

CHAPTER TWO SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THE DISCIPLINING AND TRAINING OF CHILDREN

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Scripture Memory Verse: Prv 23:13–14

“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.”

Chapter Two: The Scriptural Basis for the Training and Disciplining of Children— Bible Study

*“For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will,
but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”*
2 Pt 1:21

INTRODUCTION:

This study, as does the rest of this workbook, assumes a basic foundational conviction of the divine nature of the Word of God as it pertains to the disciplining and training of children.

First, consider 2 Tm 3:16–17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

The key words in this passage are:

All *Every word* is inspired by God, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. This includes doctrine and history, science, theology, sociology and psychology. In fact, all disciplines are ultimately subject to the Word of God.

Inspired The Greek here means “God-breathed.” Not as men whose inspiration came from within, e.g. emotion or intuitive response. Not as men whose inspiration came from without, e.g. beauty, music, the panorama of nature. But rather men whose inspiration came from God, e.g. God’s Holy Spirit moving within them and speaking through them to us. They were not emotionally moved by God, but literally *moved*, used by God.

Profitable It has value, use and application to our daily lives. It transcends both time and culture. It is a wise and sure investment. There is not risk in its use and application, or in terms of the outcome. In every area of life, in every area of child-raising, it is “for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” God’s inspired Word will be our profit.

And what is the result of this? No less than equipping the man of God for every good work. As a result, this study assumes that the Word of God will make men both adequate and equipped for the parenting of their children.

The second passage of Scripture which will shape our approach to this subject is Heb 4:12— *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

Here we see that the Word of God is both *“living and active.”* It is not a dormant document such as is found in all other literature, but rather it is alive and animate and as

such it cuts to the “*division of the soul and spirit*,” judging “*the thoughts and intentions of the heart*.” All that we feel, all that we believe, all that we hold as true must be scrutinized under the piercing light of the Word of God, and in this light budged as to its truth and worth. All principles, theories, and applications are ultimately judged and evaluated by the Word of God.

In light of these scriptural truths we must conclude that where psychology, psychiatry or sociology disputes the Word of God, as it pertains to the raising of our children, the Word of God will be held to be true and all other disciplines to be in error. of course, this will not always be the case. When in direct contradiction to the Word of God, the Word must hold sway over all others.

The fact that we hold the Word of God over secular disciplines should not be seen as an abrogation of thought or responsibility. Many of the secular disciplines have changed and continue to change over the years. What one learned professor lays down as the dogmatic truth today, contradicts what learned men in the past have said and will no doubt be contradicted again in the future, and in some other institution is presently being challenged. A simple stroll through a medical school’s historical section will produce many volumes of worthless information which *were* taught as the cutting edge of medicine and psychology. Included in these will be tomes on the care and raising of children. As for the sciences of medicines and psychology, not only is what was written a thousand years ago of no value, but from one decade to another, principles once held dear are found to be untrue and actually harmful. Meanwhile, the Word of God has remained unchanged and is as useful today as it was thousands of years ago.

The following Bible study, lecture and workbook should place you on firm footing as it pertains to the Scriptural basis for the training and disciplining of children.

Bible Study

Eph 6:1–4 will be referred to over and over again in the course of this study. As you may recall, interpretation of a verse is subject to the definition of the words in the verse.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
Eph 6:1

A good starting point will be for us to define the key words in this passage. In doing this project, do not rely upon your own opinions or definitions, but use a modern dictionary.

Dictionary used: _____

Children: _____

Obey: _____

Parents: _____

Right: _____

Honor: _____

Father: _____

Mother: _____

Commandment: _____

Provoke: _____

Discipline: _____

Instruction: _____

Proverbs and Discipline

The following are a list of verses from the book of Proverbs. First read the verse, then write out a devotional thought as it pertains to the disciplining of children.

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Devotional Thought As It Pertains to the Disciplining of Children</i>
Prv 13:24	
Prv 20:30	
Prv 22:15	
Prv 23:13	
Prv 23:14	
Prv 29:15	
Prv 10:1	
Prv 13:1	
Prv 15:5	
Prv 17:25	
Prv 19:18	
Prv 22:6	
Prv 29:17	

From these passages in Proverbs...

- A. What did you learn about God's view of the use of the rod or physical discipline?

- B. What did you learn about the results of a lack of discipline in children?

- C. What did you learn about the positive results of disciplining children?

- D. What stood out to you in these passages?

GOD'S Expectations For Us As Parents

Read the following passages, and then write out what you feel to be the expectations of God for the parent. (Try to narrow it down to one short phrase.)

Passage

God's Expectation For You As the Parent

Eph 6:4

Prv 22:6

Prv 23:13

I Tm 3:4

God's Example For Us As Parents

Read Heb 12:4–11

- A. Does God discipline His children?

- B. What characterizes this discipline (v. 11)?

- C. Is this discipline being talked about of a physical nature? (v. 6)

- D. What is God's expectation of His earthly fathers and their children in terms of discipline? (v. 7— 10)

- E. If earthly fathers do not discipline their children, how will it effect:
 1. the children's understanding of this passage?

 2. the child's view of his earthly father in light of this passage?

Our Value System

- A. If you walked into a restroom in a restaurant and saw a man or woman beating their child with a rod, what would be your reaction?

- B. Now, read Prv. 23:13— 14
Do you believe this passage is the Word of God?

According to this passage who has the wrong value system, the one beating the child with the rod or the one condemning them?

What holds sway over your mind in terms of the disciplining of children: the present world system or the Word of God?

CHAPTER TWO

The Scriptural Basis for the Training and Disciplining of Children—Lecture

INTRODUCTION:

The Word of God, in Eph 6:1 states “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” This takes certain options out of the hands of parents in terms of defining roles, actions and options, right from the beginning. God has staked out the moral high ground as obedience, so far as it pertains to a child’s behavior towards his parents. The moral imperative here is laid down by God. The moral thing, the right thing, that thing which defines what is right in God’s eyes, is that the child obey his parents. Parents then are left to start at this point. Parents are not given total say over their moral designs within a family in terms of their children, any more than they are in terms of their marriage. Adultery is wrong even if the married couple agree that it is all right. If a husband is going on a long business trip and his wife says to him, “I know that you have legitimate physical needs. You are free to satisfy them as long as love is not involved.” This does not free the husband to commit adultery. The prohibition concerning adultery does not begin and end with his wife, but rather with God.

In the same way, parents are not free to excuse disobedience in their children based on circumstances. They are not free to decide whether, in a given case, obedience is right or wrong, God has made that decision for them. To be successful parents, parents must first and foremost come to grips with this reality— in any given situation, children are to obey their parents, for this is right. Parents who struggle with the morality of a child obeying his parent, struggle with God, not man. It is not unhealthy for a child to give obedience to his parents. To obey quickly the first time, is not a vice but rather a virtue. Parents who struggle with this, need to reconsider their own value system as it contrasts to the Word of God. God says, “Children obey your parents for this is right.” As parents we are able to raise our children within this frame work, but may not step out of it. We may decide with a great degree of latitude what we ask of a child, but we may not decide whether or not, once asked, the child is morally obliged to obey. God has already decided and revealed the answer to that, and it is a resounding “Yes!” Children are to obey, for this is right.

“Sally is such a precocious child, she has such a creative and strong will. We found ourselves fighting with her all the time so we just decided not to make her obey. We let her choose what to do and it makes our family life so much more pleasant.”

Missionary couple at Seminar

“I don’t know what she is going to do about potty training. She just hasn’t decided yet whether or not she wants to be potty-trained. Of course, this is her decision. I mean what right do I have to tell her what to do with her body? We have discussed the options and so when she gets up in the morning I just ask her, ‘Well, what’s it going to be today, plastic diapers or panties?’ and then, the decision’s made, no conflicts, no fuss, it’s completely her decision.”

Parent discussing her child at son’s little league game

CHILDREN:

We must begin our study of this verse with what God begins with, “children.” God considers children to be a *blessing*. The Word of God states clearly, “*Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward.*” Ps. 127:3 Children are a gift from God. Notice the Word of God in this passage says “a gift,” not “the gift.” God has many gifts for His children. He bestows them according to His perfect will, as He knows best. No stigma is attached to the withholding of a gift. We are all happy for the one who receives a gift, but a gift by its nature *is not earned*, it is a gift. A gift does not reflect on the merit of the one who receives it, nor does it speak ill for the one who does not.

“What did you want to go and do that for!”

Relative on hearing that El was pregnant with our third child.

“Holding out for a boy, huh?”

Comment made one zillionth time on hearing we have four children.

“Which two are yours and which two are Eleanor’s?”

Second place in stupid question category on hearing we have four children.

“Is your wife Catholic?”

Third place

“I don’t see how you can afford to have so many children!”

Fourth place

At a birthday party one child receives a gift, while the other brothers and sisters do not. This is not as a result of merit, but rather a gift freely given. A father returns from a trip, and sometimes he picks up something special for his wife and children, but sometimes he is not able to do this. A gift is a gift. It does not mean he is rewarding his family on the one hand and punishing them on the other. When you receive a gift, you rejoice in your good fortune, but not in your merit. When you do not, you may wish that you had, but you need not repent.

In God’s historical revelation of the actions of men and women of the Bible, the Holy Spirit records accurately all that they did or did not do, as Chuck Swindoll often says, “warts and all.” This does not mean God is agreeing with their actions, just recording them. When David commits adultery with Bathsheba, God is not agreeing with this action when he records it. When men take multiple wives, God is not agreeing with this action when He records it. Similarly, when women in the Bible who are not able to bear children are devastated and feel completely useless to themselves, their husbands, society, or even God, God in recording their reactions is not agreeing that this is the right reaction to their situation, He is simply recording it. You should not view a woman’s reaction to not bearing children as a reflection of God any more than you should view a man’s decision to take more than one wife as a reflection of God.

