

# CHAPTER FOUR THE TRAINING PROCESS: SUGGESTED LEVELS OF DISCIPLINE

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*Scripture Memory Verse— Heb 12:7*

*“It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”*

## Chapter Four

### The Training Process: Suggested Levels of Discipline— Bible Study

*“My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you.”*

Prv 3:1,2

#### INTRODUCTION:

The training process begins in earnest with this chapter. It is here that you will begin to set goals and objectives. It is here that you will begin to implement what you have been studying, praying and discussing with your spouse.

With the implementation of scriptural principles of discipline, you will find changes not only in the child’s behavior, but in two other areas as well— family life and the child’s acceptance outside the home. The mother, of course, will be the first to notice and experience the benefits of this behavior change. Not only will the mother’s life change and the family as a whole become a more positive and happy environment, but the child also will experience a happier and more successful life. An upward spiral effect is created that will carry the child into the future. Because of the child’s good behavior...

**Opportunities to grow and experience life broaden** as the family enjoys the child and is not afraid of public embarrassment by the child.

**Self-image improves** as the child experiences life with the positive reinforcement of parents. Thus, the child seeks to emulate desired behavior.

**Grandparents and relatives reinforce this positive self image/** experience as they begin to include the child in experiences and outings which most children cannot share in due to their unpredictable behavior.

**Both school and church reinforce to the child that he is special** due to the attention and praise his behavior elicits. The child in turn looks forward to school and church as a positive place of success and fulfillment.

**Friends and neighbors reinforce this positive self-image** and experience thus broadening his social and personal experiences.

The child then experiences an ever-widening positive reinforcement of his person and abilities. The resulting maturity, positive self image, and motivation for good behavior creates an upward spiral leading to a healthy, mature, well-adjusted child endowed with that most coveted of all traits— a positive self image.

In contrast, many problems children develop as they begin to leave the home can be traced to the fact that early in life they were never taught to obey or submit willingly to authority. Just as there was an upward spiral of success and positive self-image, so, also, the opposite can be true. For the untrained child, a downward spiral effect is created which may eventually drag the child to his spiritual, if not physical, doom by its sheer momentum. Because of his unmannerly and unpredictable behavior...

*The child’s opportunities to grow and experience life narrow.* The parents are hesitant to include the child in any but the most basic activities outside the home.

*The resulting deterioration of self-image* recreates the situation, as the child cries out for attention.

*Grandparents and relatives tend to shy away and be critical. Opportunities for love and experience narrow.*

*Both school and church tend to view the child as an annoyance; a reputation is gained which precedes the child in his grade advancement.*

*Friends and neighbors tend to reinforce this with avoidance and negative reinforcement. A poor reputation is gained which precedes the child.*

*Thus creates a downward spiral of negative self-image and low personal expectation.*

The future options for these two children are markedly different. The former child has a choice. No one can make this child choose correctly, but he does have the option. He has the self-image, the reputation and the confidence to succeed outside the home if he so chooses. The latter child's choices are much narrower. He need not rebel against anything, for rebellion has been allowed to develop as a lifestyle. Thus, in the difficult teen years the child will not rebel so much as carry out his own rebellious tendencies and nature that have been left unchecked.

Some years ago, four Harvard child psychologists carried out an experiment. In two separate schools within the same district, first grade classroom teachers were told that 1/3 of their children were gifted, 1/3 average and 1/3 were slow, when in fact all were of equal ability. Each teacher was told, though, not to teach the children any differently. The teachers, however, subconsciously did so, and at the end of the year the children tested according to the teachers' subconscious expectations, even though there was no real distinction.

You can place your child in this top third by disciplining and training him early in life. People in general, and teachers in particular, view articulate, well-dressed, well-behaved children as above average. The spiral effect is real, as is the subconscious mind's determination of children's abilities. It can be affected and put into motion by you, and it will result in a healthier, better-adjusted child if only you will follow the scriptural principles laid down in the Word of God.

What follows is:

**First**, a brief Bible study to aid you in understanding the subject matter of this chapter.

**Second**, a manuscript for you to discuss and study with your spouse.

**Third**, practical projects for discussion and application to aid you in implementing those areas of the seminar that meet your needs as a parent.

**Bible Study**

**THE RESULTS OF DISCIPLINE  
AND THE FAMILY**

*“Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and do not forsake your mother’s teaching; Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head, and ornaments about your neck.”*  
Prv 1:8–9

*The Word of God speaks clearly of the impact of discipline on the life of the family. In the space below, read the passage and then write out the key thought as it pertains to the discipline, (or lack of it) and its impact on family life.*

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Impact of discipline, or lack thereof, on the life of the family</i>
<b>Prv 10:1</b>	
<b>Prv 15:20</b>	
<b>Prv 17:21</b>	
<b>Prv 17:25</b>	
<b>Prv 19:13</b>	
<b>Prv 27:11</b>	
<b>Prv 29:3</b>	
<b>Prv 30:17</b>	

**Can you think of any families in the Bible that suffered because of a lack of discipline?**

## The Rod, Foolishness, Wisdom and Happiness within the Home

*In doing this study, you should begin to see a correlation between the rod, foolishness, wisdom and happiness within the home.*

- I. In Prv 17:21,25, what is the result of foolishness in the child as it impacts the parents and ultimately, the family as a whole?
  
- II. According to Prv 22:15, how is foolishness removed from a child?
  
- III. According to Prv 23:24,25 and 29:17, what will be the result of disciplining children in terms of parental relationships?
  
- IV. According to Prv 27:11 and 1 Tim 3:4,5, how will this specifically affect the father?
  
- V. According to Prv 10:1; 29:15; 31:28, how will this specifically affect the mother?

**Behavior of Children that is Forbidden In the Bible**

*There are certain behavior patterns the Bible absolutely forbids in children. Read the passages below it name the behavior and reflect on any similar patterns in your child.*

<i>Passage</i>	<i>In what ways, if any, does my child manifest this behavior?</i>
<b>Dt 21:18–21</b>	
<b>Prv 6:20</b>	
<b>Prv 19:26</b>	
<b>Prv 19:26</b>	
<b>Prv 20:20</b>	
<b>Prv 28:24a</b>	
<b>Prv 28:24b</b>	
<b>Prv 29:15</b>	
<b>Prv 30:17</b>	

## Chapter Four

# The Training Process: Suggested Levels of Discipline— Lecture

### I. THE TRAINING PROCESS

When we think of training our children, it is important to not think just in black and white terms. Even under the harshness of the Law, that most unrelenting document in both action and accountability, there was a differentiation between levels of sin and between rebellion and simple error. We see this in Nm 15:29–30 where the Word of God states, “*You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them. But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people.*”

Here God makes provision for the differentiation between those people who are acting in error unintentionally, and those who show defiance. Eleanor and I found that breaking the discipline process down into four levels, or types, was small enough for us to stay on top of, yet flexible enough for us to be able to take into consideration other factors.

As we get into discipline and the training process, it is important to remind ourselves that nobody can do it all. No one can be everything and everybody to their children. With knowledge comes the realization of deficiencies of the past. I find myself, even as I write this manual, thinking, “Oh, I wish I had known this when I was raising Becca and Sam (our older two children). Even though Megan and Liz have benefited, Sam and Becca would have also.” Paul tells us in Philippians 3:13, “*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead...*”

This is good advice in all areas of the Christian life, including child-raising. When Paul coined this passage, he was thinking back to all his mistakes in life as pertains to God. Those, especially, that he made before he became a Christian, but those after Christ as well. As parents, we can fall into the same trap. It is best to follow Paul’s example and Paul’s advice. Rather than dwelling on what we did not do, let’s all concentrate on what we will do from now on. I often point out in my seminars that the fact that the parent is even attending the seminar attests to the fact that he, or she, is a good parent. In fact, in most of my seminars, if the parents were to drop dead at that very moment, their children would have received more prayer and more biblical concern over their upbringing, than they, the parents, did their whole childhood experience. It is best not to be too hard on ourselves about the past, but instead to work diligently towards the future.

