

13. The rules of engagement of godly living – Part 6

9/6/2020

Though it is not only a tremendous honor and privilege from our Lord to be entrusted with our children in our care but it also is very much challenging. This morning, we are going to learn how to shape our children's will with the wisdom that comes from the Lord through the Book of Colossians and Proverbs.

Colossians 3:21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

A. NO TUG-OF-WAR

Don't think that your children do not know what they are doing when they challenge your parental authority. They do know exactly what they are doing.

When a child behaves in ways that are disrespectful or harmful to himself or others, his hidden purpose is often to verify the stability of the boundaries. I was told that the children feel assurance and security when their parents hold their authority and leadership firm and confident.

The objective of child-rearing is not for parents to win the tug-of-war at all costs. If you do, you may end up not only with a confused and tearful child but also with a relationship strained beyond repair. Rather, your objective should be to shape the child's will gently yet firmly according to God's way.

B. THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEFINITION OF DISCIPLINE

Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

According to the Bible, the Word of God, we need to discipline our children as our Father in heaven does to us. But the child psychologists including some Christian psychologists as well as many Bible teachers and pastors across America insist that disciplining children would harm their self-esteem. Are they telling us that they know better than God when it comes to raising children? I think not and I know not.

Since the word 'discipline' is an emotionally charged word and generally misunderstood, we need to make some clear distinctions that will clarify the concept.

1) Between abuse and discipline

As a former chaplain of the Pima County Sheriff's Department, sometimes I went to the homes where domestic violence was reported – between husband and wife, parents and children, or relatives. No matter how you cut it, it is not a nice scene. There is a huge difference between abuse that tears down a child's spirit and discipline that builds up his character.

- **Abuse is unfair, extreme, and degrading.**

It usually is harsh, unnecessarily long, and totally inappropriate. When you drag children's feelings through emotional mud and kick them when they are down, you are being abusive.

The result of abuse often leaves emotional scars, if not physical ones, that last a lifetime. Abuse doesn't grow out of love; it stems from hate.

- **Discipline is fair, fitting, and upholds the child's dignity.**

Discipline is built on a foundation of justice and fairness and it is biblical. It is not vague and abstract. The child should have a good idea of the punishment that will be dished out if parental authorities are willfully and defiantly violated.

This form of correction actually strengthens the child's character rather than shatters it. Discipline is rooted in proper motivation – love and genuine concern – not in anger or selfishness. That is why it is best not to discipline your child with anger.

2) Between crushing and shaping

Proverbs 15:13 A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

This verse paints a vivid contrast between a spirit that has been shaped and one that has been crushed.

The ultimate goal of discipline is to build up your children with direction and confidence, giving them a strong, secure, and godly character that would carry them through life.

3) Between natural childishness and willful defiance

I believe that every child needs space in which to learn, make mistakes, and develop his or her own character within the proper limits. As parents and grandparents, it is important for you to distinguish between childish irresponsibility and willful and defiant behavior.

Allow me to make examples:

A child should not be spanked for behavior that is not willful defiance. When he forgets to feed the dog or make his bed or take out the trash or when he loses his bicycle – remember that these behaviors are typical of childhood. Please be gentle as you teach him to do better. If he chooses not to respond to your patient instruction, it then becomes appropriate to administer some well-defined consequences. He may have to work to pay for the item he abused or be deprived of its use, etc.

C. SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS WORTH CONSIDERING

Shaping the will with wisdom is a critical task of parenting. Here are some suggestions that should make it easier and more effective.

1) Start early

Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

The word 'promptly' has a colorful background in Hebrew. Originally, it is 'shachar' which means "dawn" or "early morning." Later it evolved into the idea of pursuing something early in life – like a career – and thus came to mean "with determination" or "with diligence."

The association of 'diligence with discipline' indicates that we should start disciplining our children early in their lives. The longer we wait to begin the process, the more difficult it will become.

Proverbs 19:18 Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin their lives. NLT

I know when you look at your baby's beautiful angelic face, you cannot fathom that the baby is a sinner until he starts to cry on top of his lung and throws feces because

he is hungry or dirty. Then you completely agree with the Bible which says that all humans are desperately wicked above all things.

When you look around while your child is screaming murder in a public place, if everybody looks at you with that look, you'd better know that your child is becoming a monster in your family and you become a slave of your child. It is not too late to start to discipline your child.

2) Stay balanced

Balance is what keeps children from falling off their bicycles and skinning their knees. Balance also keeps parents from crashing when it comes to discipline. Two kinds of discipline are mentioned in the Bible. Both complement each other, but both must be kept in balance.

