

**Lesson 6
Parental Responsibility in Disciplining Children**

Children do not want discipline and parents do not want to administer it. More than likely undisciplined children are the result of undisciplined parents. Our main problem is not delinquent children, but delinquent parents.

The training and discipline of children is not a simple task. It is a job that is never completed. Every generation of parents faces the same assortment of problems with its children that its parents faced with them. Every generation of parents feels about as unprepared for their responsibilities as their parents did. Yet, Christian parents have an outside authority, the Bible, for raising their children. God has made a revelation to Christian parents on child training. Being a Christian doesn't keep one from facing the difficulties that other parents face, but you do have the counsel of God and the power of God to help you in the difficulties. Discipline is a very unpleasant task for the child and the parent. This is why parents often neglect their duty. Discipline is contrary to human nature and this is why God has had to command Christians to do it.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HOME

God has told us in the Bible that there is pattern for government in the Christian home. The Christian home is not a democracy; however, democratic principles do operate in the home. The Christian home is to be a sovereign rule: Christ over the family, the husband over the wife, and the parents over the children, with each member relating his or her life back to Christ. The government of a Christian home is an authoritarian rule governed by love. Each member of the family has rights, duties and responsibilities and these are to be respected but the ultimate rule in the family is the responsibility of the father, who is directly responsible to God.

There are at least four wrong concepts of family government prevalent today.

Anarchy. This is when there is no government and each member of the family only lives for himself or herself. There is no love, discipline, organization or responsibility, for every person is doing that which is right in his own eyes. This is simply a place where people hang their hats but it is not a home.

Authoritarian. This is the home where the father is a tyrant and abuses his authority, making the home like a concentration camp. The problem here is that authority is abused and love is not shown.

Wife-centered. This is a home where the woman dominates and rules according to her whims. Sometimes this happens because men will not pick up their responsibilities, but more than likely it is a result of a dominant, selfish woman who wants everything to go her way.

Child-centered. This is a home where there is plenty of outward love but no discipline and the life of the parents revolves around the children. The children become self-centered, sassy, do not respect authority and run all over their parents.

The Christian home is a place where God expects children to learn respect for authority, and respect for authority comes only as a child learns obedience and to submit his will to his parents and ultimately to God. John Abbot, in his book *The Mother at Home*, says,

“Obedience is absolutely essential to proper family government. Without this, all other efforts will be in vain. You may pray with, and for your children; you may strive to instruct them in religious truth; you may be unwearied in your efforts to make them happy, and to gain their affection; but if they are in habits of disobedience, your instructions will be lost, and your toil in vain. And by obedience, I do not mean languid and dilatory yielding to repeated threats, but prompt and cheerful acquiescence in parental commands. Neither is it enough that a child should yield to your arguments and persuasions. It is essential that he should submit to your authority.”

Almost every young boy, usually in the teen-age years, challenges his father’s authority by flexing his muscles. Fathers should never let their sons hit them, even at play.

THE NECESSITY OF DISCIPLINE

Parents are Commanded to Discipline Their Children (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:7, 9).

All through the Bible it is commanded for parents to discipline their children. A failure to discipline children when they are disobedient is not an act of love but of stupidity. Parents are in rebellion to God when they fail to discipline their children. Parents will reap what they sow if they fail to faithfully administer discipline in the home.

Types of Discipline. All discipline does not have to be physical in nature, but it must always be corrective. It must be geared to teach a child submission. Never give a command to a child that you do not expect to be obeyed; if the child is disobedient, then punish the child until his stubborn will is broken.

Talking. In some cases talking to the child may suffice, if the child is truly repentant. However, even if the child is repentant it may be necessary to inflict physical pain as a reminder that a command or trust was broken.

Exhortation. Some children respond under certain circumstances to a firm scolding in love. This could be in terms of a warning, but only warn once.

Removal of Privileges. This may be effective, especially as the child gets older. But take away privileges that will shake the child to the reality that as a parent you mean business.