*Remember that your child will ultimately decide on his own whether or not to walk with God—no matter what you do. This means that we are working towards our child’s success, but not guaranteeing it. We are giving them the tools, but not guaranteeing their use. As a result, any and all that we do is an improvement and a help to us as parents and our*

*Gus was feeling kind of blue. He was feeling keenly aware of his deficiencies as a parent, especially now that his children were entering the teen years.*

*“Hey, Gus,” I protested, “Let’s keep this in perspective. If you were to drop dead now, you would have prayed for your children more than you were ever prayed for by your parents. You would have spent more time worrying about their walk with God than your folks ever did yours. You could drop dead right now and your kids would still have ten times the jump you had on life, and you ended up as a missionary. Lighten up. Don’t be so hard on yourself.”*

accountability to God, as well as to our children and their preparation for adulthood. Our goal in this seminar is to be the type of parents God wants us to be, and in so doing, to trust that our children will follow in serving the Lord as well.

What follows are methods Eleanor and I have put together over the years. Neither El nor I came from Christian homes. In saying this, I want to stress that they were not non-Christian homes, based on biblical models, but rather they were thoroughly secular homes. Each had the vestiges of tragedy and abuse that accompany such homes and lifestyles. When El and I married and started our family we realized all too well that we lacked the heritage and knowledge to make this thing work. As a result we did three things:

First we read every book by conservative evangelical authors who used the Word of God as their authority that we could find. Next, we went to conferences to learn even more. In fact, we made a commitment to attend each year a conference on the family. Lastly, and I think most importantly we began to keep a notebook based on interviews with successful parents. Whenever we met parents whose family life and behavior of children impressed us, we would interview them at length.

The surface answers were always the same, “Just pray for them, love them, and trust in God.” But we persisted, “What about...” and then we would ask specifically what they would do in specific instances. Some skills were so ingrained in the Christian culture of their family and their family heritage that they were hardly aware they were doing anything special. Others were methods refined and perfected in the crucible of their family life. Either way, we persisted, demanding to know the “how-to’s” of their success as parents. We slowly adapted these, but we kept interviewing...and we still do.

It was only later that I began to see the value of codifying this journal, so as to make it available for others. You may have noticed that this volume has been moving from principles to methods. The methods sections are the culmination of our experience of child raising in conjunction with the journal we have kept. Though based on Scripture, they are nevertheless the methods of man in application of Scripture. We submit them to you for your consideration in the hopes they will be of help. We have found them of great worth, as did those who passed them down to us and those to whom we have passed them down. They have stood the test of multiple spiritual generations and genealogical generations as well. They have been received and successfully implemented in such far-flung cultures as the U.S., Europe, Africa, and South America. It is our prayer that they will be used by God to aid you in fulfilling your responsibilities as parents to the commands of the Word of God presented in the preceding chapters, as well as in equipping your sons and daughters for success.

## II. The Rod Infractions:

*Martin Luther: “My mother caned me for stealing...” Here I Stand, The Life of Martin Luther; Roland H. Bainton, Abington Press, p. 23.*

*John Calvin: “... (John Calvin’s) upbringing was no doubt conventional... they would know whippings in plenty.” John Calvin, A Biography, T.H.L. Parker; Westminster Press.*

*John Wesley: “When we turned a year old (and some before), we were taught to fear the rod and to cry softly...” John Wesley: His Life and Theology, p. 43; Tuttle, Zondervan Press.*

*William Carey: "...the birch-rod hanging upon the wall in readiness for more serious offenses" William Carey— Father of Modern Missions; F. Deaville Walker; Moody Press; p. 19.*

*Jonathan Edwards: "Parental discipline was not limited to the schoolroom... other minutiae of daily life were likewise under a supervision all but omniscient... and filial obedience was the first law of the household." Jonathan Edwards, O. E. Winslow; Macmillan Press; p. 40.*

*Hudson Taylor: He (the father) was stern and even quick-tempered at times, the influence James Taylor exerted in the life of his son can hardly be over-estimated. He was decidedly a disciplinarian. But without some such element in his early training who can tell whether Hudson Taylor would ever have become the man he was?" Biography of Hudson Taylor— God's Man In China; Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor; Moody Press; p. 4.*

*D. L. Moody: "Mother would send me out for a stick, and I thought I could fool her and get a dead one. But she would snap that stick and then tell me to get another. She was rarely in a hurry, and certainly never when she was whipping me. Once I told her that the whipping did not hurt at all. I never had occasion to tell her so again, for she put it on so...!" The Life of Dwight L. Moody, p. 24 WR Moody, Barbour Press.*

*Jim Elliot: "The parents made an issue of nothing unless they intended to carry it through, believing that empty threats were dishonest and injurious to a child's sense of justice. Fred Elliot administered the more serious punishments, occasionally postponing a spanking in order to give it in private." Shadow of the Almighty, Elisabeth Elliot; Harper and Row; p. 26.*

Every leader in America today, over 40, was spanked. In fact, every leader in the history of Christendom was spanked. It is safe to say that virtually every person of significance who entered adulthood before 1960 was spanked. This being true, how could anyone, in their wildest imaginations, think that spanking can do harm to a child?

Having said this, let us keep in mind that not every mistake a child makes deserves the rod. We never spanked for the classic "spilt milk" episode at the table (the main reason being that I sometimes spill my milk). We simply cleaned it up and comforted the child. I have spilled my drink, as has El and as have all the kids. It is just one of those things that happens from time to time in the course of a family meal. There are many things like this that just happen, and as long as it is clear that it is not through willful negligence, then it just goes with being part of the fallen world.

For example, if the child is reaching for his milk and accidentally tips it over, we would not spank him. On the other hand, if we have told the child not to reach across the table to get what he wants, but rather to say "Please pass the bread." If he spills his milk while he reaches across his sister's plate to get the bread, that is entirely different. We would discipline him, but not for spilling his milk, but for rudely reaching for food at the table. The same is true of breaking a glass. We would not discipline the child for accidentally breaking a glass. We all have accidents. However, if the child has been told not to climb on

the cabinets to get a glass, but instead to ask politely, and he climbs on the cabinet and in so doing breaks a glass, then he would be disciplined. Not for breaking the glass, but rather for disobeying his parents.

There are events that resulting in the exact same outcome, but would result in either comfort or discipline for the child. What are the issues when it comes to rod infractions and spanking? What do you spank for, and how much do you spank? We decided on three rod infractions: training; disobedience; and rebellion. These will be covered in the following section.

**A. TRAINING— INSTRUCTING THE CHILD IN A TASK OR RESPONSIBILITY.**

***ONE STROKE***

There is always a period of grace when teaching a child. It is the learning period, when encouragement, modeling and praise are the key. But, there comes a time when the child must learn to work. He must learn to do a job well, and to stick to a task until its completion, even if he does not want to. This is when the training spank comes in.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Prv 22:6

An example of this is cleaning the room. Depending on the child, this task will vary. For a young toddler, it may consist of picking up the blocks and putting them in a basket. For a first-grader, it may be making the bed and leaving the room clean before leaving for school in the morning. Our children are required to have their rooms cleaned before leaving for school and before bed.

