conscience with God.

Lou Priolo said, “...you haven't disciplined a child properly until you have brought him to the point of repentance by requiring him to practice the biblical alternative to his sinful behavior... Biblical discipline involves correcting wrong behavior by practicing right behavior, with the right attitude, for the right reason, until the right behavior becomes habitual.” (*The Heart Of Anger*, p. 66). It is essential that a child identifies the sin, asks for forgiveness, and then practices the Biblical alternative. Having him go back to the scene of the crime and do it right, with the appropriate words, attitude, and tone of voice, only reinforces the

righteousness you are training in to him. Right feelings and further privileges will follow a child's obedience. Remember, this is a teachable moment for the gospel to be presented clearly in his correction (*Gal. 3:24*).

On one occasion, one of my sons had disobeyed my wife and he was waiting up in his room "until his father got home." As I was on my way upstairs to spank him, I was preparing my heart to fulfill my duty as his father (which I admit I was not looking forward to do), I felt the Spirit of God gently speaking to my mind and heart about this being an opportunity to demonstrate God's mercy and grace to my son, not just justice and punishment which he clearly deserved. As I clarified with my son that he was guilty and deserved punishment, which he completely understood and knew was coming, I took the opportunity to talk about the fact that we all are guilty sinners before a Holy God. We have broken His rules and are justly headed towards judgment and hell. God gives us grace and mercy in what Jesus did to take our sin on Himself on the cross. He received the justice my sin deserved, and we are offered mercy through faith and repentance in Jesus. My son was shocked that, although he knew he deserved a spanking, mercy was extended to him in not getting what he deserved, and grace was offered to him in getting what he did not deserve. I believe this truth was etched on his mind and the gospel was personally made clear. You can't understand grace and mercy if you don't think you are guilty and under just condemnation. If you acknowledge your sin, that you are in need of God's forgiveness, and that Jesus Christ's payment satisfied the Father's righteous justice, grace and mercy and an opportunity for a clean slate is the best news ever. For the record, I also assured him that justice would be extended in the future to his posterior if he continued in his sinful ways. I believe he understood, and he was very thankful for mercy being extended to him as the guilty party. Only God knows if moments like this contributed to him eventually trusting Christ as his Lord and Savior. Correction is a great opportunity to point our children to Jesus, just as the Law is our tutor to lead us to Christ (*Gal. 3:22,24*).

Children should have a godly fear, and respect the rod when they are being spanked. A rule in our home was that the children were not to play with the rod, or use it on other siblings. It was not a toy or game, but a serious tool to teach and train in what was or was not acceptable words, attitudes, or actions before God. It was used to mold our children into what is right and acceptable behavior

and never a play item to be taken lightly. We did not use the rod flippantly or haphazardly. It represented reverential fear. Just as a judge's gavel is not just a hammer. It is a symbol of righteous judgment based on good law.

I wanted my kids to fear me. If there is no fear of painful discipline from mom or dad, they won't obey us. But I also want my kids to know that my wife and I deeply love them and would sacrifice everything for them. The balance between love and fear is crucial. Too much love and no fear is disastrous, just as too much fear and no love is also disastrous. God said, "*Whom the LORD loves, He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives*" (Heb. 12:6). To fear the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and to know God's love brings great security and safety in His presence. There is also a balance with God's holiness and God's love. If we only think that God is only loving, we won't obey him. If we are only fearful of Him, we won't approach him or desire close relationship. But if He is both loving and the One to fear, we find great comfort. Robert Haldane said in his Exposition of Romans, "It is astonishing that men, while they acknowledge that there is a God, should act without any fear of His displeasure. Yet, this is their character. They are more afraid of man than of God. The fear of man prevents them from doing many things from which they are not restrained by the fear of God. They love not His character, not rendering to Him veneration which is due." In the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Aslan was a ferocious lion, but he also was a gentle lion which Lucy felt comfortable to be near. There must exist a healthy balance. The same relationship should exist between a parent and child. We in some way represent God to our children. We must preserve both love and fear.

Psalms 90:11 "Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?"

Psalms 36:1b-4 "There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eye he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin." (NIV)

Isaiah 8:13 "It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as Holy. And He shall be your fear and He shall be your dread. Then He shall become a sanctuary..."

Hebrews 10:31 "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (NKJV)

Hebrews 12:28b,29 "Serve (worship) God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." (NKJV)

The lives of our children may depend on them obeying us instantly. First time obedience is crucial. If we have to say things multiple times before our children even begin to take note or act, we put them in grave potential danger. When a parent says, "If you don't stop before I count to three, then I will punish you," or "I'm going to count to five," you are training your child that they have time to obey, rather than obey you when they first hear your voice. There may be a life-threatening situation in a family where we need our children to stop immediately, not proceed any further, and listen for instructions that may save their lives. A few examples of this could include: a child crossing into the street, potentially touching a hot stove, being near a campfire pit, handling a sharp object, playing around electricity, being on the bank near a raging river or waterfall, being near a dangerous animal, reptile, or spider, or being on the edge of a cliff or stairway. We need to train our children to obey our voice instantly, with no explanation given, but immediately stop and listen on command. Jesus said, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* (Jn. 14:15). God expects us to obey the first time. Train children to respond on the first command. If we have allowed our children to wait to obey after we have stated it repeatedly several times, they could get seriously injured or perish. At the moment a command is given isn't the time a parent should have to explain all the reasons why their child needs to obey. We used to have a children's program at church which used the five count. In my mind, that is dangerous to train kids they have time before they need to obey. First time obedience is so important for the safety and welfare of a family. Can you imagine trying to explain everything to a child about why they should not touch the rattlesnake right in front of them, or how electricity works as they proceed to stick a screwdriver into an outlet? "Our children will not respond to our voice the first time in a crisis unless they are accustomed to responding to it the first time under normal circumstances. Our children ought to know that we mean it the very first time that we say it." (Withhold Not Correction, p. 104,105)