A gift from God is not to be taken lightly. To my knowledge, western culture is the first in the history of the world that has put a dollar value on children in the negative column. In other words, to weigh children against the cost of raising them, not in terms of survival, but in terms of their impact on the ability to acquire and accumulate luxury items. For countless ages men sought, in obedience to God’s command in Genesis to “be fruitful and multiply.” Those who did so were considered most blessed of God. It never occurred to these parents that more children meant fewer luxury items. What more precious luxury item existed than a child from God?

It never occurred to these parents that more children meant less room. Room for what? What is a home empty of children? The modern home—large and spacious, filled with luxury items and devoid of children, would seem as barren as a pharaoh’s tomb to our

spiritual forefathers. Unfortunately, most parents, whether Christian or not, have bought into the concept of the two-child home without even thinking about it. If they were to consider the true reason, most would acknowledge that it was for the sole purpose of maintaining the lifestyle and independence which they hold so dear: to maintain a standard of living which allows for luxury items, adult toys, which they would rather not go without. I challenge Christian parents to rethink this blind acquiescence to the two-child family. I do not know of another age in the history of civilization where adults, en masse, said of one heart, “We do not want children, we want our things!”

The question often arises, “How many of these gifts are we to accept?” My answer is simple, “Do not accept a gift

from a close friend or relative that you cannot assume responsibility for.” I have a friend who is a multimillionaire. He drives a new Mercedes Benz and trades it in each year for another. One of these cars is worth more than my year’s salary. He once asked me what I would do if I had one. I replied without hesitation that if someone gave me a Mercedes Benz, I would have to turn around and sell it; I could not afford the insurance, the repair costs or the upkeep. It was simply beyond me. I was surprised to learn recently, that many contestants on game shows who win fabulous prizes, opt out for cash settlements worth much less than the prize itself. They simply couldn’t afford the taxes, the upkeep or the responsibility of their “fabulous” prize.

Each parent must decide what gifts from God he can afford to accept. But this should not be done flippantly or lightly. A gift from God is no small thing. I would say if God is offering you gifts, sit down prayerfully together and say, “Given our health, our gifts, our callings, our capacity as parents, what is the greatest amount of these gifts we can accept from God and still be good stewards?” Then, accept them freely from God. Remember: pagan humanists say, “Two children and after that you are irresponsible,” while God says, in Gn 8:17, “*Be fruitful and multiply.*”

The word for “children” in Eph 6:1 is τέχνον, “TEKNON”, and it occurs 99 times in the Greek New Testament. The Word of God in *this* passage is “child.” Since it is akin to *TIKTO*, which means to beget or to bear, we can assume it is used for a young child or a dependent.

In America the courts are swamped with drug cases, and our jails are overflowing. One answer to this problem has been a growing movement to legalize drugs in the U.S. This does not solve the problem. It just places our culture in a state of denial. True, if drugs were legalized, almost overnight the number of crimes in America would drop. This would not be as a result of a drop in drug use in America, it would simply mean we could feel better about it.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

Eph 6:1

It is different from *HUIOS*, “son.” *HUIOS* stresses the dignity and character of the parent/child relationship. A child must obey his parents. A son or daughter must honor them. There is a time then when there will be a shift in the relationship. One is always a son or daughter and as such, honor will always be due to one's parents, but one is not always a child. So, it is equally true that the time for obedience by a child will pass just as the child passes from the role of a child to the role of a son or daughter. The Word of God gives only a few guidelines concerning when this shift takes place. One most certainly is marriage. Gn 2:24 states “*For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*” Another guideline is the call of God illustrated in Mt 4:19–21, when men left their father and their father's employment to follow Christ’s call.

Time does not allow an exhaustive study at this point. However, there does come a time when a child ceases to be a child. In American culture this process begins around age 10, when the child begins to be regarded by society, not as a child, but as a “young person.” This period culminates with high school graduation, where the young person is viewed by society as an adult. Parents who slow or fight this process do both themselves and their children a disservice. In reality, here in America, we have about ten years to do the preliminaries, to prepare our child for the transition period, and then about eight more years to effectively launch our child into the world. Do not waste this time fighting and arguing about whether this is right or not. It just is.

OBEY:

This passage is speaking directly to children, and in God’s eyes the right thing for children to do is, “obey.” The Greek Word here is ὑπακούω, “*HUPAKOUO*.” It occurs 21 times in the Greek New Testament and it means literally, “to listen to, to attend to and then to submit to by obeying.” It is different from the Greek Word *PITHO*, which means “to persuade, to win over.” In *PITHO*, the obedience is not due to submission to authority, but persuasion. This latter form is not the form used when God tells us what it is “right” for children to do. Not *to be persuaded*, but *HUPAKOUO*, *to submit to authority*, to obey.

RIGHT:

Children are to do this, the Word of God says, because it is “right.” Here the Greek word is δίκαιος, “*DIKAIOS*,” which occurs 81 times in the Greek New Testament. It denotes that which is Just or Righteous, that which is in accordance of *DIKE*, rule, right, justice. In other words, the Word of God clearly states that children are to obediently submit themselves to their

A Christian organization here in the States was struggling in the area of evangelism. All the staff were concerned, as the number of converts reported each year was steadily declining. The more they looked at it, the worse the situation became. Eventually, staff who were not fruitful in evangelism became more and more in the majority, and complaints began to be heard concerning the annual reports. The solution? This particular Christian organization decided to stop reporting in this area. This did not result in an evangelistic revival within the movement—they merely felt better about it.

parents' rule and authority because in God’s sight this is the righteous thing for them to do, the right thing, the morally correct thing in the eyes of God. It is not up for negotiation. It is not a question of further understanding. It is not an issue of persuasion or negotiation. *It is out of the hands of the parents.* It is simply the right thing to do.

PARENTS:

It is important for parents to understand that God has already defined what sin and righteousness is in this area. The decision as to whether or not children are to obey their parents has already been made by God and the answer is, “Yes!” We are not in a position to decide whether it is important, whether it is an option, or whether or not we should require it. God has already made that decision for us: children are to obey their parents. This is the right thing to do. As parents, our authority is limited. In order to save money on taxes, we cannot ask our children to lie about income they have generated. In order to get scholarships and grants for school, we cannot ask our children to lie on the applications about how much money we make. God’s Word restricts us as to the morally correct response to many situations. Obedience to the parents by the child is the morally correct response in the eyes of God. We do not, as parents, have the moral or spiritual authority to decide otherwise. This decision has already been made for us and we work from this point.

This study then will be an equipping manual for parents on “Parenting”— it is not written to children on “Childrening.” It is not written so that you can guarantee your children will “turn out right,” though by following it the odds are greatly increased. It is written so that you, as a parent, will “turn out right.” It is my conviction that one follows the other, as a general rule. If a parent turns out all right, then the odds are that the children will turn out all right. You as a parent have certain responsibilities before God. One of these is that your children obey you. Neither you, as a parent, nor your children are, “turning out right” if this is not true.

Phyllis got tired of fighting with her children in two areas: the first was their room; the second was the dinner table. She decided that she simply would not ask them to do anything in these two areas. It is no surprise that conflict ceased in both arenas. In fact, this took care of most of the conflicts in the home. Compared with the former experience, the home was relatively peaceful. This did not mean that her children were learning wisdom and life skills as they pertain to possessions, lifestyles, living areas, manners and habits. It just meant she could feel better about it.

Now what exactly does this mean, “obey?” I have found that among college-educated— professional adults of an extremely sophisticated nature— an instant dumbness sets in on this issue. They begin saying things like, “Yes, but what does ‘obey’ really mean?” I have found that this highly localized form of dumbness strikes those regions of the brain housing the vocabulary index of biblical terms which we do not like or find uncomfortable. Actually this term, like most biblical terms is quite simple. We all know what obey means and what obey looks like.

Does your child obey you? Ask your child to do something and see what happens. In a normal tone, without any unusual inflection, in a calm way, ask:

- your toddler to come or hush when crying.
- your preschooler to sit quietly.
- your elementary school child to stop playing and pick up his toys or clean his room.
- “Please come to the table, dinner is ready.” (All the children are watching their favorite TV show).
- your children to get out of the pool or down from the play ground equipment, as it is time to go home.
- your teen to get off the phone and come to the dinner table.

If, in each case, the response of the child is obedience, then they have obeyed and done what is right before the Lord. If it is not, then they have disobeyed. It is time for you as a parent to take a hard, close look at your child’s relationship with God in this area and the role you must play in insuring that your child conforms to this Scriptural command. You, as a parent, must also conform to this Scriptural command. It is really no use playing word games with God. The correct response to the realization that your child does not obey you is not to stop asking your child to do that particular task or action, but to deal with the child in that particular area. The goal is not to find all areas of conflict and then eliminate expectations in those areas, but to teach the child the value of obedience.

Connie decided she wanted her children to pick up one toy before starting to play with another. Charlene decided she wanted all the toys picked up in one room before the child moved on to another room. Darla decided the toys all had to be picked up twice each day, before leaving the house in the morning and before coming to the dinner table at night. In each case, what is acceptable in one home will be disobedience in another. The key here is obedience to the parents, and parents who carefully lay down training which they feel will guarantee the future success of their child.

True, different parents have different requests. There is great latitude given here in the Scriptures concerning what parents may or may not require of a child. Something not required is not disobeyed. We must, as parents, be honest with ourselves and with God. We must determine what will best help our child prepare for living successfully outside our home on his own, and then require that of him.

I. The Scriptural Basis for the Training and Disciplining of Children: The Results of No Discipline or A Lack of Discipline in the Life of your Child

We, as parents, must realize that although the way we raise our children does not guarantee how they will turn out, it does guarantee that they will have the proper tools. Remember, the goal of this workbook is not that our children “turn out right” but that we as parents “turn out right.” If we turn out right, that greatly increases the opportunity for our children to do so. Nothing will guarantee that upon reaching adulthood they will choose God over self.

It is the same way with our children. We are to discipline them, train them, gives them options. They may or may not *use* these options later in life, but they have them. The undisciplined child has no options. He has only his nature, which is moving down a slippery slope. Apart from an intervention by God, he is doomed for destruction. But this is not God’s first choice.