Let's say that you have asked your child to pick up his Legos and come to dinner. You check on him fifteen minutes later and he is not picking up his Legos. In fact, he has started to play with them. Having filled the basket halfway, he came across a new piece he had forgotten he had. He began fiddling with it and is now lost in this new world. This is a loss of discipline and concentration on the part of the child. The child knows how to pick up the Legos. The child knows that this is right. The child was doing it, but did not exercise the personal discipline to follow through.

We would employ the "training spank," which is one stroke, for this infraction. Following the procedure outlined in chapter two, we would administer the training spank for not following through on the request by his parent to pick up his Legos. I know too many adults who were never made to finish things they started; never made to do things they didn't like to do; never made to stick with things, even though distractions presented themselves. We all know people who do not finish what they start. We have all had to put up with people who are working with us on a team or committee who fail to fulfill their end of the responsibility when things get difficult or become uninteresting. This is the visible result in their lives of the lack of this skill. It is enough to motivate me to train my children in this important area of wisdom and life skill.

**B. DISOBEDIENCE— A WILLFUL DECISION ON THE CHILD'S PART NOT TO OBEY.**

***TWO STROKES***

Disobedience is another matter. God clearly teaches that children are to obey their parents, and far too many excuses are made on the part of parents to excuse willful disobedience. Remember, Eph 6:1 states, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*" God has reserved to Himself the moral prerogative of obedience. Obedience is the right, morally correct, righteous thing for a child

*I spoke to you in your prosperity; But you said, "I will not listen!" This has been your practice from your youth, That you have not obeyed My voice.*

Jer 22:21

to do. As parents, we do not have the moral authority to excuse disobedience. God has decided on His own, apart from our role as parents, that children are to obey their parents. We become stewards of this moral truth, and do not have the authority to override it.

In this situation, the child is told to pick up the Legos. The child obviously does not want to do so, and only makes a pretense of doing so while you are there. When you leave, the child drops the project and goes off to watch TV or pursue some other task. He is not having trouble completing a task. He knows how to pick up the Legos. He simply does not want to do it, and has decided not to obey. Perhaps, while picking up the Legos, his favorite TV show came on. Maybe he saw his brother or sister doing something and wanted to join in, or he simply decided he would rather not pick them up. Whatever the case, he has decided not to obey you.

For this, we employ two strokes for disobedience. These must be firm and uncompromising. The child must understand in no uncertain terms that the issue at stake is not whether or not the Legos are in the box but rather whether or not you, as the parent, are obeyed. A good case might even be made by the child's point of view for leaving the Legos out of the box. Certainly the theoretical issue of where Legos spend the night is not worthy of bringing down two hard strokes on the thigh or buttocks of a child. But *disobedience* is, and disobedience needs to be dealt with quickly, clearly and to the point. Again, the procedure outlined in chapter three is followed using two strokes.

### C. REBELLION— A CONFRONTATION TO DECIDE WHO IS IN CONTROL **THREE STROKES**

There are times when a child simply decides to throw down the gauntlet. Once thrown, it must be taken up. We cannot pretend this is not happening. We must not rationalize to ourselves that he is sleepy, cranky, hungry, or out of his environment. None of these things justifies rebellion in God's eyes. God had at his disposal, in both culture and language, the ability to make as many modifications and exceptions in this area as He wanted to. He made none.

To God, rebellion is a very serious offence. In 1 Sm 15:23 God makes a startling charge, "*For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry...*" Rebellion is no small thing in God's eyes. In fact, rebellious children, who grow into rebellious adults, are disqualified from serving as an officer in the church. Paul, in giving the qualifications of deacons and elders states in Ti 1:6 "*namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.*" Dealing with rebellion, then, is a serious spiritual matter.

In this situation the child is told to pick up the Legos and the child says, "No" or the child begins to cry and throws a Lego on the floor, at the door or at the parent. The child may fall on the floor and begin to cry or pout or may get up and leave, either by running or walking. The child may throw the Lego down and kick it, or simply stamp his foot and kick other toys away. The child may shout at the parent, telling them why they are wrong or why he should not have to pick up the Legos. In these responses we find rebellion. It is the open defiance of the parents' authority. It is a face-to-face confrontation to see who is in control. All children will eventually resort to this. And why not? Why should they have to obey you

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*If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town. And they shall say to the elders of his city, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard."*

*Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear of it and fear.*

Dt 21:18–21

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if they do not have to? Remember that children are born foolish. They do not understand the wisdom of obedience to parents. That is why God gave them parents and that is why God gave their parents the rod. *“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him,”* Prv 22:15.

Rebellion is responded to with three hard strokes of the rod. *There must be no question in the mind and heart of the child that obedience must be his response* and honor his attitude. Children must honor their parents’ position of authority and obey their commands. There must be no question in the child’s mind or heart that this is the right thing to do before God. Rebellion is sin and the child must be fully aware of the severe nature of the sin of rebellion and the importance of not nurturing rebelliousness in his heart.

We all know people who rebel against authority. They did so as children, as students, and as adults. They chafe under the authority of government, of church and at work. They are not much fun to be around and are still children, acting out their rebellious ways. The experience of being around rebellious people, should be enough to convince us to deal decisively with the sin of rebellion. It should also give us pause. What is my attitude towards the Word of God in this area? Am I a rebellious person, and is that why I am reacting so strongly against this?

**D. REPETITION— A REPEATED OFFENSE OF THE SAME NATURE IN THE IMMEDIATE TIME FRAMEWORK AND CONTEXT OF THE PREVIOUS INFRACTION.**

***INCREASE BY ONE STROKE***

*Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.*

Prv 26:11

Not to repeat a sin is an important lesson to be learned. God says in Prv 26:11, *“Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”* As you can see, to God, the repetition of foolish behavior is no small thing. Children, as you will remember, are born foolish, and left to themselves, they will remain that way. We as parents, can drive this foolishness out of our children through discipline.

Sometimes a child will decide to press his case and repeat his folly. The response is two-fold. If he simply moves up the scale from training to rebellion, then you just move up the scale with him. On the other hand, if he simply continues in the same path, only repeating it, I stay with him in this area, dealing with him the same way. I increase the strokes by one each time, reaching my self-imposed limit at five.

**III. The non-rod infraction**

*John Wesley:* “When we turned a year old (and some before), we were taught to fear the rod and to cry softly...” John Wesley: His Life and Theology p. 43; Tuttle, Zondervan Press.

*Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.*

Nm 11:1.

*Jim Elliot:* “I don’t think it hurts any child to sit quiet through an adult meeting,” Clara Elliot declared, “it’s good for his nerves.” Shadow of the Almighty, p. 26; Elisabeth Elliot; Harper and Row.

*The Apostle Paul:* “...but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (1 Cor 9:27)

**Prv 21:23** He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.

**Prv 16:32** He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.

**Prv 17:27** He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

**Prv 25:28** Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.

**Prv 26:21** Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.

An undisciplined tongue manifests a spirit given to complaining, to anger, to whining, to contention. These are traits we do not want our children to develop over the years. How much better off is a child, who at an early age is given the wisdom and life skill of exercising self-control over the tongue. A child that can exercise control over his tongue, that is not given to whining, to complaining, to contention when he does not get his way, can exercise control over his spirit and has been given a wisdom and life skill that will be invaluable in his education, his ministry, his career and his marriage.

