

THEME: Family – Spanking, Does The Bible Teach Spanking With The Rod?

“I have two stacks of books on my desk...” The pastor of a large evangelical church (who should have known better) was explaining to the congregation the church’s stand on spanking. He went on to say that on the right were books that promoted spanking, on the left were ones that either discouraged spanking or taught against it. He went to great lengths to stress that since these respected authors disagreed he would share with the congregation what his views were based on a distillation of the thoughts contained in the two opposing stacks of books.

Unfortunately he had it wrong. The correct statement would have been, “I have in my office a stack of books on the topic of spanking one side and the Bible on the other. I have read these books comparing what they say on the subject of spanking and the use of the rod with what the Word of God says about spanking and the use of the rod. I have kept that which is in accordance with the Word of God and have discarded that which either adds to or takes away from the Word of God. Now I will teach you what the Word of God says on this subject.”

It is a sad commentary on today’s church that many pastors will not dare speak of the rod from the pulpit out of fear of the reaction of young mothers in the congregation (read drop in attendance and offering). These pastors hide behind the oft used ploy of “contradicting authors”. The fact that authors of Christian books will contradict the Word of God should be of no surprise to these pastors as it was prophesied long ago. Pastors were prepared for this in the Pastoral Epistles where God the Holy Spirit states in *2 Timothy 4:3-4* ***“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”***

This argument of contradicting authors holds no water. Supposed evangelical authors cannot agree on the existence of Hell, on the Biblical issue of divorce and remarriage, on exclusive salvation through Christ alone, on the doctrine of predestination, on homosexuality in the church and more. In fact I can collect two stacks of books, one stack presenting Christ as an historical figure and the other as a mythical one – both stacks written by scholars with advanced theological degrees and schooled in both Greek and Hebrew. I have grown weary with the cop out – “Some authors don’t agree with the difficult teachings of the Bible so now I don’t have to face them head on.”

This series of meditations on the subject of spanking with the rod will allow the young parent to decide for themselves what the Word of God says on this subject and in so doing whether they believe what the Word of God says on this subject. I will close though with a word of caution for young mothers. There is a second subtle attack on spanking by so called evangelical authors. In this approach the author reminds the young mothers that Proverbs are just that – truisms, not to be taken literally, such as Aesop’s Fables. They are “proverbial” in nature and we are not to hold to them literally. This of course is not true. First the title of the book of Proverbs is arbitrary. In the Russian Bible this book is titled – “The Wisdom of God”. These are not fables but divine, doctrinal truth. They are the wisdom of God, given by God for our direct application. Will the young mother who so quickly desires to relegate the passages on the rod to truism be equally quick to do the same with those which exhort husbands to marital faithfulness and purity? I think not. Young mother, how do you want your husband to respond to the warning of Proverbs 6:26-29 ***“For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned? Or can a man walk on hot coals And his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.”*** Do you want him to think “big picture”, do you want him to think of this only as a general truism, a fable with no direct application? Do you want him to look for creative alternatives or do you want him to accept it as the Word of God which governs his behavior? We must approach all commands in Proverbs with the same seriousness. We are not free to pick and choose on the basis of how we respond to them emotionally.

Rev. John S. Mahon
Cameroon – July 2011

JEREMIAH 15:16

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(In this Q.T. series, not all questions will apply to every verse. If this is the case simply move to the next question.)

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 19:18

Does the bible teach spanking with the rod?

Why do we spank our children?

What is the tool we use for spanking?

What does God say about parents who do not spank their children?

What spiritual and/or character traits should a parent exhibit when spanking their child?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 10:13; 14:23

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 22:15; 20:30

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 23:13 & 14; Ephesians 6:1 – 4

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Hebrews 12:4 – 9; Proverbs 3:11 & 12

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: Proverbs 29:15; Hebrews 12:8 – 11

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This excerpt is taken from the Family Discipleship Seminar. The Manuscript, audio messages and workbook can be found at our website at gciweb.org

III. Disciplining The Child

A. HOW TO DO IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

There are some times when you are writing that people want lots of words, lots of illustrations, cute stories and explanation. They feel cheated if there are not lots and lots of words. Other times, it is best to cut to the chase and give them the goods. I feel that this is one of those times. I am sure you will overlook the abruptness of this section in exchange for the information being more easily retrieved and used.