One item of discussion is the difference between house rules and Biblical mandates. Biblical commands are clear in Scripture and specific to our words, attitudes, thoughts, desires, and actions – which should be right before God. *"Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord"* (Col. 3:20). These are not negotiable, but a direct command. House rules, on the other hand, are unique expectations that parents place on their children

that are derived from basic principles in Scripture, but mainly focus on parental preferences that still should be obeyed while the child remains in your home. These are not so specific in Scripture, but general guidelines allowing different families to have different expectations or preferred requirements of behavior. (Example: choices of music, movie viewing restrictions, dress code, hairstyle, curfews, when a teen is allowed to date, when they can drive a car, get a smartphone, if a child makes their bed before starting their day, which basic chores are required, or what table manners are expected, etc.) The parent still has the right before God to require these house rules, and their children should comply as long as they are under their roof, because they are based on basic Biblical principles and their parents require it of them as the authority in the home. The idea may be that “others may, but our family will not.” This is not legalism, but practical expectations parents place rightly on the governance of their home (*1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23*), because they are founded on the parent’s Biblical convictions. One example for us is we have not allowed our children to have smartphones until they have demonstrated self-control and maturity. We chose not to allow our children to date in high school. There are certain types of music or movies we will not watch in our home without Clear Play filtering. We have chosen as a family not to do certain things because of our convictions, but other families may choose to do so (*1 Cor. 8 & 10; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16*). *2 Corinthians 1:12* says, “*Our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially toward you.*” Our children demonstrate honor by abiding by our house rules. When they are out from under our home authority, they can make their own decisions before God and hopefully with a clean conscience. Those rules are preferences, yet we believe are grounded in Biblical principles and are the reason we required it of our children for their good.

Another area to consider is, if our children struggle with temptation in certain areas where sin seems to be a serious habitual pattern, the wisest course of action, as some have termed it, may be “radical amputation.” This is when a parent removes from a child’s life a potential stumbling block that can become a source of sin, until a child can demonstrate greater self-discipline (*Matt. 5:29,30*). It might be because of unbalanced involvement in a specific sport or school activity, or obsession with technology or social media (like Facebook or

smartphone usage, or gaming). It may be because of the misuse of money. Maybe it is when they play with a certain neighborhood child which contributes to their making bad choices (*Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33*), or when they misuse their computer with porn, or when they stay up later than what is healthy, or when they are involved in too many events and their schedule becomes unbalanced, or when certain available sweets become a stumbling block which harm their physical being. They need those items or opportunities removed. I personally would not allow my child to have a bag of candy in their room, or use a smart-phone with unlimited access, or have a computer in their room without setting certain filters (Covenant Eyes) or guidelines on the time and content of their usage. Until they can demonstrate they have self-control and are trustworthy, we are just setting them up for failure to not restrain their indulgence. For a child to forsake sin, they need to remove themselves from the temptation that might be causing greater struggle. Ultimately it is a heart issue and we cannot remove every source of potential temptation from our children by locking them in an empty room. However, if we see certain things in their lives that are known trip hazards, the greater sign of love is to remove or limit those hazards so they don't become a source of trouble. "If you don't want to fall, don't walk where it is slippery." Because God placed us as the adult in the parent/child relationship, we must take control in those areas of weakness. This is not unloving, but actually the greatest sign of truly loving our kids. *Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."* Any child or teenager left to himself will self-destruct. There are times when we as the parent must step in and remove what has a hold on our child. I have found many times, the same thing has a hold on us as parents.

What Discipline (Chastisement) Is Not:

- verbal abuse (out-of-control unrighteous anger, or empty threats)
- physical abuse (parent against child)
- emotional abuse (psychological warfare, manipulation, intimidation)
- power play (negotiation, begging, reasoning, scolding, or nagging)

Unbiblical Methods Parents Fail In Trying To Discipline Children:

1. Little or no discipline by not applying the rod

Time outs, limited unsustainable grounding or restriction

This involves a deprivation of something the child wants which is removed

temporarily. The child learns to live under house arrest and then returns to business as usual with no real change. This punitive discipline does not address the sinful heart. There is no interaction. The child learns to just tolerate the punishment for a time without changing heart attitudes. Wrong behavior quickly returns.

Proverbs 13:24 "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him."

2. Inconsistent/erratic discipline

This punishment is harsh then lax which is confusing and exasperating.

3. Lacking follow through

This is when a parent's word means nothing. Their words are only empty threats. Never make a threat that you don't mean to follow through. Your word must matter and your integrity is at stake. If you say it, then do it, or your kids will never believe you mean what you say.