There are two areas of discipline where El and I have discovered that an alternative approach to the rod may be used. For us, there are only two. For you, there may be others. The non-rod infractions are fine as long as the rod continues to play a central role in the overall approach to disciplining your child. It should not be all other methods and then the rod, but rather the rod and then other methods. For it to be otherwise, you must find a release clause from the Word of God and there is none that I know of. The two areas that we have found that other methods than the rod seem to be effective have to do with whining or crying. Since both of these can be a result of the use of the rod it would be hard to tell them apart. As a result, we came up with an alternate approach for these two specialized areas.

It is important, though, not to view crying in and of itself as bad. Jesus cried. Many of the great figures of the Bible cried. In fact, doctors tell us that one of the reasons that women live longer than men is that they cry. The ability to cry easily, to express genuine, heartfelt emotion is a great gift that you can give to your children, especially to the boys. Crying however is an expression of the heart and should not be used as an emotional and manipulative tool. As the former, it is a great gift, as the latter it is a great disservice to your child.

We have always taught our children that it is completely legitimate to cry when they are hurt, sad, lonely, don't feel well, are scared, or someone has hurt them or hurt their feelings. These, and more, are perfectly legitimate reasons for a child to cry. On the other hand, we have also taught our children that it is not all right to cry when they don't get something they want or to punish another person, or to get people to do something for them.

You do your child a great disservice if you teach your child not to cry. You do your child an equally great disservice if you allow your child to develop the foolish skill of using crying as a manipulative tool. I know of many adults who have used this skill so much and so often, that they are no longer in touch with their emotions. They are to the point of not knowing fact from fantasy. For men, it drifts into the use of brooding anger, the silent treatment and bitterness, or, even worse, violent outbursts of anger. For women, it is open tears and sulking. No matter the manifestation, it is a great disservice to give this type of behavior credence, and it requires quick action to nip it in the bud.

**A. WHINING**

By whining, we mean that incessant semi-crying or complaining which some children use to punish or manipulate their parents. If little Johnny is wandering around the house at bedtime, mealtime, or when he doesn't get his way, whining, crying and complaining, or refusing to be comforted, to play or to get on with life, then emotions have become a tool of manipulation and the child will willingly spread this dark cloud over the entire home.

I don't recommend the rod here because you need to be able to differentiate the legitimate cry from the manipulative. Also, you want the child to develop the skill of being able to take disappointment without punishing those around him. Nor do I recommend just laughing at the child, ignoring the child or isolating him. Laughing at the child will justify hurt feelings. No one likes to be laughed at, and derision is wrong, even if the other party is wrong. Ignoring the child will give room for either bitterness or the perfection of the technique, neither of which is acceptable. Nor is it acceptable to allow the child to throw a cloud over the other family members.

No child should be allowed to ruin a game time, family gathering, meal or visit from friends or family because of his sullen, whining disposition. In terms of isolating the child, crying while isolated is a valid response to the hurt and fear the child will experience. Isolation communicates a breaking of fellowship due to the sin and rebellion. We want to train the child, but we do not want to communicate that he is only acceptable to us when he is good and unacceptable to us when he sins.

Our solution— "The Crying Stool." Place a stool or chair in the room where you will be working or moving in and out of on a regular basis, such as the kitchen, den, living room, etc. Place the stool well away from counters, shelves etc., so the child will not be able to play or distract himself. Have the child sit on the stool and explain that he must be quiet for 15 minutes. You can have the child go to the bathroom first if you think of it, but don't give in to this ploy but once during the discipline period. If you forget and he makes the request, explain to the child that if he needs to go to the bathroom, he may ask to do so but that the timer will be reset to begin over again for a full 15 minutes. Tell the child you will only set the timer after he stops whining.

He does not have to smile or be happy, just stop whining. Set the timer and if the child talks, whines, complains, falls off the stool, gets down, touches anything, creates a distraction or does anything but sit on the stool for 15 minutes, reset the timer and start over again. If the child resists you will see the whining shift to disobedience or rebellion and then deal with it accordingly. Discipline for this and go back to the 15-minute stool session. Do not let the child trade off the stool for a spanking. He may add the spanking if he is foolish enough to do so, but not trade it off.

Once the session is over, follow the standard post-discipline procedure and then get on with life. You will find that this is not only a great benefit to the household, but that the child learns several things besides how to control his emotions, e.g. sitting still, patience and the control of the tongue.

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*So, Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food.*

1Kings 21:4

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**B. HUSH**

**Hush is the second area of non-**

**rod infraction** Children learn early that there are times when crying absolutely drives Mom and Dad crazy (especially Mom). We all learn quickly to differentiate between the cry that is contrived and the cry that is a result of a genuine hurt. As a rule, children reserve the former for times when Mom is either distracted or vulnerable. This may be due to insecurity on Mom's part, a sense that Mom is not focused or just plain selfishness. No matter the motive, the results are the same and the issue is the same as whining. Crying is not a legitimate tool to get what you want or to punish. Using emotions to manipulate or punish is a destructive relational skill.

Do not allow your child to develop and perfect it in the laboratory of the home. When Mom is trying to talk on the phone, when Mom is trying to prepare the evening meal, when Mom is trying to have a friend over or to have a Bible study in her home, when Mom is trying to rest, read a favorite book or magazine or just take a break, and yes, when Mom is trying to use the bathroom in peace, are the times when it drives the little darlings crazy to see Mom distracted and so the child begins to cry. Sometimes, the child contrives the reason. Many children learn that they can bring life to a halt if they fake legitimate hurts, such as falling down or hurting a finger, or the development of mysterious ailments. The fact is, that to have a separate life and will use crying as a tool to manipulate and punish their mother.

These children all need to learn how to hush on command. They need to learn it is all right to cry if you are hurt or sad etc., but it is not all right to cry if you don't get your way or to punish others.

**1. Teaching your child to hush is simple.** We taught all of our children to hush on command before they were one. As the child cries, place your thumb under his chin and palm on top of his head and firmly close the child's mouth and say, "No, Hush" in a firm

*There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven, a time to be silent...*  
Ec 3:1 & 7

*Jackie was a missionary on furlough. She wanted to host our home Bible study so that she could meet some of the other Moms and make friends. Trish would have none of it. During the first Bible study she cried without stopping for the entire 90 minutes, not stopping until we had all left. She wandered throughout the house crying, came to the table where we were having the Bible study and stared at her mother, crying, and sat and looked at her toys, crying. She had developed it to an art form. Jackie decided that the study was too unnerving for Trish, so it was held elsewhere.*

trying to pray or do her Bible study, when Mom is

*Dorothy was hosting a Bible study in her home and little Philip would have nothing of it. I had excused myself to use the restroom while Dorothy tried to distract the little darling for the umpteenth time. As I came out of the bathroom, I could see Philip was again out of his room. When he saw me, it did not phase him a bit. He knew the routine well and that it would work. He plopped down on the floor with his toy and began to cry very convincingly. Dorothy came rushing in, "Oh Philip, are you O.K.? Did you fall down? Poor baby." Phillip looked me right in the eye, as if to say, "Don't even bother, she will never believe you over me." Philip was brought in to the room where the study was taking place, to be held and comforted, where he could continue to disrupt the study and distract Mom.*

some children will simply not allow their mothers

*Darla answered the phone in a whisper, "No, I am sorry, Tom is not in." "Is everything O.K." I unconsciously whispered back. "I hope I did not wake the baby." "Oh, it's not the baby, it is Kathy (Darla's two something first child), she will throw a fit if she catches me on the phone."*

*It was Jeff's birthday and the spotlight was supposed to be on Jeff, but his little brother Roger would have none of it. He would cry, shout and throw a temper tantrum, unless he got to share in it all. Mom dismissed it as love for Jeff. They are so close, he doesn't understand. He thinks it's for him too, etc. He got to be a part of the whole party. He got to hand Jeff his presents. He got to be right there when the candles were lit and even beat Jeff out in blowing out some of the candles. Whenever he did not get his way, he would just cry incessantly. For Mom, already stressed out by the party, it was just easier to let him cheat Jeff out of his special day than to deal with the tears.*

manner without shouting. Keep the child's mouth shut until the child makes an effort at not crying and then calm and reassure the child. If the child starts again, then you repeat the procedure. All you have to do is wait it out and consistently win. Within two weeks, the child will hush on command.