1. ACT IMMEDIATELY AND AT ONCE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ENVIRONMENT OR CONVENIENCE.

This is an inconvenience to the parent, but crucial in the disciplining of the child. The objective is to teach the child the wisdom of obedience early in life, as opposed to the alternative of teaching the child when disobedience will be tolerated early in life, and then trying to undo this later. Ease of child raising is a definite side benefit to biblical discipline, but it is not the immediate result. The immediate result is inconvenience. The long-term result is ease and convenience. The long-term goal is wisdom and life training for the child's success. Thus, discipline immediately, irrespective of surroundings or timing.

The only exception to this is baby-sitters. We always told our baby-sitters to let us know how things went. Like all baby-sitters, they dutifully answered, "Fine". With this nicety out of the way, we had a frank talk with them. We really liked them to baby-sit, and we really liked our date night out. If our children misbehave, they will not want to baby-sit and we will not get to go out. More important than that, as Christians, it is very important for us that our children obey authority. We do not want you to discipline them, but we do want to know and we will handle it. After this little speech, we will very often get the truth. If the children were rebellious or disobedient, we wake them up and discipline them that night, no matter how late.

2. HAVE THE CHILD LOOK YOU SQUARELY IN THE FACE.

The child must look you in the eye and concentrate upon what is being said. All of my children have, at one time or another, commented upon the response adults give them in return to their being able to look them in the eye. They are uniformly treated with more respect and taken more seriously. I can remember while disciplining them, touching my eye and saying, "Look me in the eye." as their eyes would wander.

This was great training for later in life. Judge Lewis was good at Bible study and a nice guy but he could not look you in the eye. This had affected both his career and his ministry, and reinforced my resolve to give my children this important skill.

"I wish my parents had done that."

I looked up at Glen, a little surprised. Glen was a college student in our ministry. He was older and more confident than the other guys, having served first in the military. He was sitting at the table with me when Sam had come in to ask a question. I had Sam speak to Glen, ask a few civil questions, all the while looking him in the eye. Sam was about four at the time.

Glen went on to share that it was not until he entered the military that he gained the confidence and skill to speak directly to people, especially people in authority. He shared from his heart how he wished he had been given that skill as a young boy, instead of having to wait until he was an adult.

a. Sequence for toddler:

Mommy says: “No, Heather,” pointing to plant. “No, plant is spank.” “No, Heather, spank.”

Heather hears: “No, Heather,” sees Mommy pointing to plant. “No, plant spank... No, Heather, spank.”

b. Sequence for three-year-old, or child who can handle sentences:

Mommy: “What did you do?”

Heather: “Played with plant.”

Mommy: “What did Mommy say?”

Heather: “No.” (*begins to choke back cry*)

Mommy: “What is that?”

Heather: “No.”

Mommy: “OK, then what happens when you disobey?”

Heather: “Spank.” (*Begins to cry openly.*)

Mommy: “OK, then why are you going to get a spanking?”

Heather: “Did not obey. Touched plant.”

Mommy: “Say, I will obey Mommy quickly the first time.”

Heather: “I will not touch plant.”

Mommy: “No, say, ‘I will obey Mommy quickly the first time.’”

Heather: “I will obey Mommy quickly the first time.”

Mommy: “OK, now lie on your bed and put your hands on your cheeks.” (*Then, administer the discipline in a controlled manner. The child must understand the issue and learn from it without worrying about you.*)

Connie was so disappointed in little Heather. She had mentioned more than once to the little toddler the importance of staying away from the plants. Now Heather had once again pulled over her favorite diffenbachia

Mommy says: “Heather, that really disappoints Mommy. You know I have told you not to touch the plant. You know that is wrong. Don’t do that any more. If you do it again, I am going to have to discipline you and that makes Mommy sad.”

Heather hears due to her limited vocabulary: “Heather, blah, blah, blah, Mommy. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah plant. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Blah, Mommy blah.”