When I was a student at the University of Texas, the Vietnam War was in full swing. I lived in the least expensive dorm, and this was where many returning vets on the GI bill ended up. These guys had been trained in decorum, appearance, discipline and order. They knew how to keep a room in order, right down to where each pair of socks went. They were thoroughly trained in the military, yet when they hit the dorms they became model slobs just like the rest of us. As a college student, you would have been proud to see their trashed-out rooms, disorganized desks and unkempt appearance. Yet I noticed something different. When it came time to do job interviews, these men could turn out as professional-looking as any businessman on Wall Street. Their appearance and poise in the interview process gave them not just an edge but a mile-long lead over any of their civilian counterparts. They knew how to dress, how to hold themselves with confidence, and how to relate successfully to others in a position of authority. They were both prepared and successful in their interviews. The reason was discipline and training. It is true that they did not use it as college students. It is equally true that having been trained in it, it was theirs to call upon when needed for an interview. The rest of us were slobs by disposition, not by choice. We were simply following our nature. These men had a choice and it put them light-years ahead of us.

A. REASONS TO INTERVENE

God's first choice is intervention by the parent on behalf of the child. Without this, the child is left to his fallen nature. The Bible is clear on the results of the fallen nature of the child (the fact that all children are born sinful and in need of the salvation of Christ), when accompanied by a lack of parental discipline.

1. FOOLISHNESS: "FOOLISHNESS IS BOUND UP IN THE HEART OF A CHILD; THE ROD OF DISCIPLINE WILL REMOVE IT FAR FROM HIM." (PRV 22:15)

The Word of God says that within a child lies foolishness. Children are born this way and are, in and of themselves, if left to their own devices, doomed to stay this way—it is their natural bent. Foolish children, foolish teenagers, foolish adults, do foolish things to their own hurt and sorrow.

We live in an age when things are turned upside down. Unborn babies are not babies, they are fetuses; homosexuality is not a sin, it is a life style; the way to prevent teen pregnancies is to teach teens to have sex more carefully; and the list goes on, and on. One of these upside-down myths moving within our culture is the "from the mouths of babes" myth. According to this myth, in the lives of children there can be found a purity and wisdom that parents have lost because of the extended time they have spent in the world. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Bible clearly teaches that children are born a.) Sinful— Rom 5:18 clearly states, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men..." Every child is born with the sin of Adam and as such they are born b.) Foolish— Prv 22:15 "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child..." Despite these two overwhelming truths, we see a growing movement in our society of "child wisdom." This takes the form of peer mediation in our schools. It takes the form of a lack of confidence in our parenting. It takes the form of parents wanting to discuss and reason with a child concerning issues of obedience. It takes the form of the childrens' rights movement.

Do not be deceived. Your child was born sinful and with that sin came foolishness. Your child rebels against you, resists what is right and spoils many things which are for his benefit and fun, not because he is bad, but because he is a sinful and foolish child. If you begin to believe the problem is yours and that your child is not sinful and foolish, you will never be able to solve this problem for him.

Remember, the Word of God says that *within a child* lies foolishness. Children are born this way and are foolish in and of themselves, if left to their own devices doomed to stay this way—it is their natural bent. Foolish children, foolish teenagers, foolish adults, do foolish things to their own hurt and sorrow.

2. DEATH: "DISCIPLINE YOUR SON WHILE THERE IS HOPE, AND DO NOT DESIRE HIS DEATH."

"You know, John, when your children get a little older, they are going to rebel against all this discipline you are giving them." Gus was a fellow campus minister with a very laissez-faire attitude toward child raising. He and his wife, Karen, prided themselves on the independent nature of their children. Since Gus and I were good friends and he had taken the liberty of speaking openly to me, I responded to him with the same candor. "You know Gus, you may be right. I hope you are not, but you may be. But I will tell you what. Your kids are going to rebel too. Not against anything, though. Your children are not going to rebel against discipline. When they rebel, they will be carrying out their own nature, their bent towards life. My kids may rebel. I don't think they will, but they might. Yours however, unless you change or God sends another agent to save them, will simply continue on down the same road as teens as they are on right now." Gus actually agreed that I had a valid point, but he made no changes in his child-raising philosophy. I am happy to say that my children did not choose to rebel and are involved in fruitful and successful lives. I am sad to report that Gus's children are still on the same road.

Sexually active children between the ages of 12 and 17 are the fastest growing group of HIV positive individuals

PRV 9:18

The ultimate price of this foolishness in moral and spiritual decisions will be death. The stakes here are not philosophical; they are not matters of simple lifestyle emphasis; they are death.

In 1970, my senior year of high school, the worst consequence of being sexually active was pregnancy. Today it is the best and the worst is death. The worst consequence of substance abuse was a severe hangover. Today that is the best and the worst is death. The worst consequence of a traffic altercation was a black eye. Today it is death. Parents have abandoned their children to foolishness, and our children are becoming permanently ill, disfigured, emotionally scarred or dying at alarming rates.

"Wow, four children between the ages of one and ten, how did you stand it?"

Mom 1

"If I couldn't send my children off to my Mom's I'd go crazy!"

Mom 2

"I have got to get those children in day care and me back to work before I lose my mind."

Mom 3

"If we don't find a nanny and me get back in the ministry with Clyde I will lose my mind. I mean it, I will go crazy with those children all day."

Mom 4

"I just stay in bed, Bill gets the children off to school and then I get up. I just can't take it any more. He's a pastor, he can handle these things better than me."

Mom 5

3. HELL: "YOU SHALL BEAT HIM WITH THE ROD, AND DELIVER HIS SOUL FROM SHEOL." (PRV 23:14)

Since children left to their natural bent will constantly choose wrong, they are in great peril as pertains to both their moral and spiritual well-being. Left to themselves, they are doomed to both physical and spiritual destruction.

4. GOD:

God can and does intervene and it is His will to do so at an early age through the obedient parent. He is not limited to this, but this is His first choice. It is the obedient parent in action that is the safeguard of the children. The parent, in obedience, preserve the children and the family through submission to the Word of God.

Claudia was the wife of a career missionary. They had returned home from the field so that their children could finish high school in the States and go on with their lives. As career missionaries in a secular European country, they had adopted the prevailing view of spanking as something bad or dysfunctional. As a cultural adaptation, they decided "when in Rome, do as the Romans do." When I met Claudia for the first time she was a cowed, mousy woman completely dominated by her overbearing teenagers, and without the support of her uninvolved husband who was preoccupied with his studies and his ministry. He just couldn't see what the big deal was. Slowly, over the years, the teens grew up, left home and got on with their lives. As each one left, Claudia came more and more into her own. A year after the last one was gone her countenance had returned. When we saw her again two years later, she was almost unrecognizable— alert, self confident, happy with life and enjoying each day. The difference was that the children who were her shame were now out of her life. What a testimony to her missionary husband! What a shame that she married a man who submitted her to this shame rather than applying the "rod of reproof" so that Claudia could enjoy being a mother with wise, respectful children. As spiritual head of the household, Claudia's husband, in making this decision concerning spanking, had effectively cheated her out of one of her life's most precious callings.

B. THE RESULTS OF A LACK OF DISCIPLINE IN THE FAMILY ARE NO LESS DEVASTATING IN...

1. THE MOTHER: “THE ROD AND REPROOF GIVE WISDOM, BUT A CHILD WHO GETS HIS OWN WAY BRINGS SHAME TO HIS MOTHER.” (PRV 29:15)

Ultimately, it is the mother who bears the brunt of an undisciplined child. While Dad is away at work, Mom must live with this little terror who will not pick up after himself, screams at everything, fights and kicks, will not allow her to cook meals or talk on the phone in peace, makes shopping a chore, makes certain stores or fun places for Mom

completely out of the question, makes a quiet cup of tea, a pleasant hour spent with a friend, the enjoyment of cooking a meal, or even using the restroom in peace impossible. Unless the little beast is asleep, or has decided to offer a reprieve, Mom is faced with another day of headaches and turmoil.

Unless she is romantic enough or airhead enough to begin thinking of this behavior as “cute,” guilt and shame begin to creep into her life. “This is not at all what I had in mind. What am I doing wrong, what is wrong with me?” Dad comes home, “What’s the big deal?” He romps with the children, feeds them, puts them into bed and off to work before they get up. It is the mother who bears the brunt of the undisciplined children.

The theme is clearly taught in God’s Word. Lack of discipline brings foolishness and rebellion. Foolishness and rebellion bring grief to the mother. This is most clearly seen in the book of Proverbs.

Pro 10:1 ...*a foolish son is a grief to his mother.*

Pro 15:20 ...*a foolish man despises his mother.*

Pro 29:15 ...*a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.*

Ultimately, it is the mother who bears the brunt of an undisciplined child.

Larry and Tina were in my office. Larry wanted Tina to homeschool their children. Tina wanted a break for rest and recovery. The variable was undisciplined children. Larry, an executive whose work schedule had him home only in the evenings and gone many Saturdays, did not see it. What was wrong with Tina? Why couldn't she up hold her end? Tina, a Christian, was wracked with guilt and shame, “What’s wrong with me? Why can’t I get it together?” I had seen her four children and I knew the problem. The four boys constantly bullied their mother, resisted every effort and gave no ground without a fight. Tina had no emotional energy as a result of this. She was constantly worn down and wracked by guilt because deep, deep down she really did not enjoy being the one thing she had looked forward to all her life, a Christian mother. Larry was unwavering in his insistence that the home and children were her responsibility, not his. The counseling went nowhere and soon ended. Both of their desires were met soon after this interview. Larry did indeed get Tina to homeschool their children and later that year, Tina was admitted to a psychiatric hospital with a total breakdown due to stress, so she got her break from the family after all.