4. Timing of consequences is delayed

Delayed correction may give the child the impression that his sin is not a big deal or that you don't mean what you say will happen which is license for further sinfulness.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 "When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong." (NIV)

5. Consequences don't hurt or cost the child very little

The punishment must fit the crime. Pain is a deterrent.

If it doesn't hurt, they will think they can weather the storm next time as well and get right back to it.

6. Left only to one partner, parents are not unified in the discipline process, or one partner undermines the other.

Mom and dad must be unified in their corrective discipline. (*Eph. 6:1-3*)

7. Conditional contracts or only verbiage without action

All talk or lecturing without action is disastrous. Never be known for being a yeller who vents, but nothing really happens. Contracts are easily broken if conditions are not met by both parties. Your word matters.

8. Appeasement

This shows itself in useless bribery or giving in to the demands of the child when a parent becomes frustrated. Pragmatism tries to use what works, but that usually is not the best course of action. If bribery seems to work, be warned. When the reward is removed, the behavior defaults back to being unacceptable. A parent usually runs out of candy in the hostage negotiation and the child wins.

9. Manipulation

This is seen in scolding, shaming, blaming, guilt tripping, rejection, giving the cold shoulder, or using an emotional appeal to turn the child to a desired behavior - which does not accomplish a heart change. Kids learn our bad techniques and will use it on us.

10. Trying to use logic or reason

In this hostage situation, negotiation and pleading do not change a child's heart for good. Sin is always illogical and unreasonable. Don't get distracted by trying to reason with a child, when what you have asked them to do still goes undone. God does not always tell us every reason why we need to obey Him – but He still expects our obedience.

11. Done in anger

Anger (yelling) usually leads to embitterment rather than a change of heart.

Psalms 39:3 says, "My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue."

James 1:20 says, "For a man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

Parents, we need to examine ourselves and ask, "Do I have greater anger because my will has been violated, or because God's will has been violated? Am I more concerned when I discipline my child because I feel they have sinned against me and their behavior has caused me

embarrassment, frustration, and inconvenience, or because they have sinned against our Holy God? What are my motives in correcting? Why am I so angry?

When Is It Not Age Appropriate?

When is a child too old to spank? There are some different ideas on this, but I believe when a child is in their teen years, spanking becomes more of a conflict between the parent and teenager. It is seen more as physical aggression or brute force. When this happens, it may be time to seek another means of correction. The last thing you want is a brawl between parent and teenager – especially when some teens are stronger and bigger than their parent. This is no longer correction, but a fist fight or a test of strength. This type of confrontation can end in a teenager assaulting the parent which never ends well (*Ex. 21:15; Prov. 19:26*). Hopefully, if a parent has disciplined correctly early in a child's life, there will be very little that needs to happen later in their teen years. Physical violence between parent/child is never acceptable correction. God sanctions the rod as a means to a desired end. Use the rod wisely and early.

Negative Results From A Lack Of Discipline:

*Proverbs 17:21,25 "He who sires a **fool** does so to his **sorrow**; and the father of a **fool** has **no joy**." "A **foolish** son is a **grief** to his father and **bitterness** to her who bore him." (10:1)*

*Proverbs 30:11,13,17 "There are those who **curse** their fathers and do not bless their mothers." "Those whose eyes are ever so **haughty**, whose glances are so disdainful." "The eye that **mocks** his father, and **scorns** obedience to his mother..." (NIV)*

*Micah 7:6 "A son **dishonors** his father, a daughter **rises up** against her mother... a man's **enemies** are the members of his own household." (NIV) (Matt. 10:36)*

*Matthew 12:25b "...any... **house divided** against itself will not stand."*

Discipline Which Must Not Be Done:

1. With out-of-control anger or rage (Ps. 6:1; 38:1; James 1:20)

Some parents are known for having a short fuse or quick boiling point. But just as bad is those who are like a teapot which simmers somewhat quietly for a while and then blows out a lot of steam from that little hole at the top of the

kettle. I call this the “teapot phenomena.” This is characterized by seemingly outward calmness, but inward turmoil until it blows when heat is applied. We end up taking our frustration out on our little guy, which has been building up all day, rather than dealing with it rightly as it comes up throughout the day. Our anger usually shows the worst of us and the child gets the brunt of it.

2. Inconsistency

Bruce Ray said, “It is not the severity of correction which will produce obedience; it is the certainty of correction which will bring about the desired result. Be consistent in your administration of discipline. Never issue a warning or a command without following it through.” (Bruce Ray, *Withhold Not Correction*, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1978, p. 103)

3. Ineffectively or without persistence and endurance

Galatians 6:9 “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

1 Corinthians 15:58 “Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

2 Thessalonians 3:13 says, “Do not grow weary of doing good” (*Heb. 12:3*).

We need to be vigilant in our discipline. Giving love pats which wouldn’t squash a fly or spanking through layers of clothing where no pain is felt by the child, is not a form of good corrective discipline and accomplishes little.

4. With elevation of tone and volume

Parents should not have to say a command multiple times or raise their voice. If you have to increase the decibels to have your children take notice and respond, you are not disciplining Biblically, and may be part of the problem.