Picture this for a moment...

*You are talking on the phone, and your little darling comes wandering in whining and crying. You make eye contact and say firmly, "Hush." He hushes and goes about his business, leaving you to finish your conversation.*

*You are driving back from shopping. The traffic is bad... it is raining, and now your toddler begins to cry. You already have a headache and you still have to drive across town to get home. You quickly look back to him, sitting in his car seat. You call his name, make eye contact and say firmly, "Hush." He rides quietly with you the rest of the way home.*

*It is the dinner table. You and your wife are finally getting to sit down together. The baby has been fed and is sitting in the highchair at the table with you, playing with her cheerios. She becomes bored and begins crying. You look her in the eyes and say firmly, "Hush." She stops crying and goes back to her Cheerios, while you and your wife finish your meal in peace.*

*Your toddler has been put to bed and the couples are arriving for Bible study. As you visit, pray and get started, from the other room you hear her begin to cry. The couples look at each other nervously, as they all have two- and three-year-olds. You excuse yourself, walk to the hall and call out in a firm voice the name of your child and "Hush!" She immediately stops crying and falls off to sleep. As you sit back down, you can hear a pin drop. Young couples are looking at each other in disbelief. Finally, one of the mothers asks, "Does she always respond that way?"*

**2. I praise God that all my children, including my son, grew up with the freedom and ability to show their emotions through tears.** Crying is a not an uncommon sight at the Mahon house. I also praise God for the couples in our lives who stressed to us that our children need to learn to hush. This is a great skill that we taught our children. It afforded El many opportunities in life and ministry that were denied other Moms by their children. It afforded her a great deal more emotional reserve than many Moms her age. Most importantly, our children learned early in life the difference between what is acceptable and not in this area. Now that they are entering adulthood, they are able to maturely face problems and deal with issues of interpersonal conflicts without resorting to emotional manipulation and emotional blackmail. This skill began before they were one, by teaching them to hush.

## IV. Win the Battle Early

### A. THE "TERRIBLE TWO'S" ARE A MYTH

The Word of God does not speak to them nor does it give credence to the concept of any age or type of child being "terrible", even in a joking way. Any childraising philosophy that has room in its vocabulary for the term "terrible," in reference to *your child*, is bankrupt and not worthy of consideration. None of my children were or are "terrible," and we reject outright any philosophy that results in "terrible" behavior or a phase in which children are referred to as "terrible." The key is conscientious training on the part of the parents. No child needs to be "terrible," if his parents are willing to discipline and train him in wisdom and life skills and then, so trained, to let go. In reality, this discipline and training, will create and allow for freedom and independence if done correctly. The terrible two's occur when freedom is gained through rebellion to parents who are not training for independence,

but rather fighting back. The terrible two's are avoided when, through discipline and training, the child is prepared for independence before his peers and excels in each step as his excited parents help him along. The key is discipline and training from the start.

The training process begins at about nine months, and peaks at age four in terms of disciplining your child. From age four to the fourth grade (or puberty, whichever comes first), you will still have to discipline, but the battle, so to speak, will have been won. From fourth grade on, most of the work should be done. All that follows will be built on the character and lifestyle that has been developed at this early age. Once your child enters school, you have less and less time and influence upon your child. It is during the pre-school years that the foundation is laid. After that, the finishing work is done. After grade four or puberty, physical discipline, or spanking, is counterproductive. With this in mind it is important to begin early, be thorough and do the job right. This means winning the battle early and winning the big one.

Let me repeat that statement again. The terrible two's are a myth. None of our children went through the terrible two's, and I know many parents whose children did not experience them. The reason was that from nine months on they expected certain behavior of their children, they began to discipline their children, driving out the foolishness and training them in wisdom and life skills. As a result, the children did not experience the foolishness of the terrible twos and the parents were never reduced to referring to their child in public or private as "terrible." If you are following a philosophy of childraising that views it as acceptable for a child to go through a stage where he is "terrible," or acceptable for others think he is "terrible," I would reject that immediately.

## B. THE BIG FIVE:

The following are basic early battles which must be won. If won between the age of nine and eighteen months, they will afford a night and day difference between your child and the "terrible" ones. We call them the Big Five and will give them to you in the order that we recommend that you teach them—devoting about a month to each one before going on to the next.

**#1— NO**

**#2— OBEY**

**#3— COME**

**#4— OPEN/GIVE**

**#5— HUSH**

By “**No**,” we mean that when told “No,” a child does not do what he is being told not to do on the first command.

By “**Obey**,” we mean that when told to “Obey,” the child does what he is being told to do on the first command.

By “**Come**,” we mean that when the child is told to come, he stops what he is doing and comes on the first command.

By “**Open/Give**,” we mean that when told to open his mouth, his hand or whatever is at issue the child immediately, on the first command, does so, and gives to the parent what the parent is requesting.

By “**Hush**,” we mean that when told to “hush,” the child quits making noise.

Now I want you to imagine for a minute, the difference in your family life or of the families you are familiar with, if the children are trained before reaching 18 months in these five areas. Can you even imagine how pleasant and how much fun being a parent can be if these areas are instilled in your children through discipline and wisdom and life training? Can you imagine how much more refreshed your wife will be when you come home? How much different the house will be when you come home? How pleasant the evening meals will be, how much growth will take place after the evening meals as the family spends time together in loving play and growth rather than constant conflict? How the fathers sense of dignity and respect will be restored in his home environment? I can assure you that we have slipped so far from Christian values, that many evangelical parents snicker— or worse, feel it is unjust to require these responses, while many non-Christians from third world countries, when exposed to this seminar, do not.

Udobong Idemeter, the southern regional director of the Navigator ministry in Nigeria, has hosted this seminar a number of times. Though without children, he and his wife Gertrude recognize the need for it in their ministry. The last time I presented this section, Udobong shared with me that after hearing this principle the first time, he had gone back and read through the Old Testament. He had come to the conclusion that everything God required of his children could be grouped under one of these five headings.