2. THE FATHER: “A FOOLISH SON IS A GRIEF TO HIS FATHER, AND BITTERNESS TO HER WHO BORE HIM.” (PRV 17:25)

The Father is not immune from the results of failure to drive out foolishness from the child. It is ultimately his grief. Grief in his relationship with his wife, whom he loses to emotional drought caused by the children; grief in his social life, when the subject of children come up, and grief in his public life after one more embarrassing incident. The theme is clearly taught in God’s Word. The lack of discipline brings foolishness and rebellion, and foolishness and rebellion bring grief to the father. This is most clearly seen in the book of Proverbs.

Pro 17:21 *He who begets a fool does so to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.*

Pro 17:25 *A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him.*

Pro 19:13 *A foolish son is destruction to his father...*

Pro 28:7 *...he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father.*

Tom was an executive with a large firm. He bought a house out in the country so that between his travel and his commute he only had time for “quality time” with his children. He just didn’t see what the big deal was. He came home about bed time, the children having already eaten. He played with them, tucked them in and was off before they got up in the morning. If anything, he received a groggy hug a kiss as he passed them, in front of the TV set. Yet, here they were in counseling. Jane was absolutely adamant— no more children. When she became pregnant with her third, it was like the bottom dropped out of her life. She became listless, unresponsive and unmotivated. The thought of being saddled with another little hellion was more than she could bear. Tom came from a very liberally educated family and received Christ late in life. He saw no need for spanking children. “If you hit children, it only teaches them to hit,” he proudly proclaimed. Now things were coming unraveled. He wanted a large family, but his wife could only handle two and was shut down with three. What was wrong with her? During counseling, Tom began to see for the first time what Jane’s life was like and began to make changes. He changed his discipline, his job profile, and his schedule. Tom is at home much more now. The children are their mother’s delight, and she has gladly born him three more.

3. THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

“SEE TO IT THAT NO ONE COMES SHORT OF THE GRACE OF GOD; THAT NO ROOT OF BITTERNESS SPRINGING UP CAUSES TROUBLE, AND BY IT MANY BE DEFILED; THAT THERE BE NO IMMORAL OR GODLESS PERSON LIKE ESAU, WHO SOLD HIS OWN BIRTHRIGHT FOR A SINGLE MEAL. FOR YOU KNOW THAT EVEN AFTERWARDS, WHEN HE DESIRED TO INHERIT THE BLESSING, HE WAS REJECTED, FOR HE FOUND NO PLACE FOR REPENTANCE, THOUGH HE SOUGHT FOR IT WITH TEARS.” (HEB 12:15–16)

“DO NOT BE DECEIVED: BAD COMPANY CORRUPTS GOOD MORALS.” (1 COR

Phil was the pastor of a medium-size church. He neither had the time nor the inclination to discipline his children. The two boys were little hellions and the brunt of church jokes. There was not a business meeting or social where the latest anecdote concerning the boys wasn’t told. Many times, within earshot of Phil. More than once, I have seen the grief in Phil’s face as his children caused him embarrassment or worse in the Church and at school. Ultimately, it cost him his spiritual standing in the Church, and with the loss of this respect came then the loss of his job.

As a school teacher I saw the impact on peer leadership. The first child to act up in class was watched by the entire class. If decisive action was taken and the penalty was severe and teacher maintained control, then the class stayed orderly. However, if the infraction was not dealt with, the entire class got the word,, “This is a goof-off class, you can get away with anything.”

15:33)

As with Jacob and Esau, the foolishness and bitterness of an undisciplined child defiles many, and if left unchecked, can and does affect their brothers and sisters. Although there are notable exceptions, such as Joseph, we see for the most part, in Scriptures as in real life that the failure to discipline children feeds on itself as older, foolish children influence their younger brothers and sisters in this same way. We see in some of the great biblical families, Jacob, Eli, Samuel and David, how the sins and rebellions of children affected and influenced them. It is no less true in our own homes. An immodest daughter affects her sister. A bully of a son harasses his younger brother and teaches him to be the same kind of bully. How many times have I seen it, brothers and sisters bringing one another to ruin? So many children grow up fighting one another and competing with one another, rather than loving, helping and serving one another. It is very important that older brothers and sisters not be raised in such a way as to disciple the younger ones in sin.

Tom was a career missionary who just didn't have time for his children once he was on the mission field. His career improved and his time at home lessened. His first son was away at college and doing well, but there was tragedy at home. The second child rebelled constantly and the rebellion finally ended in his death. The third asked simply to live elsewhere during the teen years. I have seen Tom weep as he talks of how he traded the ministry for his children. "I disciplined the whole world, but not my own children," he once shared with me as tears ran down his face...

As a youth minister, I once asked what the deal was with the Smith family. The Smiths were a large and prominent family in the Church. Dr. Smith was a physician and deacon in the church. His wife, Hannah, was a wonderful Christian woman and devoted wife and mother. The Smiths had eight handsome children. As each one reached high school though, they dropped out of all church activities except for Sunday morning Church. "What was the deal with the Smith family?" There was no hesitation in the reply, "It's Emily." Emily was a senior in college and hadn't been around in years. The junior high student went on to explain that she influenced the one behind her and each one in turn had done the same. Each, in turn, had taken it upon him or herself to disciple the next one down in the things of the world as older brother or sister had done. A little less churching and doctoring and a little more attention to Emily during those first crucial years of high school could have made all the difference in the world for the younger brothers and sisters.

4. THE FATHER'S TESTIMONY:

"AN OVERSEER, THEN, MUST BE ABOVE REPROACH, THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE, TEMPERATE, PRUDENT, RESPECTABLE, HOSPITABLE, ABLE TO TEACH, HE MUST BE ONE

It was several weeks before the prom and my son Sam had asked a very sweet girl from a sister church to go with him. Although I did not know the family, I did know the young lady by reputation. She was active in her youth group, in the Christian Student Union at school and had been involved with our daughter Becca in Evangelism Explosion training and weekly evangelism. I was a little surprised to get a phone call from her mother. She made small talk and hemmed and hawed, when I realized something was on her mind. Finally I asked her point blank if anything was the matter. "Well," she replied, "it's just that I am a little concerned. My daughter is a pretty quiet girl and ..."

"Yes?" I persisted, "You can feel free to share anything with me that you want."

So she blurted out, "And all we know about your son is that he is a preacher's kid and frankly we are a little concerned."

What a great testimony my brethren in the pulpit have left for me. All she knew about my son is that he is a "Preacher's Kid" and that is enough to cause her serious concern about her daughter going to the prom with Sam.

WHO MANAGES HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD WELL, KEEPING HIS CHILDREN UNDER CONTROL WITH ALL DIGNITY (BUT IF A MAN DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO MANAGE HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD, HOW WILL HE TAKE CARE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD?)”
(1 TM 3:2,4,5)

“LET DEACONS BE HUSBANDS OF ONLY ONE WIFE, AND GOOD MANAGERS OF THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR OWN HOUSEHOLDS.”
(1 TM 3:12)

Ultimately, a man’s testimony is sacrificed both within and without the church. He loses his platform from which he may speak and minister, if not by overt act of the church then by the deterioration of his testimony due to the foolishness of his children. Now some will say that they know of many ministers who have been allowed to continue as deacons, as elders or as pastors despite the fact that they did not manage their household well and that their children were far from being under control, much less dignified. What is not taken into account is that an office is more than a title.

First, a man must have respect to minister effectively. Despite the office, without respect, he cannot accomplish what he needs to. I remember in our own state we had, for the first time in over a hundred years, a governor of the minority party in office. He found that even though he was governor he could not get the bureaucrats and appointed officials to work with him. To them, he was an outsider and they cared nothing for his title. Position without respect is of little value.

Second, a man must have the blessing of God to minister. A man can remain in a building, in a position, with a title long after he has ceased to function in God’s eyes as a holder of a spiritual office. There is a Unitarian Church in our city, as well as a Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Both of these call themselves churches and both have pastors, elders and deacons. They have certificates of ordination on the walls and they are registered with the state, but I can assure you

that in God’s eyes they are not Churches and the men who hold the offices do so before man only, and not before God. If God disqualifies a man for a certain office because he does not meet the requirements, I can assure you that the fact that a board or a congregation decides to retain him in that position does not override the counsels of God. He may stay in the building and retain the title, but he can only retain the spiritual position by the recognition of God. There will be many surprised elders, deacons, pastors, missionaries and Christian workers in heaven when they discover that God was true to His Word, even when man was not.

“I am sorry but we can’t meet at Jim’s house. We’ll never get anything done. Haven’t you seen his children at church? Believe me, his home is a disaster area. Better meet somewhere else.”

Deacons meeting discussing which deacon’s home to meet in. It was then agreed that we should not meet in homes with pre-school or elementary children because they would disrupt the meeting.

We had been having International Students over to our house for meals long enough to know what was about to happen. The Asian

graduate students were here and was bringing a woman who was saying carefully, so as not to offend. “Your children are different than Pastor Deacon?” I asked our oldest daughter on the way home from church.

“Yes?” I demurred, trying to give him room to express himself. “Well the children can’t believe we’re so involved in the Youth Activities and so on.” He insisted trying to express himself. “Your children obey you. You see, all we have ever been around are this sort of children and so we thought that Christians did not discipline their children. This is so very different for us to see.” Well evidently, pastors’ children don’t exactly have the reputation of being ‘good children’, more or less excited about the Lord.”

That little scenario has been played out at least a hundred times in my home or office or on the campus. What a great testimony my brethren in the ministry have left for me. “What a great testimony of my brethren in the ministry.”

I know that many deacons, elders, pastors and missionaries have wonderful families and delightful children, but something is definitely going wrong when society as a whole is surprised when their spiritual leaders have children who are excited about Jesus, Church and the ministry, not to mention, well-behaved and obedient. When a child is not disciplined, ultimately a man's testimony is sacrificed, both within and without the church.

C. THE SPIRAL EFFECT

This spiraling effect finally touches on the child's ability to lead a fruitful and fulfilling life. If a child does not learn early the value and use of discipline and teachability, he bears the fruits of this throughout his entire life. He begins to develop traits which he will carry with him until they are undone by society, by some institution, or by God and his church.