5. With abusive speech (*Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:8; Prov. 15:1; James 3:2-11*)

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth.” We parents should admit how flustered we can become in the discipline process, and how we tend to say the most illogical and hurtful things to the ones we claim to love the most. “From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. These things ought not to be.”

6. With delay

Ecclesiastes 8:11 "When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong." (NIV)

7. In public

Choose the right time and place for every correction. When you reprove your child in front of others, the focus is removed from being a heart issue, and it becomes a distracting issue of child or parent embarrassment or humiliation.

Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother."

8. Without also giving reproof (Prov. 29:15)

Never spank your children without telling them exactly what they did that was wrong and giving them a clear path for what they must do to make it right. A child must understand how he violated the parent's standard and also displeased God.

9. In a way that physically causes great harm to the child (abuses, scars)

What Should Also Not Be Part Of Biblical Discipline:

• Giving excuses for the child's misbehavior

Saying "little Billy is just tired, or hungry, or missed his nap today," is never an acceptable excuse to give Billy a pass in his need for immediate correction, nor does it address the core issue of the child's sinful heart. An excuse is just a distraction from the real issue that needs to be addressed. A parent may revert to excuses even though their conscience is screaming at them pointing to the fact they have neglected their parental duty to discipline their child. Giving a lame excuse only momentarily diverts the attention to something or someone else, rather than causing us to own up to our own failures and motivate us to immediately correct it. It seems like when we give an excuse, we are fooling no one but ourselves. Everyone in the room knows obviously what is or isn't happening.

Using the excuse that the child is not old enough to fully understand is also unfounded. If a child can understand the word NO, he is capable to understand what NO means. If a child is old enough to be defiant, he is old enough to be taught compliant obedience. If he is old enough to resist your command, he is

being disobedient and old enough to be disciplined. Understanding comes before the ability to speak. Children know much more than we give them credit for.

Another excuse is that a child is choosing to act differently in public than they would at home. A child's disobedience is a heart issue and location really has nothing to do with how they respond or should respond. They should obey no matter where they are. Where does it say these rules apply only at home?

Another excuse is that a child is not responsible if he copies someone else's misbehavior. Yet, wrong behavior is unacceptable regardless of who else is also doing it. Stop blaming Adam for your own sin. And saying "the devil made him do it" is not going to cut it. Man is without excuse (*Rom. 2:1-4*).

Some say that spanking just doesn't work, but that may be because the parent is not using the rod effectively.

Another excuse is "that is just the way they are." But that is not the way they ought to be and only the rod will remove it far from them.

- **Bribing to create an advantage**

Children can suddenly become hearing impaired (selective hearing) until the stakes go up. If you can only get them to obey you by giving them something, or if they only hear you when it is in their best interest, you are in a heap of trouble. Bribery is never an acceptable practice or good correction. Take away the bribe, and everything resets to normal bad behavior.

"I'll obey only when I can get something out of it."

"I'll obey only when it is in my best self-interest."

- **Threatening**

Usually this comes by repeating demands multiple times without any real effect. Parents, avoid saying things that you don't mean, can't do, or won't do. Whatever you do say, follow through, or your word will mean nothing. Empty threats or you being a yeller will get little response. If you are not in control of yourself, how can you expect your children to be? Empty threats train a child to think that mom or dad's word doesn't mean a thing because they are out of control, and that there is no reason for alarm because mom or dad are just

blowing off steam and will cool down later. If a child learns they have lots of time before a parent blows their top, they will wait conveniently until the show begins.

Matthew 5:37 "Let your statement be yes, yes, or no, no; anything beyond these is of evil."

Proverbs 15:28 "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things."

- **Using the guilt trip or emotional appeal**

If a parent has to resort to guilt-tripping their children to make them obey them, they have lost the game, and guilt will eventually wear off and then where are you? Eventually the child will continue on in their sinful pattern regardless of the emotional state of the parent. Saying, "Look at all I have done for you..." "You said you loved me... I don't believe it." Or "I am really disappointed with your behavior..." So what... That may be true, but it does nothing toward correcting the sinful heart of a child when sin is dominating their choices and attitudes. The consequences must move the child to obedience and the training must address a sinful heart behind the sinful action and attitude.

- **Accommodating or reacting to a child's actions**

A parent's word should matter when he says, "don't touch." Parents get drawn into playing a game of moving the object out of reach for the moment. If you start playing that game, you will lose. Just removing the object seems like the easy way out. However, the problem is that the child just gets more persistent on doing what you just said was not to be done or moves on to another object somewhere else and never learns obedience to your verbal command. The conflict is only deferred to another time and place. I have been in homes where an undisciplined child has everything in every room on the floor in a heap. Eventually everything in the house has to be locked up or put out of reach, and the child has learned nothing in regards to obedience and self-control. The child becomes even more tempted to be creative in their disobedience like using a chair or stick to reach the item, climbing up on furniture to reach it, or asking their older sister to hand it to them. The best way is not to put items out of reach (unless they are life threatening), but to discipline a child in what is to be left alone. If they persist, then the spankings become more intensified, until the will is broken and a child's heart is shaped in obedience. If you see a child pulling things out without asking permission when they are visiting someone else's home, you

can bet they have been allowed to do it at their own home. When a child is done playing with their toys, you can also train them to be responsible to pick it ALL up. Do not do it for them. Guide them to pick it up. With this training, your home can be orderly. Everything doesn't have to be kept on the top shelf out of reach (locked up) or require taking the rest of the afternoon to pick up the disaster. You can actually visit friend's homes without major issues. Your word NO means NO, now, and tomorrow. Once a child's self-will is reigned in, he is more apt to resist temptation in the future and be a strong leader willing to deny himself and stand with conviction. A strong-willed child requires tremendous perseverance and determination to train them, but in the end, if trained properly, they will *"yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness"* (Heb. 12:11).

