

Lesson 7 The Child's Responsibility in Receiving Discipline

"The younger generation no longer respects its elders; it tyrannizes its teachers, fails to rise when older people enter the room, and has atrocious manners." That comment did not come from a "Letters to the Editor" column in a recent newspaper. It is the observation of a wise old gentleman who lived over 2,000 years ago by the name of Socrates. The problem of youth is as old as man himself.

The words of Socrates do not seem much different from those of a school teacher who recently resigned from her school system in America. She said, "The teachers are afraid of the principals, the principals are afraid of the parents, and the parents are afraid of the children. But the children are afraid of no one!"

RESPECTING THE ROLE OF THE FATHER

The primary task of discipline has been placed into the hands of the father. This does not mean that a mother is not to discipline her child (Prov. 29:15), but the overall responsibility rests with the father. The father is the key to the spiritual, social and mental stability of a family. It is a proven fact that in societies where the father is respected as the supreme authority in a home there is much less juvenile delinquency. Ethnic groups such as the Chinese, Jews and Italians are living proofs of this. Max Lerner in the article "The Vanishing American Father" wrote,

The vanishing father is perhaps the central fact of the changing American family structure. His virtual disappearance holds important consequences for his wife and daughters, but I believe that the most critical impact is upon the sons. The father sees his family only at the end of an exhausting day, on weekends, or between business trips. He is no longer the source of authority in the family. This distorted emotional structure may give us a clue as to the problems of violence in our culture.

Fathers are to Respect the Feelings of the Children (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). The meaning of "provoke" in Eph. 6:4 is to make angry, and in Col. 3:20 it means to excite, embitter, irritate. These are both present tenses in the Greek and mean that the father should not continually and habitually be provoking his children. Provoking a child by a parent may be done by (1) too much harsh discipline with no love, (2) too little discipline so that a child loses respect for his parents, (3) too much nagging at the child without a firm hand, (4) not spending enough time with the children, or (5) unfair discipline without all the facts.

Fathers are to Bring Up Their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). "Nurture" has to do with child-training with reference to Christian discipline that regulates the child's life. This deals mainly with training by acts. "Admonition" literally means "a putting in mind." This is training by word, whether of encouragement or reproof.

Fathers Can Discourage Their Children (Col. 3:21). Children, because of constant provocation, can lose heart and respect for the parents.

Fathers Represent God to Their Children (Heb. 12: 5-13). It is a sobering thought that a human father represents God to his children. God is called "Father" and a human father is a

pattern of God. If a father is mean and angry, the child may think of God like this. If the father is loving, fair and firm, the children may realize that God is all this and more. In Hebrews 12:5-11 God uses the picture of a human father to picture His dealings with Christians. The author of Hebrews wants his readers to know that the persecution they had undergone was a fatherly discipline at the hands of God. From this passage, we can find some principles that children ought to have when disciplined by their human fathers.

1. Children are not to despise discipline (12:5).
2. Children are to grasp that discipline is the result of a loving father who cares, and sometimes this discipline must be severe (12:6).
3. Children are given discipline to teach them respect for authority (12:9).
4. Children are disciplined by their fathers for their own good (12:10-11).

RESPECTING THE NEED FOR PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE

Introduction. That children are to be disciplined is contrary to many modern books on child psychology. Too many of these “experts” feel that a child’s mind at birth is a blank tablet, and they go ahead with the notion that a child is like an electronic “brain machine” which, when fed the correct information, will always come up with the proper behavior. The Bible does not teach that innocent view of children. God says that all of us are born with a curvature of the soul.

Children are Morally Immature (Prov. 22:15). Foolishness is in the heart of every child. To leave a child by itself is to guarantee its ruin. A child needs discipline and discipline includes spanking.

Children are to be Disciplined (Prov. 23:13-14; Prov. 29:15). All children have a sin nature and only discipline will curb the horrible manifestation of that nature. Much juvenile delinquency is the result of parents trying to train children without starting at the bottom! Children should be told that discipline is part of growing up and they are to accept it as such, for the day will come when they will have to discipline their own children.

REALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHILD TO THE PARENTS

1. The son is to hear the instruction of the father (Prov. 1:8).
2. A wise son is one who listens to his father (Prov. 13:1).
3. A son is a fool if he does not listen to his father (Prov. 15:5).
4. A wise son makes a happy father (Prov. 15:20; 23:24).
5. A foolish son brings grief to the father (Prov. 17:25; 19:13).
6. Children are not to curse their parents (Prov. 20:20).
7. Children are to listen to the father and not despise the mother (Prov. 23:22).

A wayward child will never understand the heartbreak and sadness he will bring to his parents. If he ever understands, it may be when his own children grow up and become rebellious.

REALIZING THE NECESSITY FOR OBEDIENCE

1. Children are to obey their parents (Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1).
2. Children are to honor their parents (Eph. 6:2).
3. Children who obey their parents are promised long life by the Lord (Eph. 6:3).

God will bless the obedient child in a special way. A child should be obedient even when the father or mother are wrong, for God will bless for this submissive attitude. Parents do

not always have to give reasons to their children for the commands they give to them. The children are to obey, knowing that the parents have much more wisdom and understanding.

RECOGNIZING THE GOAL OF DISCIPLINE

1. Discipline is designed to break one's stubborn will, but not to break one's spirit.
2. Discipline will make a child a better member of a family.
3. Discipline will fit a child to be a good citizen in society.
4. Discipline administered in love will produce a secure child.
5. Discipline will make a child a better candidate for salvation in Christ, for the child who has learned to submit to the authority of parents is more likely to submit to the authority of God.

CONCLUSION

Discipline is painful for parent and child alike, but it is essential for the normal growth of the child. Parents should pray that God would give them the grace to administer discipline and children should pray that God would grant them the grace to receive it.

Children must realize that loving discipline brings good results. Therefore, parents, for God's sake, for their sake, and for their children's sake, should bring their children up in the loving discipline of God.