Dorothy called Eleanor on the phone. She could not understand why her little darling was not doing well in school. Perhaps he had a learning disorder—tested, but no luck. Perhaps he had a chemical imbalance—tested, but again no luck. Maybe he was a gifted child and just bored by the mundane pace of the average kid on the block— tested again, zippo. Dorothy could not understand it. Unfortunately, El knew the reason. This child had not been made to obey and learn at home from his mother. What did she expect to happen when he was expected to obey and learn from a total stranger? Did she really think a teacher with twenty other children was going to dote on this little darling like it was her only child, and she had all day to spend with him while he made up his mind if he wanted to learn and cooperate?

I don't think so. The mother was not at all open to the suggestion and so it was left at that. Another bright child doomed to stupidity by the unwillingness of a Christian parent to teach him to love discipline.

1. STUPIDITY: PRV 12:1

“WHOEVER LOVES
DISCIPLINE LOVES
KNOWLEDGE, BUT HE
WHO HATES
REPROOF IS STUPID.”

What most parents don't realize is that success in school goes hand in hand with discipline.

As a school teacher, parent, youth minister, college minister and pastor I have seen this scenario played out many, many times. If you can't control your own child, what makes you think someone else will, or will even want to?

David and my son were playmates, although I wasn't really thrilled about it. His parents, though well-entrenched in suburban America, had not ever really accepted the realities of post-collegiate life. They weren't very responsible and had a very laissez-faire attitude toward their children.

David and Sam got to know each other playing T-ball during Kindergarten and both went in for screening for first grade on the same day. As Sam sat quietly waiting for the screening, David could be seen wandering restlessly in the hall, going into rooms he was not supposed to go into, playing with the water fountain, spilling the water on the floor and generally making a pest of himself. Any attempt by his mother to control this behavior was met by resistance and sometimes even shouts. After the interview, El got a frantic call from David's Mom. He had been turned down for first grade. This did not surprise me, as I always considered David to be kind of a sullen dolt.

David's mother immediately took him to a psychologist and had him tested and lo and behold, he tested out as a gifted child. This poor boy was more intelligent than Sam intellectually, but because he had been raised in such a way as to hate reproof, he was considered by all to be stupid. A teacher later recounted that the mother brought David in to school to see the counselor, armed with the test results showing that David was a gifted child and demanding entrance. On the way to the counselor's office, David spit on every classroom window he passed.

If you allow your child to grow up resenting and hating discipline, then the Word of God— not me, but the Word of God, says you are going to raise a stupid child.

2. SCOFFING: PRV 13:1 “A WISE SON ACCEPTS HIS FATHER'S DISCIPLINE, BUT A SCOFFER DOES NOT LISTEN TO REBUKE.”

Our culture, which does not accept discipline, has spawned a generation of scoffers. A

scoffer is someone who laughs at authority or that which has value or worth. When I think of scoffing I think of just about all the current comedy shows on TV, or the movies. Authority, religion, education, the military, the police, parents, teachers, government officials, historical heroes, anything of worth or value in our culture is scoffed at and people pay money to scoff and support scoffing. Think now to yourself, is there anything I would not laugh at in my culture? Is there any authority figure, that if the joke were not phrased the right way and the character done with taste, I would not scoff at? With young couples and families this is epidemic. Parents scoff at all authority including their own. Mothers openly scoff at their husbands before the children and vice versa. Scoffing, sarcasm, the quick wit, the one-liner, the fast retort, the little zinger, all these are in vogue and we see in our culture today as a direct result of this scoffing, an unwillingness on the part of our culture to accept discipline or rebuke.

A while back, I was driving home on a cold, rainy day. It was already getting dark. As I rounded the corner of my neighborhood, there was a child of about five sitting in the street and playing in the rain. I knew this child, as did the whole street. He was sullen, disrespectful and totally without discipline. His mother prided herself on this, and told me so in no uncertain terms the day I called her because he and his brothers and sisters ambushed my car with an assortment of projectiles. I leaned out and called to the child to move. I tried honking. I finally had to get out of the car and in the rain literally drag the child, screaming at me, to the yard and then quick jump back in the car and drive off before he could retake his position. I could see him return to his position in the street in my rear view mirror as I rounded the curb. I remember thinking to myself, “Now that is what I call a really stupid kid.” I called his mother to report where he was, but was careful not to give my name. I knew all too well that if she thought for a minute I had physically touched this little cherub, she would call child protective services and report me. This child had learned from his parents to hate reproof and the results are that he is truly stupid.

Early in our marriage, El and I found ourselves falling into the trap of the one-liner, and of scoffing at each other's roles and short comings. We both desired not only to not do this and to be open to correction when we found ourselves slipping into it. This not only did wonders for our marriage, but made us better parents, friends and ministers. Now, when we are visiting in a Christian home where this is rampant, the atmosphere seems stale, shallow and irreverent. I would have to say that this decision was one of the most important we ever made.

3. FOOLISHNESS: PRV 15:5

“A FOOL REJECTS HIS FATHER'S DISCIPLINE, BUT HE WHO REGARDS REPROOF IS PRUDENT.”

The rejection of discipline is seen everywhere. This is defined by God as foolishness. We see it in the world's answers to problems— how do you keep the population from growing so that millions won't die of starvation? Kill millions of unborn babies. How do you reduce venereal disease

As I drove home with my wife, I reflected somberly, “That is a sermon, by God's grace, I will never have to preach.” The denominational convention was in our city that year. As Associate Pastor I was excited about the last and traditionally largest meeting of the week. My brother, one of the team of pastors of one of the largest Churches in the denomination was there and his Senior. Pastor was delivering the message for the plenary session. As he preached, my pastor sat stone-faced. He preached on priorities of pastors and the family, and how children of Christians view their heavenly Fathers through the lens created by earthly ones. The following day, on Sunday morning, my pastor preached a sermon, which if you read between the lines could be titled, “I gave my life to the ministry and the business of the church and if it turned my children off to God, it's not my fault.” By God's grace I will never have to preach that sermon.

and unwanted pregnancies among teens? Teach them the mechanics of sexual activity and then give them condoms which fail 18% of the time. How do you resist the breakdown of the home and family? Make divorces easier and get the state to assume the parenting roles. How do you teach children to respect and obey authority in the home and in the school? Eliminate discipline of children in these areas. The rejection of discipline creates a foolishness to which those schooled in it are totally blind.

4. POVERTY: PRV 13:18

“POVERTY AND SHAME
WILL COME TO HIM
WHO NEGLECTS
DISCIPLINE, BUT HE
WHO REGARDS
REPROOF WILL BE
HONORED.”

My great-grandfather was a poor country preacher and missionary. His son, my grandfather, through much sacrifice attended college and became a newspaper editor. He was the first Mahon to break into the urban middle class. His son, my father, attended college and grew to

be an executive in a multi-national corporation. He was the first Mahon to move into suburbia. I have sought to be a good steward of the sacrifices that were made by my forefathers by completing a graduate degree and advancing my family.

If you look at family photos, each generation was a little better-dressed, better-educated, drove a better car and lived in a nicer home. In my high school, many of my friends had a similar family history. With one exception, they became professional bums called hippies. In fact, many of my generation took a great step downward in their educational and social standing, and did so willingly. They, as a generation, neglected discipline. Poverty and shame came upon them, whether they or society are willing to recognize it as such, it has happened. We have in a whole class of professional poor who are protected by society. The generation that spawned the hippies grew into a generation that protects and romanticizes poverty, to their shame.

As a project for her fifth grade class in a public school, my daughter Megan was asked to interview someone who came in contact with homeless people and to report on their story. The class was to put together an anthology, so to speak, of interviews with the homeless. Since at the time I was Associate Pastor in a downtown urban church, and since it was my job to deal with this aspect of our church's ministry, she interviewed me.

I shared with Megan that about four homeless people came to our church each week asking for money. Each had a story as to why they needed this money and I listened carefully to each one. I would then explain that our funds were limited and I had to make a few phone calls to check on the story to make sure it was a legitimate need. Of the estimated 500 interviews I had conducted up to that time, I was able to verify only four real needs. I was able to discount all the others as genuine cases of blatant fraud. Megan's interview was not allowed to be part of the anthology.

At my 20th high school reunion there was a moment of silence for those who had died and could not attend. Their names were read and out of a class of about 400, there were six who had died. As I related this to my daughter, I commented that the toll would be much higher in her class. In most high schools classes, by the 20th reunion we can expect eight times that many to have died of AIDS, and even more to be dying given the growth rate of the spread of AIDS among teens and young adults.

5. DEATH: PRV 15:10 “STERN DISCIPLINE IS FOR HIM WHO FORSAKES THE WAY; HE WHO HATES REPROOF WILL DIE.”

If anyone doubts the fact that those who hate reproof die, all they have to do is get an abstract from their local reference library containing the statistical tables of the causes of deaths of those under 20. They will see, first hand, the results in black and white. Failure to discipline our children is not just an oversight of a busy modern home, it is a ploy of Satan to destroy your happiness, your witness, your family and ultimately the life of your child.

“But to the wicked God says, ‘What right have you to tell of My statutes, and to take My covenant in your mouth? For you hate discipline, and you cast My Word of Gods behind you. Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.’”

Ps 50:16–17,22

D. THIS BRINGS US BACK TO PRV 19:18,

“DISCIPLINE YOUR SON WHILE THERE IS HOPE, AND DO NOT DESIRE HIS DEATH.”

While the child is young we must go to work to protect him from this fate. If we fail, he will ultimately turn this attitude toward God.

The child who has the indulgent father, the absentee father, the preoccupied father, the unteachable father, the father who-has-bought-into-the-world's-lie (though-sincere)-father, this child ultimately, to his own sorrow and The child who has the indulgent father, the absentee father, the preoccupied father, the unteachable father, the father who-has-bought-into-the-world's-lie (though-sincere)-father, this child ultimately, to his own sorrow and destruction, turns this attitude toward his heavenly Father.