- **Playing "catch me if you can"**

Another dangerous game is when you tell your child to come to you (and you are not playing chase), and they turn and run in the opposite direction in disobedience. Or when your child knows they are going to get a spanking, they hit the road and run for their lives. We had a circle drive inside our home and we could run in circles for a long time until my mom got tired of that game and said, "If you don't stop running, you will get twice as many swats," which caused me a moment pause to count the cost of the game continuing. If the spanking is not severe enough, a child will weigh the lack of pain with the spanking against what they want to do. If the pain is worth it, they will continue to disobey. Make it clear that the punishment for disobediently running when they are called is far greater than the momentary joy of escape. Make it a memory they will not forget and they will be better for it.

- **Repeating yourself or having to raise your voice**

If we as parents allow our child to hear multiple appeals before they act, we are creating in them an unacceptable habit of conditioned delayed obedience. If it takes three times today, it will take more tomorrow, because our voice means nothing. There is no reason for them to act because we don't really expect that they will act. If you expect your child to obey after you count to three, then they will only obey when you count. In the end, anger becomes the only motivator. The child waits until the last possible moment before they act and just before the parent blows their top. First time obedience is what we are training for.

- **Trying to negotiate or use logic**

“Would you like to have dinner now?” “No... I want to finish playing...” “Do you want to eat your vegetables?” “No, actually I would rather have more chips!” Any time the parent gives the child an option in obedience, the child will choose only what they want and not what the parent was hoping. Negotiation places the child in the driver’s seat. It makes the parent and child peers on the same level. It erases the chain of command. Disobedience is always illogical. It is self-driven. You can’t talk your child into obedience. If you leave it up to them, they won’t obey you. You must state what you want and then expect them to obey. Parents who try to use logic with their child usually end up frustrated and sometimes outwitted. *Proverbs 14:12* “*There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*” (hell-bound). *Proverbs 26:4,5* says, “*Do not answer a fool according to his folly or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves that he not be wise in his own eyes.*”

- **Rejecting spanking altogether**

Some parents have rejected spanking altogether because they think that if they truly loved their child, they would not spank them. Some think it may hinder a child’s creativity or warp the child’s personality. No! The Bible speaks directly against this idea. *Proverbs 3:11,12* says, “*My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in*” (NIV.) *Proverbs 13:24* says, “*He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly*” (NKJV). To purposely cause pain to your child is very difficult. When both the child and parent are crying after a child gets spanked is evident it is not an easy job being a parent. Spanking my children was the last thing I wanted to do, but it was the right and best thing I could do to train them in righteousness. I loved my kids too much to allow them to continue in their sinful ways (*Prov. 22:6*). Who benefits if you do not correct your child with the rod? The child is still bent on self-destruction. The parent is free from the inconvenience at the time, but by doing nothing, it changes nothing. It doesn’t take much to grow a garden of weeds. You just have to do nothing and it happens naturally. Love is what truly motivates the parent to use the rod and change the child forever for good. Don’t be deceived into thinking that spanking will hinder closeness. Actually, Biblical correction that uses the rod will create a peaceful home known for respect and obedience. *Proverbs 29:15,17* says, “*The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets*

his own way brings shame to his mother.” “Correct your son and he will give you comfort, he will also delight your soul.” Proverbs 23:24,25 says, “The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave you birth.” This will only happen with proper correction and training according to Biblical principles. My own children give visible testimony to this fact. “I have no greater joy than hearing of my children walking in the truth” (3 John 4).

- **Minor Infractions**

Are you more lenient, neglectful, or inconsistent with lesser crimes which don't require the rod? Do you give your kids a pass when you should be correcting them? J. C. Ryle said, “Beware of letting small faults pass unnoticed under the idea it is a little one. There are no little things in training children; all are important. Little weeds need plucking up as much as any. Leave them alone and they will soon be great.” Don't correct only the major acts of disobedience and ignore the minor infractions. It is always easier to pull up weeds when the roots are small and they don't go very deep. Similarly, to allow children a pass with the little things like picking up their toys for them, you hanging up their clothes, or you putting their dishes away, or you doing their chores will only become big problems when they are teenagers who feel entitled to everything and are lazy bums. Little character flaws could have been corrected far easier when they were children rather than waiting till they are teenagers and their flaws are now full-blown bad habits. Letting them get away with a lot of small things throughout the day and then suddenly releasing all your built-up frustration at them at the close of the day will end up being punishment in anger, not correction. We need to correct every act of sinful disobedience great or small as they come. A child who is allowed to be a slob when he is young, will be a lazy slob when he is old. Those little things add up over time.

What about the timing of discipline?