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*“You mean I can ask my child to do that?” Cynthia asked in a completely surprised voice.*

*“Well, actually Cynthia, you can require your child to do just about anything that you feel will be best for your child or for the family.”*

*One of the greatest senses of gratification I get from this seminar is to see parents re-empowered to raise their children. For many parents power is equally divided between the experts and the child, leaving the parent little power. It is my conviction that nobody on the face of the earth, save God, knows better what your child needs in life.*

*“Is it all right to ask my child....?” A common question at my seminar.*

*My reply, “Not only is it all right, but your days of asking are over. You no longer have to hope for good behavior, but can now require it. Simply start telling your child what to do and how to do it. You no longer ask your child. You tell your child. In contrast, your child no longer tells you. Your child now humbly asks you.”*

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*Your two-year-old, Jeffy, sees Tiffany, your best friend's crawler, playing with one of his toys. He walks over and begins to take the toy away. You say quickly, “Jeffy, **No**.” Jeffy stops immediately. Then you say, “Jeffy, **come** to Mommy.” Jeffy immediately comes to you. “Jeffy, **give** Mommy the toy.” Jeffy hands you the toy but begins to cry, “Jeffy, **Hush**.” Jeffy gets control of himself. “Jeffy, I want you to share this toy with Tiffany. Give Tiffany back the toy and give her a kiss.” Jeffy, hesitates only slightly. “Jeffy, **obey**.” Jeffy walks back to Tiffany, gives her the toy and a little kiss. “Jeffy **come** here.” Jeffy returns. You praise him, give him a hug and a kiss, and send him off to play quietly. You turn back to your best friend who is watching the whole thing with her mouth open. “Is he always that cooperative?” she asks.*

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Can you see how each of the big five was employed in this situation? Can you imagine how different your children's relationship with you and with each other would be if these principles were at work in your life? Can you see how Jeffy will be ahead of his peers at church and at school because he is able to respond in this manner?

## C. THE LITTLE THREE:

We consider the Big Five as universal for all children. There are some tasks that El and I decided to discipline in, that may be more indicative of our temperament. I share them with you to illustrate what can be done in the area of discipline and childraising, and to encourage you to customize your own discipline plan to include those things which reflect your values and goals for your family.

The little three...

**#1— Cooperation with the diaper change**

**#2— Cooperation with eating**

**#3— Cooperation with dressing**

**By cooperation with the diaper change,** we mean that the baby does not roll all over the place, grabbing things, knocking things over, smearing things around while you change the diaper. I decided on this because I got tired of accidentally pricking my first born with a diaper pin. I felt bad about this, but realized the baby had to cooperate to avoid it. I simply began firmly tapping the baby's thigh and saying "No," when she got rambunctious. As soon as she knew the system, I moved to a training spank with the wooden spoon. Halfway through child number two, disposable diapers had really been perfected and come down in price. I found that I still wanted to train the child in this area. A cooperative baby is a whole lot less messy, and this early training laid the groundwork for other areas.

**By cooperation with eating,** we mean that the child can eat without it looking like a disaster area when it is over. Now I understand that at an early age, when first learning to eat solid foods, a baby will experiment with differing orifices in his head to see what works best— nose, ears, hair follicles and finally decides that the mouth is the way to go. After that, the child can be trained to eat to a degree commensurate with his motor skills. And let me assure you, there is not some anatomical anomaly inbred in evangelical one- and two-year-olds that causes them to throw food, knock things off their high chair tray, or spew things on the floor. They simply do so because they want to... they are bored... maybe punishing Mom... perhaps enjoying the responses... or most likely... *they just want to do it.*

*Parent at seminar: "I don't see how you can expect your child to behave that way. I certainly don't see how mine would."*

*My response: "Well, before answering let me ask you a few questions."*

*"First, were you and your husband out working in the wheat fields when suddenly you saw a streak across the sky and an explosion. You followed it only to discover a small space capsule with a little baby in it wearing a costume with a cape and big red S on it?"*

*"No."*

*"Well, is your child heir to some omnipotent dynasty, and you have been entrusted with his care 'til he is of age, but after that he will wield absolute power over you and over your family?"*

*"No."*

*"Well, is your child going to inherit a billion dollars when he turns 18, and you don't want to alienate him so as to be cut out of the family fortune?"*

*"No."*

*"Then, if your child does not have super powers, is not someday going to be your absolute ruler and if the family fortune is not at stake, then when he disobeys, just get the wooden spoon and follow the procedure outlined in the seminar. I guarantee you that if you do this consistently and in a firm manner, all of your children will obey quickly the first time."*

From the training spank, I go quickly to rebellion (as with all hitting, spitting or throwing) in this area. Lifting the tray off the high chair takes only a minute to accomplish and the discipline process is then followed. Once accomplished, you can take your child with you anywhere and not just to fast food restaurants who make provision for out of control children. (Oh don't be so hard on me. We all know those restaurants don't build those playgrounds because they love children. They build them first and foremost, because mothers have to have a place they can take their children where their manners won't be an embarrassment. True, the kids like it and will ask to go there, but first and foremost, it is for haggard moms of children who cannot sit still and civilly eat a meal in a polite and thankful manner and then continue obediently with her on her shopping trip without whining, fighting or complaining.)

**By cooperation with dressing,** we mean that as Mommy begins to dress the child, to the child's anatomical ability, he puts his head, hands and feet where Mom wants them to go. As soon as he is physically able to, he dresses himself. Your child is not a poodle that views dressing as alien to his nature and needs to be patiently dressed by you if he is to look cute. Your child is a human being, created by God, whose will it is that he be clothed. (Gn 3:21 "And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them"). From the training spank, I

go quickly to disobedience. This is something that can save a lot of grief in the relationship later on, if a child learns early. Wisdom in this area transfers over to modesty, hair care, appropriate dress, styles, fads and getting dressed and off on time. Clothing and appearance will be an issue throughout adolescence, so lay the groundwork of wisdom now.

The parent does not have to play this game, or any other manipulative game for that matter. The parent does not have to be the laboratory where the child learns the art of manipulation. Diaper changing can be a simple process where tensions are not frayed. Eating with the child can be a fun, bonding experience which is a delight to all involved. Dressing can be something you do together and enjoy. All this presupposes a commitment to discipline and training in wisdom and life skills.

## D. THE QUESTION IS THEN ASKED, "WHEN TO START?"

For us, the answer was between six and nine months of age. Two mileposts are clear determiners. First, does the child recognize his name? This is a very complex mental process. Not just, does the child recognize a voice, but does the child recognize his name? If he can understand this, he can understand, "No." Second, is the child mobile? Once the child is mobile, "No," "Obey," and "Come," are imperative for his safety.

Before this time, forget about discipline. It is the time to cuddle, to bond, to love and to unconditionally meet the needs of the child. Now some will argue that choosing the child's bedtime is a form of discipline. I am not going to split hairs with you on this one. I will say that just as soon as possible, you should begin making this decision. A child can learn to

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*A statement in the form of a question I commonly hear is, "Have you ever noticed how sometimes (changing the diapers, or, feeding the child, or, getting the child dressed) is so easy and sometimes it is like pulling teeth?" At which time, all the parents nod in agreement and, depending on their state of denial, share their latest cutesy or horror story.*

*My Answer: "The reason this is true is actually very simple. It is because sometimes your child wants to cooperate and sometimes he doesn't" Come now, do you really think your child is carried along by cosmic irresistible impulses dictated by the stars, or biorhythms or some such rot? Certainly not. Sometimes he wants to. Sometimes he doesn't. It's great indoor sport. It's great entertainment to see Mommy struggle along. The child, being in control of this game, changes the rules on a daily basis.*

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take naps and to go to bed. Beyond this, I would not start earlier than six to nine months. You can start earlier if you want, but I think it is a mistake.

If you will commit yourself to faithfully disciplining the child in wisdom and life skills for the sake of the child's success, not only will the mother's life change, but also the entire family dynamic will be transformed. The home will be a more positive and happy environment and the child will experience a happier and more successful life. An upward spiral effect is created both now and in the future.

### Now...

The disciplined child

With good behavior, *opportunities to grow and experience life broaden* as places, homes and environments usually closed to children are opened.