II. The Results of Discipline in the Life of your Child

A. THE RESULTS ARE LONG LASTING

Of all forms of input into the life of a child, the results of discipline and training are the most lasting. The Word of God says in Prv 22:6, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* Our commitment to training and discipline must begin when they are children.

“I have tried and tried to communicate biblical truths of discipline to my flock. In this culture, you let the children run wild when they are young and then beat them when they are teenagers. The effects are disastrous in the life of the teens and in the family relationships. If they would only see that it is children who need discipline and training, and that teens need to be prepared for leaving home.”

Missionary at Family Discipleship Seminar

I cannot overstate the seriousness and importance of beginning the discipline and training of children early enough. Parents always ask me, “When should I begin?” and I always respond, “The first time you are disobeyed” Remember, the results of discipline are just as beneficial as the lack of discipline is just as damaging. Training should begin early for the sake of the child. It is amazing to me the amount of sophisticated early-age educational training parents give their children, while neglecting to discipline them because “they are not ready.”

B. THE RESULTS OF DISCIPLINE

1. ON OUR FALLEN NATURE

Discipline is viewed by God as a work of Grace in the salvation process. The Word of God says in Prv 23:14, *“You shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol.”* God does not view disciplining children as punitive, but as positive and proactive; not as judgmental, but as redemptive. He views discipline not as merely sociological behavior modification, as if our children were one of Pavlov’s dogs, but rather as a spiritual ministry to the child. Discipline is redemptive in nature, not just in terms of the child’s character and earthly success but also in terms of his soul and its eternal destiny. This is a major shift from the way our society thinks. It is important for us as parents not to mistake Grace for License, or view Redemption and Reconciliation as punishment.

“I get so tired of the same old scenario. We can’t get them to take spiritual training seriously when their children are children, and then they come rushing into my office when they reach the teen years and cry, ‘Pastor save my child! Where were they ten years ago with all this zeal for our ministry?’”

Youth Minister at church staff meeting

2. ON OUR OUTLOOK ON GRACE AND JUDGEMENT

An act of Grace is redemptive in nature, it *benefits* the person who receives it. An act of License is negligent or permissive in nature, it simply allows the person to act out their desires without regard to their well-being. Many parents consider it an act of grace if, when their child disobeys them, they overlook it or excuse it rather than acting immediately. “Jenny did not come when I called her, but I knew she was tired and had had a long day, so I decided to give her grace and just pick her up and carry her to the car.” or, “Sure I told Tommy to pick up his toys, but it was close to nap time and I

thought ‘What the heck, give the kid a little break now and then,’ so I picked the toys up for him.”

Grace and license are two very different things. Grace is granting to others that which is not deserved. We extend Grace to our children by our unconditional love of them. License is to condone or allow sin even when it is known to be wrong. God extends Grace to us, but He never condones or allows sin. He disciplines us for our good as an act of grace. We extend grace to our children, but we never condone or allow sin in their lives. We discipline our children as an act of grace. If your child disobeys and you overlook it, this is not Grace on your part, but License. You are not benefiting your child by simply allowing them to “get away with it,” because you are either too tired or too preoccupied or too brainwashed by our culture to deal with it. If you sin and God does not intervene to teach you not to sin, that is a bad sign. It is not a sign of Grace if God does not begin to deal with you as you sin, it is a sign of judgment.

In Rom 1, when God allows a culture to disintegrate without intervening with His discipline to save it, this is not viewed as Grace but as Judgment. It means God is giving them over to their acts. Rom 1:23 states, concerning the sin of mankind, “*and [they] exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*” In verse twenty-four we see God’s reaction, “*therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.*” This phrase, “gave them over” is a recurring theme in this passage. Here, we learn that the fact that God did not intervene when idolatry was introduced but rather “*gave them over in the lusts of their hearts...*” The absence of involvement is not a sign of Grace, but of Judgment.

We, as parents, must realize that when we let our children “get away with it,” this is not an act of Grace but of License. We are benignly allowing them to slide towards “the lusts of their hearts,” rather than checking this slide with parental discipline. That is how God deals with us, He will intervene and check our slide, even if we resent it, even if we plead with Him to allow us to get away with it “just this one time.” God will intervene with whatever Redemptive discipline is necessary for our well-being. He is not a God of License, but a God of Grace. That is how God deals with us and that is how we should deal with our children.

The Word of God has ample illustrations of fathers who doted on their children to the child’s ruin and the fathers deep sorrow. In each case, it was a *failure to act decisively* on the part of the parent that lead to the destruction of the child. Whether it be Jacob, Eli, Samuel or David, the tragic results were always the same. We do our children no favors when, upon reports of their misbehavior, we create lame excuses for them. We live in a very permissive society. We also live in a society that is increasingly preoccupied with its own privacy and space. Given these two trends, if someone is emboldened enough by our children’s behavior to mention it to us, then something is seriously wrong. Rather than defend your child, you should praise God that he has sent this messenger to you to warn you.

3. ON OUR HEROES FROM THE WORD

We can see the results of this tragedy modeled in some of our heroes from the Word of God. Why did they not respond in a timely manner? Was it personal pride? Was it an unrealistic view of their children? Had they put their children up on a pedestal? Did they find their self worth in their children's approval in the face of marital difficulties in the home? Whatever the reason, the results were tragic.

Isaac did not intervene in the lives of his sons Jacob and Esau, to ensure harmony in the home and a closeness between these brothers. The result was life-long enmity between them and heartache and sorrow for both parents. Jacob too, failed to discipline and raised his sons as friends.

This yielded the same tragic result in his life. How much better for Isaac, for Jacob, and

for us, if we consider our own family relationships when we were young and then take steps to prevent the same errors from being repeated.

Do not simply take for granted that what you experienced is the norm, but compare it closely with the Scripture. How much better if we are proactive, if we discipline to ensure family harmony, if we discipline our children in terms of their relationship with God, with man and with each other. Both Isaac and Jacob overlooked sibling rivalry and conflict to their own grief and sorrow. Let us earnestly desire not to make the same mistake.

Later, we see the tragic figure of Eli, the great prophet of Israel who was instrumental in bringing the nation of Israel back to God, yet would not discipline his own sons. In 1 Sm 3:13, God says to Eli, *"For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he*

George was a successful businessman who had been helped greatly in his walk with God by Steve. Under Steve's guidance, he had learned to share his faith, pray, study the Word of God, minister as a layman and preach the gospel. Opportunities opened for him that he never dreamed as God blessed his ministry. Steve, a well known layman in Christian circles, helped George expand and broaden his ministry. In George's eyes, Steve was a great man of God who could do no wrong. Yet, Steve could do wrong. His family was in shambles. His wife showed signs of emotional neglect, his children were rebellious and out of control. It was said that the chaos of the family, more than the call of God, kept Steve on the lay preaching circuit. Not only was George blind to this, but by emulating Steve's lifestyle he was headed down the same road. When I tried to approach George with this, he was hurt and not open to the subject. How much better for them both if George had been willing to take Steve off the spiritual pedestal he had placed him on. He might have been able to save both their families, but as it is they are both now lost.

Esau, to ensure harmony in the home and a closeness

"The first grandchild of each of my four spiritual heroes and mentors was born out of wedlock and now I am scared to death."

Minister sharing at a conference with me that his eyes were only now opening to the family frailties of those he had been emulating

When I was in the ninth grade, I went out for two sports— basketball and football. I can remember at the time I really liked my basketball coach. He was always very nice to me. He never shouted, gave me a few tips here or there, but basically just wanted me to enjoy the game. The line-coach on the football team was another matter. He was always in my face, always yelling, yanking me around, "do it over," "do it again," "hit him again," "try it again." It seemed like I could never please him. As I look back, the basketball coach never really believed in me. He just wanted me to be there, work out in the off season of football and enjoy the game of basketball. I would play on the practice squad, but he knew I had no real future in the game. As a result, he was indulgent and the favors and grace I thought I was receiving from him were really judgment against me— you can't cut it, so why bother?

On the other hand my football coach really believed in me and wanted me to excel, for both myself and the team. As a result, he was always on my case. The harsh judgment I felt he was meting out to me was really the discipline of Grace. I was getting a lot of extra attention, extra conditioning and extra skill development, even though it did not seem like it at the time. At the time I thought I was being unfairly judged and singled out, but I was the recipient of a special kind of Grace, the discipline of Grace. After the hardest workout there would always be praise, always be a pat on the helmet or a swat on the butt, an indication that this was not vindictive, but training.

did not rebuke them.” What an indictment on this man! God is going to judge his house, “*because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them.*” When Samuel grew up however, he did not learn from Eli’s experience.

In 1 Sm 8, we find the people coming to Samuel. He had made his sons priests, but he did not require a high standard of them. He did not correct or rebuke them. When the people came to him saying in 1 Sm 8:5, “*Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do*

not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.” Rather than admitting that his sons were out of control and something had to be done, he rebukes the people for desiring a king. It may have been wrong for the people to desire an earthly king rather than a spiritual one, but it was Samuel’s sons who caused the people, by their behavior to lose heart. What a sad state! Samuel can judge a whole nation, but not his own family.

David, the spiritual son of Samuel, carried this same weakness with him. He failed to deal decisively with his children. When David learned of the moral wrongs in his family it says in 2 Sm 13:21, “*Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry.*” Yet, he did nothing. Time and again in David’s life, though he knew something was wrong in his family, he failed to act. This resulted in all forms of heartache and family tragedies. From Eli, to Samuel to David, we see the theme. These were great men, capable leaders, respected in the secular and spiritual community, yet, when it came to their own children, they were impotent to act. They became weak and vacillating, to the grief of their children, their family and their community. If we as parents are going to be decisive in anything, let us be decisive in our families. If we are going to give a hard, cold look at any of the faults of our parents or spiritual leaders, let’s deal in reality in the area of the family so that we are not doomed to repeat the same mistakes.