4. ADMINISTER DISCIPLINE QUICKLY AND SHARPLY

The only reason you should put it off is to calm down if you feel you are losing your temper. You should never wait until you are angry to discipline. If you are angry, then you are not disciplining the first time you are disobeyed. The spank should be...

a. A sharp stroke which definitely stings the child and gets his attention the first time**b. In an isolated spot**

The child should not be humiliated nor should you give opportunity to social-agenda fanatics who will take it upon themselves to interrupt you or tell you off. At home, if other children are present, choose a place which will be isolated. This is not entertainment for the other children. The correct response for the other children is sorrow that their best friend is in trouble. In public, return to the car or find an empty rest room if possible.

c. In a controlled manner (both parent and child)

The child should be concentrating on the infraction and the desired change in behavior, not on what Mommy will do next. Equally true, the child should be concentrating on the infraction and change, not on ways to manipulate or punish Mommy by screaming, kicking and throwing a temper tantrum.

d. In a predetermined and set manner

The stroke of the rod should fall on the fleshy part of the child. The best place is the buttocks. Diapers make this a poor choice unless they are removed. If not, the fleshy part of the back of the thigh is fine. In some cases, where the hand is involved, the fleshy part of the biceps will suffice. **Never, never, never strike a child in the face, on the back or on the head.** Do not discipline on the shin, or where the bone is near the skin. Do not spank the hands or feet or anywhere

He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.

Prv 17:9

I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Is 43:25

that little bones exist or are forming. Never discipline without warning and explanation. Never discipline in anger.⁶ This is the difference between hitting and training. This is the difference between a coach and a judge.

With our children we would say, “Go to the bed room and put your hands on your cheeks.” We would follow shortly with the wooden spoon to administer one, two or three strokes. The children always knew what to expect from us and what we expected from them. My good friend Mike would have them go to the bathroom and put their hands down on the closed toilet lid and wait. Same principle, just a different method.

e. The stroke should be hard enough to hurt and to leave a red mark.

Patty could not understand why her child would not stay in bed even though she spanked her repeatedly. My wife discussed this on the phone, and Eleanor just could not believe the child would exchange this foolish behavior for the discipline of the rod. The next time, she had Patty leave the phone off the hook in the room while she spanked. The problem was plain. A wimpier whack you have never heard. El had Patty spank herself on the arm, “Harder,” “No, still harder,” “Come on Patty, I said hard!” “Owww! Patty let out a yell.” “OK, Patty, now you have it.” Patty had the problem under control within the week.

f. After the discipline, reassure the child about the relationship

After the discipline, allow the child to calm down, repeat the lesson learned, then after kissing, hugging and reassuring the child about the relationship, **life should return to normal.** No family purgatory, no constant

“Dad, when I remember how you and Mom disciplined us, it really helps me understand how God forgives our sins.”
Sam

reminders, no stony silence, no pouting on your part or the child’s part. Life picks up as normal and the family continues on. After a particularly rough time, a shared snack or drink or a short play time or story may be helpful.

B. THE PRINCIPLES ILLUSTRATED, HEATHER AT ONE AND HALF YEARS OLD...

(Remember, physical discipline is for the ages of approximately nine months to fourth grade, with the crucial years being the first four. At fourth grade or puberty, whichever comes first, it becomes counterproductive.)

(The child is looking at the plant which she has managed to work her way over to, and you say:) “Heather, no, don’t touch, no!” (Heather reaches out, lightly brushes her hand across the leaves of the plant and then toddles off. You retrieve Heather, bring her back to the plant and communicate clearly, making eye contact. Touch the corner of your eye and then the plant, as needed to keep Heather focused.)

Mommy: What did Mommy say?

Heather: No.

Mommy: That’s right, Mommy said, “No.” Heather, what’s that? (*pointing at plant*)

Heather: No.

Mommy: That’s right, Heather and what is a “No”?

Heather: Spank. (*Heather begins to cry.*)

Mommy: That’s right, Heather, it is a spank. A “No” is two spanks. Heather, say “Obey.” (*or*) “I will obey Mommy quickly the first time.” (*begin this longer sentence just as soon as she is able to do so*)

Heather: Obey. (*or*) I will obey Mommy quickly the first time.

Mommy: (*At this time Heather is sent to her room to lie on her bed and put her hands on her cheeks, if there are other children present. If not, she can lie on a couch or chair.*)

Mommy: Heather, the plant is a no. Heather did not obey. That is two spanks.

(At this time apply two strokes of the rod, spaced by several seconds with a deliberate count of “One” wait and then, “Two”)

(If you did this right Heather will now, as a rule, be crying. Take Heather into your arms and hold her and let her calm down a little. Do not let her crying be a form of punishment or avoidance.)

Mommy: Heather, why did I spank you?

Heather: Touched plant.

Mommy: Yes Heather, but what should Heather do?

Heather: Obey.

Mommy: That's right Heather, say, "I will obey Mommy quickly the first time."

Heather: I will obey Mommy quickly the first time.