Physical Punishment. A good spanking will teach a child to submit. Be sure and spank hard enough that the child knows that to do it again will mean more of the same. There is a need to understand the difference between spanking a child and hitting a child. Spanking is a deliberate punishment, given without anger, and applied to the bare bottom of a child. Hitting is usually in anger and may be upon the face, arms or body. Hitting a child is not discipline.

Conclusion. When you as a parent are tempted to let disobedience pass by in the child without punishment, remember that your sweet little girl undisciplined may turn out to be the town harlot, or that cute little boy the city drug addict or drunk.

Parents are to Apply Physical Discipline.

Satan has managed to delude parents who vigorously believe in literal interpretation of Scripture into thinking that God's method of "the rod" isn't to be taken literally. The Bible commands that physical discipline be applied to a child and every child needs it at times (some more and some less). The question before the Christian is whether they are going to believe God's Word or modern day, non-Christian psychologists on the matter of discipline.

1. Parents are to train their children (Prov. 22:6).
2. Parents are to correct their children (Prov. 23:13).
3. Parents who do not discipline with a rod hate their children (Prov. 13:24).
4. Parents who love their child use the rod (Prov. 13:24).
5. Physical discipline will not kill a young child (Prov. 23:13).
6. Physical discipline drives away the foolishness of children (Prov. 23:14).
7. Physical discipline brings wisdom, but an undisciplined child brings reproach on a family (Prov. 29:15).
8. A disciplined child brings great joy to the parents (Prov. 29:17).
9. Parents are not to let the crying of a child deter them from spanking their child (Prov. 19:18).

The Old Testament, especially in relationship to the nation Israel, puts great emphasis upon correcting rebellious children. (Deut. 21:18-21). These verses are not completely applicable to the Church but they show how parents must put aside their personal feelings and do what is right to discipline a rebellious child.

Parents are to Administer Discipline in Love (Heb. 12:6-9).

Love is not giving in to every whim of the child, but love is thinking about what is best for the child. Real love disciplines a child. A father should never spank his child when angry, in a fit of temper, or without having sufficient facts to administer punishment. He should tell his child that this is being done because he loves him and, after the discipline, the father should take the child in his arms and assure him of his love. Punishment in love by inflicting pain will draw a child closer to the parent rather than away from the parent because the child cannot live apart from the parent's love.

Conclusion.

It is a very serious thing for parents to trifle with their duty to discipline their children. Eternal destinies are committed to the trust of the parents. Abbot says,

“The exercise of discipline must often be painful; but if you shrink from duty here, you expose yourself to all that sad train of woes which disobedient children leave behind them. If you cannot summon sufficient resolution to deprive enjoyment and inflict pain when it is necessary, then you must feel that a broken heart and an old age of sorrow will not be unmerited. And when you look upon your dissolute sons and ungrateful daughters, you must remember that the time was when you might have checked their evil propensities. If you love momentary ease better than your children's welfare and your own permanent happiness, you cannot murmur at the lot you have freely chosen. And when you meet your children at the bar of God, and they point to you and say, ‘It was through your neglect of duty that we are banished from heaven, and consigned to endless woe,’ you must feel what no tongue can tell.”

BLIND PARENTS

One of the big problems of many parents is that they think that their little darlings can do no wrong. Nothing is more pathetic than parents who are blind to wrong behavior in their children. Everyone else can see it—but they cannot or will not.

Any judge or policeman can tell you stories about parents who shut their eyes to their children's sins. The youngster breaks the law and the police take him into custody. There is no question about guilt. Yet, parents will insist "But your honor, he is such a good boy." Any school teacher will tell you of parents who constantly take their children's side against the school's. They refuse to accept the judgment of a teacher that their child has misbehaved. Instead of punishing the child, the parents set out to get the teachers.

Parents, blind to their children's faults, cannot chasten them or admonish them—and the child is the loser. Parents who are too busy, tired, lazy, egocentric or indifferent to discipline their children are not obeying God. Their children may become delinquent because of their lack of consistent discipline.