“I am not too hard on Kenny for sneaking out at night. I used to do it myself, so I understand where he is coming from. In fact, my mother shared with me that she used to do it. Actually, it’s kind of startling and in a way kind of cute to see the way he treats us and tricks us just the way I used to do my parents.”

Mother, blind to the repetitive path of disobedience in her family which she was now allowing to be repeated in the lives of her children

C. GRACE BRINGS ABOUT RECONCILIATION

An act of Grace brings about Reconciliation while an act of Judgment is punitive in nature; it simply evens the score. When the state passes judgment it cares little about the future well-being of the criminal. The court carries out the Law; the judge is very often disgusted by the crime; the attorney for the state will argue for the strictest of punishment; and the family of the person wronged will testify at the hearing to determine the strength of punishment, often in tears of anger, hurt and bitterness, in an effort to extract the very last ounce of judgment upon the guilty. It is an emotionally-charged

We live in a society that forbids cruel and unusual punishment. Is it legal in our society, to punish a man by exposing him to radiation so that he gets sick and all his hair falls out? If a man commits a crime, can the judicial system, as punishment, inject lethal chemicals into his body, bringing him to within an inch of his life? Can the prison system cut a man open and remove large parts of his body as a form of punishment, leaving large scars across his torso? In each case the answer is a resounding “No!” Yet, here in Houston, people come from all over the world and pay tens of thousands of dollars to get men to do these very acts. They come willingly. They relocate and wait in line for it. It is called Radiation therapy, Chemotherapy and Radical Cancer Surgery. The difference is that the former is judicial, punitive punishment and the latter is therapeutic, proactive medical care. The same type of actions with exactly the opposite results, based on motive and purpose.

atmosphere with only one thing in mind: the execution of judgment on the criminal. This is a far cry from discipline. Discipline, though sometimes harsh, is always for the *benefit* of the one who receives it.

That is how God deals with us and how we should discipline our children. No matter how hard, no matter how intense, the relationship should always be restored and reinforced after the discipline. The motive and the purpose of the parent means everything. Just as God lovingly disciplines us, we should do the same for our children. We should not, as an emotional backlash, omit physical discipline from our child-raising skills, but master it and employ it as God intended.

D. GOD USES DISCIPLINE

1. AS OUR EXAMPLE

God uses the discipline and Grace process in the father/son relationship to illustrate His relationship with us as spiritual sons and daughters. In Heb 12:5–11 the Word of God states:

12:5 *and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, My son, do not regard lightly the **discipline** of the Lord, Nor faint when you are **reproved** by Him;*

12:6 *For those whom the Lord loves, He **disciplines**, and He **scourges** every son whom He receives.*

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**?*

12:8 *But if you are without **discipline**, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*

12:9 *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to **discipline** us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be **subject** to the Father of spirits, and live?*

12:10 *For they **disciplined** us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He **disciplines** us for our good, that we may share His holiness.*

12:11 *All **discipline** for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been **trained** by it. Afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

It is through loving, Scriptural discipline that the child learns of God’s dealing with mankind. We are, as fathers, the child’s frame of reference when he thinks of his Heavenly Father or reads passages in the Bible which refer to God as Father.

In verses five and six, we see that God here is calling us “son” and we are to relate to Him as a father when we receive His discipline.

In verses seven and eight, the discipline of earthly fathers is seen as a universal trait of love. What will your son think when he someday reads, “but if you are without discipline...then you are illegitimate children and not sons?” Will he thank God for a father who loved him enough to discipline him or will he wonder at this passage and the father who treated him with the benign neglect, as though he were a bastard child?

In verses nine and ten, this same discipline is used as an illustration of our heavenly Father’s love and commitment to us as His spiritual sons and daughters.

Verse eleven then sums up the value of discipline when done in a Godly manner. It is not judgment, in that it always carries with it the two unique qualities which separate discipline from judgment. The first quality: it is done for the good of the recipient, not for punitive retribution even though it causes sorrow; and the second quality: it always entails a restoration of the relationship.

“God wants us to be happy doesn’t He?” This is a lead-off question I love to ask and the response is always unanimous, be it a junior high Sunday School Class, a College Campus Meeting or an auditorium of young parents in my Family Discipleship Seminar. Hands fly up, faces light up, the room fills with cheer, the response is always a resounding, “Yes!” “Yes, God loves us and wants us to be happy!” or “Yes, God has only the best for us and wants us to be happy!” It comes in differing forms but is always the same answer, “Yes!”

It is then with a little gleam in my eye that I take them to Heb 12:11, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

The discipline of God makes us unhappy. It makes us “sorrowful.” It is such an integral enough part of our spiritual experience to warrant the term, “schooled in it.” No, God does not necessarily want us to be happy. He wants us to be Justified. He wants us to be Sanctified. He wants us to be Glorified. He wants us to be Fruitful. He wants us to be Fulfilled. He wants us to be Disciples and Disciplemakers, but He does not necessarily want us to be Happy, not all the time anyway. Sometimes, He wants us to be sorrowful.

This is an important lesson to learn, and the group I am sharing with always struggles. You can almost hear the gears of their brains grinding and smoking under the strain of this concept. Understanding this will help us to be better heavenly sons as well as better earthly fathers. Furthermore, this concept

Don was not considered an overwhelming success in his ministry. He was definitely not a failure, but neither were articles written up on his ministry in his organization’s journals, and the leadership did not make trips to his ministry Mecca to try to spread his methods and philosophies abroad. He was a good, hard-working, anonymous grunt in the kingdom of God—one who will be asked to go to the front of the line in heaven when we discover that Christ was not joking when He said “the last will be first,” but that is another story, to be told at another time. For the present it is enough to say that Don was a solid man in the trenches for the work of God.

I had the privilege of meeting Don’s children. They were pure gold. Their love for their father was surpassed only by their love for Jesus. His oldest daughter was a great success as an evangelist and Bible study leader in my campus ministry and went on to become my secretary. His second daughter was a great encouragement to my daughter at a Christian camp and became a role model for Becca when she went to college. His son had a wonderful countenance, was active in the ministry and may well enter it full-time. Don’s commitment to his family, his commitment to the Word of God, to training and discipling his children had paid off big time. At a time when many Christian workers were wondering, “Where did I go wrong?” as the shadow of foolish children spread across their home and waning years, Don’s life and home were made full and bright by the joy of a wise son and righteous daughters.

frees the parent from the unrelenting tyranny of being responsible for keeping the child happy all the time. It is true that in Eph 4:4, the Word of God commands fathers, “do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” This word “provoke,” though, means to purposefully and vindictively cause a child to get angry. It does not mean to avoid doing anything that might cause a child to become angry.

If we use this passage to do away with physical punishment, then we must also throw the baby out with the bath water. Suddenly, we have restricted ourselves from any

behavior that might cause our children to become angry. Of course this would mean chaos in the home and most certainly the destruction of our child's moral, emotional and spiritual fiber, if not his life as well. It simply means, as parents, we are not to be spiteful, vindictive, petty or mean-spirited when we discipline our children. Even so, most parents gauge the success of their parenting skills on whether or not they have a happy child, not only in the big picture, but often, day by day or even hour by hour. This is a very heavy burden. Once the little darling realizes that this is your goal, he takes over and you become a very abused servant to his precarious tastes and wishes. Many parents labor under this yoke, both to their child's and their marriage's undoing.

2. TO MAKE US SUCCESSFUL

Discipline is a work of Grace both as it applies to our fallen nature and as it applies to our ability to be successful in life. It is a work of Grace in terms of our fallen nature in that it leads to salvation. It corrects the spirit and makes the mind teachable to the things of God. It is a work of Grace in terms of our being successful in life in that it prepares the child for a correct response to God after salvation. It gives the child the proper perspective that short-term sorrow will lead to long term joy, through training and discipline. It is the parents' responsibility to act while this crucial "window of hope" is open, as stated in the Word of God in Prv 19:18, "***Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.***"

E. DISCIPLINE AND THE FAMILY

Just as the lack of discipline affects the family, so discipline plays a redemptive role in making the family successful and pleasant—a place which is filled with the Grace and Love of Christ.

1. JOY

One of the most obvious ways that this it seen to be true is in the way it brings joy to the parents and to the home. Prv 13:1 states, "*A wise son accepts his father's discipline...*" while stating, "*a scoffer does not listen to rebuke*" In verse ten, God goes on to explain, "*Through presumption comes nothing but strife, But with those who receive counsel is wisdom.*" Thus, a son who has been schooled in discipline, who listens to rebuke, who is teachable

Jim was retired, but at one time he was had held several positions as an executive in a multi-national, multi-million dollar Christian organization. He was the one of only two men I have ever met that could remain humble, professional, and unaffected by ministry success. The other is Ray Tallman, International Director of Arab World Ministries, based in Worthing, England (which of course puts me on the outside of this exclusive group as well). I was in town, and Jim found out that after the conference I would be staying on for one more night since my plane did not leave until the next morning. He insisted that I come and stay the night in his home. With a joy in his heart and a beam on his face, Jim began to recount the success of his children. His son had just completed another Christian book... and on he went. What a joy to see the gladness in this humble man's heart that a wise son had brought him during his last years on earth.

is not only a wise son but creates a home atmosphere that is free from strife. That is why God can say in Prv 23:24–25, "*The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you.*" The home which houses children who have been trained by God's standards—the home which has employed the redemptive work of disciplining and training of children, is one characterized by rejoicing, by gladness and by thankfulness for the joy that only a Christ-centered home can bring.

We see this theme over and over in God’s Word. Discipline brings Wisdom into the life of the child and Wisdom brings joy into the life of the home and the parents. We see this most clearly in the book of Proverbs...

10:1 *A wise son makes a father glad...*

15:20 *A wise son makes a father glad...*

29:3 *A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad...*

Over and over again we see the same theme: wisdom through discipline, joy in the home through wisdom.