Mommy: (*Points to plant*) What is that?

Heather: No.

Mommy: Good girl, Heather. Heather is very smart and Mommy is very proud of Heather. Heather knows "no." Heather can obey. Heather is a good, good, girl.

(*Now Mommy loves Heather, and reinforces that Heather is a good girl who obeys, holds her, calms her down, gets some juice for her and sends her back to play.*)

Now, fathers, as you look at this process, you must realize that you are going to have to adjust your expectations to allow your wife to take the time to discipline and train the children while you are away at work. You cannot expect them to make bricks without straw the way Pharaoh did the children of Israel. If they have to take time to do this, then others things may not get done. Also, that means when you come home from work, you are still on duty. You have been working all day. Your wife has been working all day. You both continue to work until the kids go down. Then you rest. This is just another good reason to decide on the bedtime of the children, rather than to let them decide.

Children instinctively know when Mom is most vulnerable or preoccupied. Meal times, getting ready to pick Dad up at work, phone calls, meal preparations... all these are times when Mom is preoccupied with other things than darling little Heather. Heather senses this and for whatever reason, selfishness, insecurity, or just a dislike of change, begins to act up. The process above will break this cycle, but it will take time and have to be repeated periodically. When you come home and dinner is late, or your wife is late picking you up, or whatever, because she was disciplining the children, this needs to be a cause of praise on your part, not of complaint.

The main reason parents do not discipline becomes obvious: it's a pain. It is, however, short-term loss for a long-term gain, both for you and your child. In the long run, you will be happier and in a better mood because of the emotional reserve you will gain by having well behaved children. You will enjoy your children more because you are not always yelling at them and they are not always wearing you out. Your children will be happier and more secure knowing they can entertain themselves when Mommy is busy during certain times of the day. The children will enjoy their relationship with Mommy more knowing it is nonconfrontational, that she is in charge and the limits of behavior are clear. The children will be happier, overall, as they enjoy the fruits of wise behavior in all aspects of their lives.

C. THE DEFINITION OF ABUSE

A good friend of mine used to define abuse as "Disciplining in anger." I think I would expand this to "Disciplining in anger, or for the sake of punishment— be it emotional or physical." Punishment always carries with it the connotation of getting even, of a score to settle before the relationship can (if ever) be restored. A price is sometimes extracted in physical pain, but always in emotional pain. It is great indoor sport for those skilled in it, but never productive in child raising.

On the other hand, discipline is synonymous with training and should carry with it none of the emotional baggage of punishment. We use physical discipline, spanking, because the Bible says it works. It has no negative connotation concerning the relationship, and once administered, is over and done with. This is seen in the clear distinctions in their definitions. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, punish means "*to subject someone to penalty for a crime, fault, or misbehavior,*" while discipline is "*training that is expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially that which is to produce moral or mental improvement.*"

We do not administer the rod to the child to punish him for his behavior; e.g. to get even with him so we can begin relating to him again, but rather to train him in a way that will make him a wise and successful adult. If handled correctly, discipline is done without reference to fellowship or anger, only foolishness and wisdom are at issue.

As a result, we don't look or feel guilty about discipline, nor do we look for a way out, holding back discipline only as a last resort. We are doing our child a favor and as such we embrace discipline as a work of grace bestowed on our child by God through us, his parents. The child is being disciplined for his success and we are proud to be a part of that. Don't

buy into the world's lies. Discipline is not hitting. Disciplined children do not rebel at a later time. Above all, discipline is at the heart of scriptural teachings on child raising. Listen patiently to all sides and then say quietly, "Chapter and verse, please."

IV. Summary

A. The Three Goals Of Discipline

1. Submission to Authority
2. Self Control
3. Wisdom

B. Discipline is not punishment, and there is no place for anger or guilt. The only issues are foolishness and wisdom.

C. Remember

1. Act immediately
2. Have the child look you in the eyes
3. Communicate clearly
4. Administer the discipline quickly and sharply
5. Do not allow the child to throw a temper tantrum
6. Afterwards, reinforce the lesson learned
7. Then, make sure the relationship is on good ground and the child feels loved and secure.

D. We don't look or feel guilty about discipline, nor do we look for a way out, holding back discipline only as a last result. We are doing our child a favor and, as such, we embrace discipline as a work of grace bestowed on our child by God through us, his parents. The child is being disciplined for his success, and we are proud to be a part of that.