Do you intervene early or wait until things really get out of control? What is the reason for a delay in correction? Usually it is because a parent just doesn't want to deal with it at the time so they put it off, hoping it will resolve itself. Similar to a leak in a pipe – whether in your home or in your car. When the leak first started it was a small problem, but now that you have waited to deal with it, it is flooding your kitchen or you are broken down on the road, and there is major damage to contend with. Sinful behavior only increases with time and will be

much more difficult later to reconcile the offense. If you didn't have time to do it right the first time, will you have time to try to do it right the second or third? The level of punishment only increases with time. What would have possibly been just a verbal reprimand at the time, may become a major infraction if left unchecked (*Ecc. 8:11*). Pull that small dandelion flower up before it puts out its seed pod, or you will have hundreds of dandelion seeds blowing all over your backyard with thousands of potential dandelions to deal with in the future. Procrastination never helps anyone and it only gets worse.

When is it appropriate NOT to spank?

There are certain unwanted or undesirable behaviors in a child that don't warrant the rod and are not necessarily related to disobedience, disrespect, or lying (deceit). A child may do or say something childish or immature which you want to shape in a better direction, but does not necessarily need a spanking. *1 Corinthians 13:11* says, "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child, when I became a man, I did away with childish things." We must make allowance for a child being a child. Enjoy those times because they pass quickly. I remember one time laughing at my child for having his shoes on the wrong feet, until my wife reminded me that I was the one who had gotten him dressed that morning. Gentle persuasion is best for shaping behavior and words that do not warrant more serious correction.

Children may have an inability to fully complete a task or perform it to a certain desired standard. We need to be discerning whether the child is choosing not to do a job well, or can't mentally or physically do a job well, which might mean we need to back off on our expectations and train them to continue with the request as best they can knowing those factors might come in to play. Some things they just can't do at this stage in their lives. Don't expect them to be adults. Somethings don't come naturally to their gift mix at this stage of their lives. Don't expect them to do something that is beyond their ability to do. Maybe they need more hands-on training from you to complete it more favorably. Maybe they need you to do it with them so they can watch you model it for them. If the apprentice is messing up, the master needs to ask himself why and spend the time necessary training them in what is desirable. The right timing in training is golden.

Another challenge is how we react to unintentional accidents which happen without evil intent. They didn't mean to break it, but it happened. They did not mean to spill it, lose it, or dent it, but again, it happens. Again, we need to discern if this is part of childhood, or if it was because of carelessness which the child was warned to avoid. Does the child know what I expected or are they completely ignorant to the potential risks involved. If it was an accident their milk spilled, ok, but now let's clean up the mess, and I will help you do so. Keep this in perspective; my child is of greater value to me than the item that was broken or lost. Sometimes we forget this in the moment of frustration and we communicate the opposite to our kids. In the greater scheme of things, those things (like a glass dish or favorite fishing lure) don't have any lasting eternal value. All of them are going to eventually burn one day, but my child's soul is eternal. This is also an opportunity for us to check our anger and attitude and respond with love. Although these instances may be frustrating to us, we need to see them as teachable moments for our kids (and ourselves) to grow in. It is also a chance for us to be willing to let go of things that don't really matter. Childishness becomes foolishness when a child has been clearly told not to repeat a behavior and he fully understands the parent's request, but chooses to disregard that command, which should bring on the need for more firm correction. But if it is an accident, let it go. Your kids will learn more from your reaction than anything you can say to them. The tongue does have the power to heal or destroy (*Prov. 12:18; 16:24*).

To be honest, it my console you that there were many times my wife and I felt like failures as parents. For whatever reason, parents get discouraged. At times we were discouraged. Sometimes we felt like all we did all day was correct our son or daughter, and they didn't seem to be getting it. This is where we must take God at His word. *Galatians 6:9* says, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." If we are obedient to Him, in due time we will see fruit from our labor. We cannot let down our guard. I think this is one of the greatest challenges as parents we have, when we get to a place where we just don't want to deal with it any more. We let the child go and we check out. Have you ever felt like that? "I'm done." "You're on your own kid." Mommy or Daddy is AWOL for the day. Yet that is the one time our kids need us the most to be consistent, firm, and controlled in correction. We may need to reevaluate what we are doing in discipline and if it is being effective. May God

give us the strength of character to keep going on, even when we feel tired and discouraged.

I could relate several stories to you on this breakpoint in our lives. One with our daughter was regarding eating certain foods that we asked her to eat which our little girl fought with a passion. Another was with our son concerning saying something we had asked him to say before he was able to get out of his highchair - but he absolutely refused. Another was in a spanking situation where even after our son had been spanked multiple times, he was in command of the situation and he was not “sweet” yet. We knew these were turning points in our relationship with our children. Our parental authority had been challenged and our integrity was at stake. This was a hill to die on. We could give up and walk away, or we could persevere diligently, be obedient to God in our correction, and trust God for the results. Well... by God’s grace, we stayed with it and God blessed our efforts. I have to admit it seems like it would have been easier to turn and run, but that would not have been the right or best thing to do in our children’s lives. God blesses our obedience as parents in ways we can never imagine. When you get to a place where you don’t know what to do next, do what you know God has clearly called you to do as parents, and trust God for the results. He is faithful even when we are faithless. Someone once said to my wife, every day is a new day to live in obedience to the Lord. Yesterday is gone. Our failures of yesterday are past. Let’s do the right thing today. Lord help us!