- **Physical discipline:**

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

The rod indicates the infliction of pain. It is important for you to convince your child that his wrongdoing results in pain. In addition to that, the Lord graciously provided extra padding on your child's behind that he can feel the pain without getting hurt.

If your child has ever touched a hot stove, you can bet he'll never deliberately do that again. He does not become a more violent person because the stove burnt him. In fact, he learned a valuable lesson from the pain. The bumps and bruises throughout childhood are nature's way of teaching him what to fear. They do not damage his character. They do not make him vicious. They merely acquaint him with reality.

In like manner, an appropriate spanking from a loving parent provides the same service. It tells him there are not only physical dangers to be avoided, but he must steer clear of some social traps as well. If you are still not convinced to physically discipline your child, now you are going to be disciplined by the Lord. A good example was the high priest Eli in 1 Samuel 2 through 4.

When you do not allow your child to suffer the consequences of his actions, you are robbing him of the ability to live a godly and respected life.

- **Verbal discipline:**

Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; 12 For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.

While growing up, many of us came to associate the word 'discipline' with only one thing – punishment, usually of the dreaded, "wait till your father gets home" kind.

But biblical discipline is a correction, and that means that the pattern of the child's behavior must be changed by instruction in righteousness. He must be shown the error of his way, and then directed to the proper path. This requires explanation and instruction. Biblical discipline demands words.

Correction should not be a tongue lashing with cutting remarks that degrade character. It is verbal instruction coming out of genuine and deep love for the child.

Too many parents rely on punishment alone to discipline their children. But by doing that, they're neglecting to give their kids the assistance they need in understanding and applying God's Word to their lives.

At the same time, if they are obedient and do what you ask them to do, let them know how proud you are of them. You don't have to buy anything special for them. Just let them know that you are pleased.

How well-prepared are you to shape your children's wills with the wisdom of God's Word? Are you training them in the way they should go or punishing them for going in the way they shouldn't?

The Book of Proverbs is loaded with nuggets of wisdom to help train in righteousness – discipline – your children.

We have a grandson Elias who is 5 years old. He often interrupts adult conversation because he feels left out. I don't let him get away with. I stop my conversation with another person and I tell Elias firmly but lovingly, "We were talking. You should not interrupt our conversation. You have to wait until we finish." Like many other children, he is testing me if he can get his way.

3) Be consistent

I've seen many parents threaten their children with discipline when their children do not behave properly, but they never follow through. Or the parents blow the discipline out of proportion for a small problem while they don't discipline the kids at all even though they deserve very much. These children get a message that their parents are not consistent and they would push them as far as they can. To prevent this, you need to be consistent.

Here are a few guidelines to ensure that your discipline will be consistent:

1. Make sure the rules are known beforehand.
2. Discipline privately. Do not embarrass your child in front of others.
3. Explain the violation and its consequences.
4. Administer the rod soundly.
5. Tenderly hold your child after the spanking.
6. Assure your child of your love and concern.

4) Be parents, not friends

Don't try to be your child's friend by allowing them to do whatever they want. Your God-given role is being a parent, not a friend. If you love your children enough to discipline according to God's way, your child will respect you and cherish the relationship he has with you in most cases. I said, "in most cases", because there are some children who are bent on evil and they would go their own defiant ways no matter what.

If your family is blended, I highly suggest that you discipline your own biological child with complete support from your spouse. Remember, what I told you before: your children can read your looks as well as books, so do not show your disagreement about the disciplines on your face. This brings the next point.

5) Be in agreement

Do not express your disagreement against your spouse's discipline for that child. The child will take a cue to manipulate you two. Children know and utilize a simple tactic – 'Divide and Conquer'. Even 3-5 years old knows how to effectively use it against mom and dad, not to mention, step-parents.

You must discuss and agree on the amount, contents, and length of discipline to the child behind the closed door, not in front of your child. The discipline should be painful enough for them to realize that it is not worth it to go through it again.

6) Be reasonable

Don't threaten them with unrealistic disciplines and punishments – such as grounding them for the next two years, etc. Your children know that it is not going to happen and it just cheapens your words to them.

If they insist that they are older and they should be treated differently, treat them as an older one with more responsibilities in the house. They may not like all the responsibilities that go with older age.

As a child grows older, there comes a time when it is inappropriate to use the rod. If you're not sensitive to this, you will end up demeaning rather than disciplining your child.