*Self-image improves* as people's approving smiles, praise and positive comments touch the child and his parents.

*Grandparents and relatives reinforce this* as they give special treatment, and as they relax around the well-behaved child, showering him with love, affection and experiences.

School and Church reinforce this as well, as the reputation of the child's behavior spreads, *the recognition of this brings increases and the opportunities this brings widen.*

*Friends and neighbors all love an obedient considerate child.* Opportunities broaden and self-image increases as he experiences this love and appreciation of his behavior

Thus, an upward spiral of success and positive self-image is created; a sophistication of experience and a pride in the growing awareness that the child is indeed something special adds to this upward momentum.

### The Future...

No one can make your child employ these skills and life experiences in the future, but the child has them at his disposal. The child may not choose to use them, but correspondingly, no one can take them away. The wisdom, the life skills, the self-control, the confidence, the broadened life experience will put him on a footing which will allow him, if he chooses, to compete and succeed in the non-Christian world, while retaining his testimony. Not only that, as the child matures, he begins to understand the values of the virtues you have built into his life and will be very careful not to throw these benefits away.

### Now...

The child without discipline

Just as the upward spiral of obedience enhances present and future success and positive self-image, so, also, the opposite is true. For the undisciplined, untrained child, a downward spiral effect is created both now and in the future as the child sinks into sullen rebellion.

Opportunities to grow and experience life narrow as Mom and Dad become more and more cautious about where they take the child and what or who they expose the child to.

Self-image deteriorates, as he reacts to the scowls and disapproving glances of those around him and the bemused and sarcastic smiles of still others at his antics. Parental time is more and more given to correcting and less and less emotion is left for praise and reinforcement.

Grandparents and relatives tend to shy away from baby-sitting, hosting and keeping the child except for short visits or controlled situations. The need to "child proof" the home

becomes more of a burden on the hosts and their wariness or resentment is easily picked up by the child.

Schools and Church begin to view the child as an annoyance, and the reputation as a problem child takes hold as the child begins to act out his reputation for disruption or for clowning around.

Friends and neighbors tend to reinforce this with names and attitudes. Some parents begin to no longer invite the child over as his social circle constricts while simultaneously the mother is looking more and more for opportunities for the child to play out of the home so she can have a break.

Thus, a downward spiral of failure and poor self-image is created. A narrowing of life experiences and a growing self awareness by the child that he is not wanted and is considered, by even his mother, to be trying only adds to this downward momentum.

## The Future...

The child's rebellion will continue, but without option or alternative. The child is not so much rebelling against any thing as carrying out his rebellious nature that has been, for the most part, left unchecked. The child goes from a home where he is not disciplined, to a school where he is not disciplined and then on to a University where not only is he not disciplined but where discipline, especially moral discipline, is seen as a vice and not a virtue. Meanwhile, Mom and Dad cannot understand what went wrong while their little darling finally has an environment where his undisciplined life can drift almost completely unchecked. Many problems that I see college teens struggling with as they begin to leave the home can be attributed to the fact that they never learned wisdom and life skills through the discipline of obedience. There are adults that I have met where I went away thinking, "He never grew up. He's still a little brat."

Ultimately, all we do looks forward to the time when the child will be independent of our immediate care. All we do looks to the future with excited anticipation of our child being able to make his way successfully and on his own in the world.

## V. Winning the Big One

Most children will select one area at around nine months to a year and dig in. This particular issue must be settled at that time, and **must be won** by the parent. Periodically, he will draw a line in the sand to decide who is in charge, be it "come," or eating or screaming or hitting or any number of activities, he will choose one to wage the battle of the wills over. We call this, "The Big One."

*With Becca, it was "Come." I can remember that morning in our kitchen in College Station, Texas. We were in the campus ministry and just finishing breakfast. I asked Becca to come to me, so that I could wipe her mouth. She decided she would not. The discipline process went on and on for about 45 minutes before Becca decided she would obey in this area. After that, the storm was over. Periodically, she would test the waters of rebellion again, and the response was always the same.*

*With Sam, it was screaming. If he did not like something, he would let out a scream like a crazed banshee. In addition to this, he began perfecting the art of eating without swallowing. In both cases he just decided he would have his way and the battle was on. It seemed like forever before he would give in on these two issues.*

*With Megan, it was "Hush." She was a very compliant baby, but she decided one day that she had had enough of this "hush" business and would see who would outlast whom. An hour and a half later, the issue was settled.*

*With Lizzy, it was food on the tray. She decided one night that there would be no food on her tray, and she cleared it in royal fashion with a stroke of her arm. It took thirty minutes to decide this one, but Lizzy finally submitted to our discipline in this area.*

One reaction I sometimes get upon sharing the anecdotes on Winning The Big One is, “No wonder they rebelled when you battle with them so!” To which I reply, “No wonder you don’t have these battles, because you just let them rebel!” Remember: *you are in the right*. You have the authority from God to require obedience and the mandate from God to use the rod as a tool of grace in driving out the foolishness in the child that causes him to rebel. The obedience of children to their parents is “right,” as is the disciplining of disobedience with “strokes” from a “rod.”

## VI. Disciplinary Principles to remember

Deciding on what areas to discipline is a question that faces many young parents—especially those that do not come from a strong Christian home, or one that supported the biblical principles of discipline and training. Allow me then to present to you a few simple guidelines.

### A. THE BIBLE

What does the Word of God require of you? For instance, it is not your prerogative decide whether or not to discipline in the area of obedience. God has already decided this. The same can be said for “honor,” and “control,” in regard to the parents and the home. Similarly, the parent does not have *the option* of using the rod. Many parents think they do; that this is just an option. The Word of God does not present it that way. In Proverbs 23:13–14, the Word of God says to parents, “*Do not hold back discipline from the child; although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.*” The rod is presented as a direct command, and not an option. Again, in Proverbs 13:24, “*He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.*” In both passages, discipline with the rod is presented as a biblical imperative—a command, not an option.

### B. THE MORE CONSERVATIVE PARENT

Generally, one parent is more conservative than the other. The wishes of the more conservative should be respected. The Word of God says of moms in Proverbs 23:25 “*Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you.*” and again, in Proverbs 29:15, “*The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*” Mothers have a right to enjoy their children and the honor that comes from a disciplined home that is under the father’s control.

The father, therefore, should listen to the mother in this area and respond to her needs and desires. In the same way, the Word of God says of fathers in 1 Timothy 3:4, “*He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.*” If the father feels more control is needed, that the dignity of the house is compromised, that his dignity and leadership is compromised, then the mother should support him in this, knowing it affects his ability to witness and minister in the community.

### C. THE CHILD’S CHARACTER AND SUCCESS

Some areas of discipline will be decided on the basis of character. For instance, both kindness and patience are indicative of godly behavior. As a result, we decided to discipline our children in both of these areas so as to develop this character trait and accompanying skill in them. Again, sitting still and following instructions are

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I’ll Always Believe What You Do!

Sign in Megan’s  
7th grade English  
class above the  
teacher’s desk.

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necessary for success in school. As a result, we decided to discipline here in order to insure their success in school and in environments where controlled behavior and concentration was necessary for success.

#### D. WHAT WILL THIS BEHAVIOR LOOK LIKE IN THE BODY OF A TEENAGER?

One of the biggest myths that parents buy into is, “Don’t worry, he will grow out of it.” We all know that bad habits and bad behavior are not grown “out of” with time, but rather become more entrenched. Take any behavior, be it screaming, running away, ignoring your requests, hitting, throwing things, and then project that into the body of a 5’ 10,” 170 lb. teenage boy. Then you will wish that you had dealt with the behavior decisively when the teenager was a child.