As we come to parenting as husband and wife, we must be together in how we approach the correction of our children. We must agree on the specifics and work together as a team to make it happen. Both mom and dad should administer the rod with the same consistency and firmness. Both parents must resist using empty verbal threats without taking action. The children must learn early that they need to obey mom just as quickly as they obey dad. If a child ever senses that mom or dad is more lenient or that dad will not back up mom in discipline, you can bet the child will play that to their own advantage and learn a destructive lesson. Dads, we can never allow our sons or daughters to verbally or non-verbally, dishonor or abuse their mother. *Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling.” Psalms 101:5 says, “No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.”* We must nip that one in the bud. Meaning, that sin should be met with utmost consequences

and not be allowed to continue. Dad, God has called us to protect our wives – especially from disrespect. The time to stop it is when it begins. During the Old Testament, children knew of the serious consequence for cursing their parents or physical violence toward a parent (*Exodus 21:15,17*).

Some times our kids will play one parent against the other. They will ask the same question to both parents separately and then plan their strategy and play their parents' inconsistencies. When dad says no, the kids will say, "well mom said we can..." Parents need to be aware of the stance of their spouse – which means they actually need to talk privately about correction ahead of time. If there is any question about something, the best question to ask the child is, "Did you ask your mother? What did she say? If you don't agree with the answer, go ask your wife. If at any point your child lies or stretches the truth for their own advantage, you must correct that quickly and firmly. Lying is never acceptable in any circumstance (*Ps. 5:9; 12:22; 34:13; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 3:4*).

Different levels of obedience or disobedience in children:

(Example: When a parent communicates an expectation to clean the dinner table and help in the kitchen) (Adapted from Parenting for Life, Grace Community Church p. 61)

- a child completely ignores the parents request and leaves the kitchen without removing his dishes or helping in any way. (Disobedience)
- a child sets dishes on the sink instead of rinsing or placing in dishwasher as told. (Partial obedience)
- a child leaves the kitchen and comes back later to put his dishes away. (Untimely disobedience, procrastination, or forgetfulness depending on his hearts motive/attitude)
- a child puts things away with a sulky, pouting, angry face (Dishonoring reaction/disrespectful attitude)
- a child put his own things away only but nothing more (Partial obedience)
- a child puts his things away with a cheerful attitude and goes ahead and puts others utensils and dishes away without being asked. (Self-initiation and praiseworthy behavior)
- a child puts his and others items away and then washes the remaining dishes & turns the dishwasher on demonstrating a servant's heart

with eyes to see family needs (Signifying servant hood and demonstrating life skills)

- We need to train our children to go beyond what was asked.

Inappropriate Speech

One area of training that does not involve physical correction is redirecting sinful attitudes or words which should be addressed. One example of this is in how we talk to each other. If a child is disrespectful, sarcastic, or haughty in their words or tone, rather than you as the parent getting angry in return or responding in kind, we parents need to calmly identify the child's unwholesome words or attitude and refer to their sinful behavior in Biblical terminology. If it is disrespectful – call it as it is, based on what God's word says about that sin. The child will need to reconcile with the parent when their heart is right and ask forgiveness. Have them restate what they said in the correct tone of voice, body language, or verbiage. (Example: “_____, you were very disrespectful to (me or your mother) in how you _____. The Bible states that is sin. You need to admit your sin and ask forgiveness.” “I was disrespectful to you by my _____. Would you please forgive me?” “Yes, now will you say that again in a way that is not disrespectful and in a kinder tone of voice?”)

Sinful Forms Of Speech

Rebellious speech reveals a rebellious heart. Words always proceed action. The speech won't change until the heart does. *“Out of the heart, the mouth speaks...”* (Matt. 12:34; Ecc. 5:6; Is. 6:7). These words should not be allowed when a child speaks.

Unwholesome (Eph. 4:29)

Disrespect (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:2)

Untruthfulness (Ps. 34:13; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 5:6; Prov. 26:28; 1 Pet. 3:10)

Harsh, abusive tone of voice (Prov. 15:1; Ja. 4:11; Col. 3:8)

Haughtiness or sarcasm (Ps. 101:5; Prov. 21:24; Rom. 12:16)

Foul, profane, cursing (Ps. 59:12; 10:7; Prov. 8:13; 30:11; Eph. 5:4)

Pride, arrogance (Prov. 16:5,18; Ps. 12:3; 1 Pet. 5:5)

Anger (Prov. 29:22; Ecc. 7:9; 2 Cor. 12:20)

Ungratefulness (2 Tim. 3:2)

Bitterness (Ps. 64:3; Heb. 12:15)

Destructive speech (Ja. 3:5-8)

As parents, we must not allow these forms of unacceptable speech in our home between our child and their siblings or with ourselves. Words have meaning and do matter. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Words have consequences and should be spoken cautiously. Words are just as destructive as the actions that may proceed. *Matthew 12:36* says, “Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” We cannot allow our children to mouth off or “say what they feel.” Some things should not be spoken. I have been shocked to listen in to conversations between parents and their children. Once I asked a teen, “Do you normally talk to your parents that way?” When wrongful speech happens, it is the job of the parent to identify the sin and confront the child to ask forgiveness for the offense, and then the child should acknowledge and confess their sin, asking forgiveness, and practicing rightful speech in a right tone with right body language. In this way we are reinforcing good patterns of speech and practicing Biblical correction (*Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; Rev. 2:5*). Our goal as parents is to get our kids to think first about what they are going to say before they say it, and to choose their words carefully. We as well, rather than react to unacceptable verbiage and respond in kind, we should respond calmly and redirect their comments toward righteous speech.