#### E. KEEPING RULES IN PERSPECTIVE— IF EVERYTHING IS WRONG, THEN NOTHING IS WRONG.

Your child will someday be old enough to begin deciding things for himself, in terms of his values and ethics. For a child entering his teen years, if everything is wrong, then in all probability he will come to the conclusion that nothing is wrong and start out on his own to decide right from wrong.

I find parents sometimes overreacting in their fear of the secular, non-Christian world. The Word of God states, *"You are not to say, 'It is a conspiracy!' In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy, And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread,"* Is 8: 12–13. We do not have to react in fear. As an illustration, I talked recently to a young mother who was told that Christians should not have a VCR in the home, it was too dangerous to the morals of a child. Another told me that you should not hire a boy as a baby sitter because boys were too unpredictable in their sexual curiosity.

I know mothers who are afraid of public schools, so their kids are in private schools. Still others are afraid of all private schools, except for those along a very narrow range of doctrine. Still other moms reject private schools for homeschooling. The privateers warn, “How much money is the soul of your child worth? How will you feel when he is on drugs, while you have that new car?” The homeschoolers warn, “How much time is the soul of your child worth? How are you going to sleep at night knowing he is in the hands of strangers all day?” If secular music is bad and Christian Rock is bad and TV is bad and even Christian TV is bad; if all churches (but yours) are bad (and you are not so sure about yours) and if the in-laws are wrong and the neighbors are wrong and the other Christians are wrong, pretty soon the child decides, “They can’t all be wrong.” All children must sort out for themselves right from wrong at one time or another. Keep your disciplining and training to the essentials, and let your child learn in your presence discretion and wise decision-making.

It is the same with moral absolutes. If you clutter the child’s value system with a host of things that the Bible says is wrong, when in fact those are your applications and not the Bible’s doctrinal commands, then you run the risk of your child deciding that all you have taught him needs to be thrown out. Make clear what is the Word of God, what is application and what is just your desire for the family’s sake. Stress to the child, that when he is an adult, he may reject your applications and methods for his own, and that this is fine with you, so long as he does not reject the Word of God. Meanwhile, though, he must respect your judgment while he is in your home. In all of this, be sure to make the Word of God the high ground and not your personal values and preferences. In fact, take time out to share with him areas of the family’s life where you do things based on personal application, but that other godly Christians act otherwise. Help him to learn to discern between doctrine and application.

## VII. Summary

- A. There are four levels of rod infractions to consider:
  - 1. Training
  - 2. Disobedience
  - 3. Rebellion
  - 4. Repetition
- B. There are two non-rod tools:
  - 1. The crying stool
  - 2. Hush
- C. The Big Five:
  - 1. No
  - 2. Obey
  - 3. Come
  - 4. Open/Give
  - 5. Hush
- D. The Little Three:
  - 1. Cooperation with the diaper change
  - 2. Cooperation with eating
  - 3. Cooperation with getting dressed
- E. Win the battle early and win the Big One.
- F. Make sure the spiral of life experience is going up and not down.
- G. There are five principles to keep in mind when deciding to discipline:
  - 1. God's command
  - 2. The family
  - 3. Your child's success
  - 4. What will this behavior look like in a teenager?
  - 5. If everything is wrong, then nothing is wrong.
- H. Remember the objectives:
  - 1. Submission
  - 2. Self-control
  - 3. Wisdom and life skills
  - 4. Discipline, not punishment

## FOUR POST-STUDY PROJECTS

Author's  
Note:

*It is at this point that you should begin to set and implement changes in your child's behavior. What follows are a number of projects which you and your wife can complete together. Each project is designed to be done alone, first, and then together. The goal is to come to an agreement on the discipline needs of your child, and then work on them together.*

### **Scripture Memory Verse— Prv 19:18**

**Discipline your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death.**

**Last Week's Verse— Heb 12:7** “*It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*”

## QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: THE TRAINING PROCESS— SUGGESTED LEVELS OF DISCIPLINE

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 10:1

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 17:21, 25

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 22:15

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

## QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: THE TRAINING PROCESS— SUGGESTED LEVELS OF DISCIPLINE

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 13:24

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 23:13–14

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 29:15

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week, and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**Husband's Evaluation Sheet— Discipline Needs**

**Wife's Evaluation Sheet— Discipline Needs**

**Joint Evaluation Sheet— Discipline Needs**

# HUSBAND'S EVALUATION SHEET

<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Child #1</i>	<i>Child #2</i>	<i>Child #3</i>
<b>No</b>			
<b>Obey</b>			
<b>Come</b>			
<b>Open/Give</b>			
<b>Hush</b>			
<b>Diaper</b>			
<b>Eating</b>			
<b>Dressing</b>			

# WIFE'S EVALUATION SHEET

<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Child #1</i>	<i>Child #2</i>	<i>Child #3</i>
<b>No</b>			
<b>Obey</b>			
<b>Come</b>			
<b>Open/Give</b>			
<b>Hush</b>			
<b>Diaper</b>			
<b>Eating</b>			
<b>Dressing</b>			

# JOINT EVALUATION SHEET

<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Child #1</i>	<i>Child #2</i>	<i>Child #3</i>
<b>No</b>			
<b>Obey</b>			
<b>Come</b>			
<b>Open/Give</b>			
<b>Hush</b>			
<b>Diaper</b>			
<b>Eating</b>			
<b>Dressing</b>			

## HUSBAND

***How does your child respond to you and/or your wife in terms of those areas that Proverbs specifically forbids?***

I. Prv 6:20— **Obedience:** “*My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;*” When you ask your child to do something in a normal voice, what is your child’s usual response if he or she does not want to do it?

II. Prv 19:26— **Hitting:** “*He who assaults his father and drives his mother away is a shameful and disgraceful son.*” Does your child hit, strike, throw things, food etc. at you when angry?

III. Prv 20:20— **Hateful language:** “*He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will go out in time of darkness.*” Does your child shout at you? Does your child ever say, “I hate you”, “Stupid,” or in any other way exhibit hateful language?

IV. Prv 28:24a— **Stealing:** “*He who robs his father or his mother... is the companion of a man who destroys.*” Does your child go into your room, purse or drawer or any place you keep things, and take things he is not supposed to? When you tell your child he cannot have or eat something, does he do it anyway?

V. Prv 28:24b— **Denial:** *"He who... says, 'It is not a transgression,' is the companion of a man who destroys."* Does your child refuse to admit wrong, ask for forgiveness, receive correction or in any other way deny wrongdoing when he is guilty?

VI. Prv 29:15— **Selfish:** *"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."* At home, at church, in the super market, with other children, does your child have to have his own way, or will he easily give in and cooperate?

VII. Prv 30:17— **Mocking:** *"The eye that mocks a father, and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it."* Does your child mock, mimic, scorn or in any way belittle your requests by word or by expression?

VIII. Prv 23:13— **Foolishness:** *"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him."* Does your child engage in foolish behavior at home, at play or at school- behavior which is clearly not in the child's best interest?

IX. **The Big One:** Of all the issues discussed here and throughout the study, what in your opinion is the most serious, the "big one?"

**WIFE**

***How does your child responds to you and/or your wife in terms of those areas that Proverbs specifically forbids?***

I. Prv 6:20— **Obedience:** *“My son, observe the commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teaching of your mother;”* When you ask your child to do something in a normal voice, what is your child’s usual response if he or she does not want to do it?

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