Proverbs 15:28 “The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer. But the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.”

Proverbs 26:4 “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him. Answer a fool as his folly deserves that he not be wise in his own eyes.”

1 Peter 3:9 “Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead.”

Appropriate Speech

We should respond righteously in our conversation. Our choice of words and our tone of voice can heal or destroy our family relationship.

Proverbs 12:18 “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Proverbs 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And those who love it will eat its fruit.” (Ps. 52:4)

Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." (edifying, healthy)

Titus 2:6-8 "Urge the young men... (to be) sound in speech..." (wholesome)

Biblical Speech Is...

- Gentle & kind (*Prov. 15:1; 15:4; 25:15; 31:26*)
- Sweet & pleasant (*Prov. 16:21,24*)
- Excellent (*Prov. 17:7*)
- Timely (*Prov. 15:23*)
- Truthful (*Prov. 4:24; 12:19*)
- Guarded (*Ps. 141:3; 39:1; Prov. 21:23; Ja. 1:26*)
- Loving (*Eph. 4:15*)
- Wholesome (*Eph. 4:29,32*)
- Gracious (*Prov. 22:11; Col. 4:6*)
- Exemplary (*1 Tim. 4:12*)
- Beyond reproach (*Titus 2:8*)
- Pure (*Prov. 15:26; Zeph. 3:9*)
- Acceptable (*Prov. 10:32*)
- Wise (*Prov. 10:31; 15:2*)

Inappropriate Body Language

When our voice says yes, but our body says no... there needs to be a change in our attitude. Our countenance (facial expressions), and body language communicate volumes even when our words seem to say differently. Children can use facial expressions like a scowl, poochy lip, slouchy posture, or haughty eye rolling to reflect what is actually going on inside. Rebellion is at the heart level. The face is the mirror of the soul.

Genesis 4:6,7 "Then the LORD said... 'Why are you angry and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not our countenance be lifted up? But if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.'"

Psalms 28:3 "...those...who speak peace with their neighbors, while evil is in their hearts."

Psalms 55:21 "His talk is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart." (NIV)

Psalms 62:4 "They delight in falsehood, they bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse."

Psalms 131:1 "My heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty."

Proverbs 6:13 "Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers." (deceptive body language) (Prov. 16:30)

Proverbs 21:4 "Haughty eyes and a proud heart... is sin."

Proverbs 26:24 "He who hates disguise it with his lips, but he lays up deceit in his heart."

Proverbs 26:25 "When he speaks graciously, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart."

Proverbs 26:26 "Their malice may be concealed by deception, but their wickedness will be exposed in the assembly." (NIV)

Proverbs 30:13 "How lofty are his eyes and his eyelids are raised in arrogance."

Nehemiah 2:2 "Why is your face sad though you are not sick?"

Proverbs 27:19 "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects man."

Matthew 6:16 "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting."

Biblical Warning To Children About Rejecting Discipline Or Reproof:

Proverbs 1:25,30; 10:17 "You did not want my reproof..." "They spurned all my reproof..." "He who ignores reproof goes astray."

Proverbs 3:11 "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof."

Proverbs 5:12 "How I have hated instruction and my heart spurned reproof."

Proverbs 12:1 "He who hates reproof is stupid."

Proverbs 13:1 "A scoffer does not listen to rebuke."

Proverbs 13:18 "Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline."

Proverbs 15:10 "Grievous punishment is for him who forsakes the way, He who hates reproof will die."

Proverbs 15:5 "A fool rejects his father's discipline."

Proverbs 15:32 "He who neglects discipline despises himself."

Proverbs 17:10 "A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool."

Proverbs 29:1 "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy."

Ecclesiastes 7:5 "It is better to listen to the rebuke of wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools."

Jeremiah 2:30 "In vain I have struck (disciplined) your sons, they accepted no chastening."

The Benefits Of A Child Accepting Discipline And Reproof:

Psalms 141:5 "Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me. It is oil on the head, do not let my head refuse it."

Proverbs 9:8b "Reprove a wise man and he will love you."

Proverbs 12:1 "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge..." (15:32)

Proverbs 13:1 "A wise son accepts his father's discipline."

Proverbs 13:18b "He who regards reproof will be honored."

Proverbs 15:5b "He who regards reproof is sensible (prudent)."

Proverbs 15:31 "He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise."

Proverbs 19:25b "Reprove one who has understanding and he will gain knowledge."

Proverbs 29:15 "The rod and reproof give wisdom..."

Proverbs 29:17 "Correct your son and he will give you comfort, he will also delight your soul."

Hebrews 12:11 "(Discipline) produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (NIV)

Titus 1:13b "Reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith."

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,
but **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**”
Ephesians 6:4*