2. TESTIMONY AND WITNESS

A second blessing that discipline brings to the family is that it is not only a work of Grace within the family, but it is a work of Grace in the community as a whole. A family which is a blessing is the envy of every non-Christian in your community. The thought of a lifestyle or philosophy which will make the home a haven rather than a disaster zone will open homes across your neighborhood to the gospel and the study of the Word of God. It is for good reason that the Word of God links the conduct of the family within its four walls in 1 Tm 3:4, “*He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity,*” with the ability to influence the world outside those four walls for Christ in verse seven, “*and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*” One who has a good reputation as managing his household well, keeping his children under control, having a home which is characterized by dignity, will have, as a natural result, a good reputation outside the church.

Tony was a little mystified as he shared. He had been in the ministry for some twenty years. His specialty was evangelism, prayer and equipping men in the disciple-making ministry. He had experienced some success, had had innumerable visits to his ministry and had been written up on a number of occasions in the professional journal associated with his ministry specialties and organization. Now, at what he thought would be the peak of his career, when he would be able to share his ministry experience and philosophy with the organization he was with and the wide, wide world, this simply was not happening. He was being asked to speak, but on the family. He had been asked to travel outside the country, speak to churches, to staff gatherings, to other Christian organizations. It had taken on a life of its own. The impetus for all this was his reputation as a devoted family man and the testimonies of his wife and children. He was not ungrateful for these opportunities, just a little bewildered. His only real regret was that his wife did not receive more of the spotlight and credit. It was pointed out, gently, that he was the solution to this—duly noted and acted upon.

3. FRUITFULNESS

As the child learns early the value and use of discipline and teachability in his life, he bears the fruits of this throughout his life. Not only does he receive benefits from the lessons learned from his father and mother, but in the future, lessons he will be able to learn in life will be because of his open attitude to correction and discipline. The Word of God gives clear evidence of this process and in the book of Proverbs, we find a concise list of the benefits of discipline and training which will be the big payoff for the child.

“Oooh, yuck, is that weird or what!” was Becca’s exclamation and her preschool brother and sister giggled politely to themselves. The scene was a child about her age (1st grade) throwing a temper tantrum in the grocery store. I praised God quietly to myself that I had children who not only had been trained at an early age not to do this, but were wise enough to see how foolish it looked in others.

“the rod and reproof give wisdom...”

Prv 29:15

As I dropped Becca off at her high school, she turned to me and said, “You know Dad, I used to think you could make one Lordship decision and then just forget about it. But you know, it’s not true, it’s like I have to make a Lordship decision each day when I walk in the cafeteria. Who am I going to sit with? What crowd am I going to hang with? Will you pray for me today, Dad?” As I drove away, I praised God for a daughter wise enough to see this and wise enough to share with her father and to seek his prayers.

Here we go again, I thought. This is really kind of embarrassing. I don’t want to act like I don’t believe in my children, but I also already know what the outcome will be and what the problem is, if you can call it a problem. Maybe not so much the problem, as the cause. Megan’s teacher had requested a conference and I already knew the reason. The other two had been down this same path about this same time of year for each. They want to test her to see if she is a gifted child. She is not, and she tests as such. You see the problem, or perhaps the cause, is that Megan was disciplined and trained to sit still, control her tongue and her movements, respect authority and follow instructions at a very early age. She therefore, like her brother and sister, was a quick learner and excelled in school. They assumed she was gifted because learning came so easily. Instead she was simply a child who had grown to love discipline and its benefits. As a result, knowledge came easily to her, as it did and does with all her sisters and her brother.

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge...”

Prv 12:1

One of my great joys in life has been to see my children honored. At first, this honor came as a result of their behavior. It was not uncommon for adults to approach us in restaurants or at museum exhibits or at stores and praise the children for their behavior. I can remember the trouble we would have getting seated at nice tables in restaurants. You could see the fear in the maitre d’s face as we insisted on a nice table, not stuck in the back where parents with small children are relegated. Then the praise would come from the waiter and staff as the children quietly ate their meal and talked with us in subdued voices.

“...he who regards reproof will be honored.”

Prv13:18

“You know Mr. Mahon, Sam is not by any means the most gifted guy in the city league this year. In fact, there are several boys on other teams who are athletically pretty far ahead of him. But, he’s a real team player. He’s dependable and I have never had a young man who is easier to coach. That’s why I am giving him the honor of playing on the city-wide All Star Team this year.”

Sam’s 8th grade baseball coach.

Later on, they were honored for academics, but as they moved along this slowly gave way to character. Not that they are not good students. They are all A/B students in honors-level courses, but, with the exception of Lizzy, the youngest, they are not “gifted.” They do not move in that hyper-intellectual realm that exists in the large urban public

schools in the city which we live—the one people love to test and talk about. No, my children will graduate with honors from high school but they will not be National Merit Scholarship Finalists or Valedictorians of a class of 500, or recruited by Harvard or MIT to study astrophysics. Every year, they receive honors at the end of the year recognizing character, morals, citizenship and the other terms the world tries to come up with to mirror true spiritual values. In a way, I am even more proud of these than of an academic award based on mass testing or an athletic award based on physical accomplishments. Those are often as much a result of the genetic gifts of God as personal accomplishment. But my children’s willingness to regard reproof is something they have been trained in and has consistently paid off for them.

I was listening attentively, with pen in hand because I really wanted to get this down. Millie is the mother of Meril, a woman in our campus ministry. I had

“He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.”

Prv 15:31

always been impressed by Meril’s character and by the types of friends she chose for herself. I coveted this for my daughters and, as is my habit, when I find a parent who is doing something right I ask a bunch of questions, jot down the answers and put it into practice. The question was, “What was the key in helping Meril to develop such good friendships over the years?” Millie answered without hesitation, “Be the one who picks them up!” She went on to explain, “Children like to go to malls and to movies together. Certain children have irresponsible moms. They say, ‘pick us up at 9 p.m.’ and they know this mom may not show till 9:30 or even 10. That’s when children get into trouble. Always be the mom who picks up and be there early, waiting. The bad children will have none of this and find some one else’s mom to do the deed, leaving your child to run with the children who don’t mind. In the same line, you be the one who has the parties and hosts the get-togethers. The bad children won’t stand for this. In fact, they will ostracize your daughter. She will be ruined for her whole school career, being confined to seek out friends among the good children.” This was fantastic advice and so very true. A child with a parent who disciplines them, who gives them life-giving reproof, and who is involved in their lives will indeed dwell among the wise.

Becca had to make a decision. Our children have always attended public schools and for the majority of their schooling, they were in large urban public schools. We found that requiring them to join one academic club and one social club each year

“A fool rejects his father’s discipline, But he who regards reproof is prudent.”

Prv15:5

“He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.”

Prv 15:31

was a good way of ensuring that their school friends were among the good children. We limited it to two clubs, though, to leave room for studies and church activities. Now Becca had to make a decision. She had been invited to join the “Belles,” a high-kicking dance team that her school sponsored, known throughout the state. If you were in you were really “in.” It meant looking cute at football games, performing at half time, traveling, getting to perform at a professional football games and colleges as well. It was a great honor.

Something was troubling Becca, though. She did not feel the outfits they were to be wearing were very modest and her freshman year she had heard the boys in the stands

making comments during the high-kick routines. So, Becca had to make a decision. She also had the opportunity to be on the planning team of the Christian Student Union of her school. These were good children, but considered kind of nerdy and definitely not of the popular set. We left this decision completely up to her. The CSU was her ultimate choice. She made it on her own and it was a real turning point in her witness at school. I praise God for a daughter who learned to regard reproof and became prudent in her decisions.

“Don’t worry, Liz, I stared them down.” Sam was swimming at the beach with his younger sister, Liz. A couple of junior high guys, Liz’s age, with whom he was not real thrilled, wanted to make time with her. Her big brother, the high school baseball player, stared

“Dad, it is definitely easier to be pure around Christian nerds than the guys on the baseball team.”

Sam explaining his decision to sit with the Christian Student Union members during lunch rather than the baseball team.

them down and they got the message. I praise God for a prudent son who will look out for his sisters. He came by this honestly. I can remember three years before, his older sister Becca saying to me, “Don’t worry Dad, I stared them down.” Nothing puts the fear in a girl’s heart like an icy older sister in high school. Some junior high girls at a church outing were trying to make time with her brother. Becca was not at all impressed with them and would have none of it. I praise God for a daughter who is prudent and looks out for the best interest of her younger brother.

“But John, she’s so young; she’s just a freshman.” This was Eleanor’s first response to Becca’s request after we were alone in our room. Becca had

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life,”

Prv 6:23

become very active in a campus organization known as Campus Crusade For Christ her freshman year of college. Now she wanted to attend a summer training program with them on the other side of the country, far from where we lived. Those who finished out the summer would be eligible to go on a summer-long foreign mission project the next summer, and the next and the next if you get the drift. It would be all summer long and her mother was really torn. She was excited about the opportunity and the honor bestowed on Becca being asked to join after her freshman year, but would sorely miss her darling who had become one of her best friends.

I pointed out to El that Becca had grown up watching us minister to college students. She knew that the most mature, the real go-getters, were always being recruited by us to summer training programs or mission projects. Did we really think, after modeling this before her, after making a career in our ministry of separating sons and daughters from their parents, that we would go untouched? El agreed with her mind, but her mother’s heart was unconvinced. As we put Becca on the plane to her training program, I praised God that for Becca, the reproofs of discipline had indeed become a way of life.

4. THIS BRINGS US BACK TO PRV 19:18, “DISCIPLINE YOUR SON WHILE THERE IS HOPE...”

While we have the opportunity, we must act decisively. The “window of opportunity,” in terms of discipline, does not remain open long. We must begin while the child is young. We must go to work to ensure his place of blessing. We must discipline while there is

hope, so that our children may be able to enjoy all the fruits of this hope throughout their lives.

III. The Scriptural Basis for the Training and Disciplining of Children: God’s Expectations for you as a Parent.

(Before moving into this section it might be good to review two important points we have covered previously in the chapter.)

A. FIRST: THE WORD OF GOD PRESUPPOSES THAT YOU WILL VIEW CHILDREN AND PARENTING AS A BLESSING IN A LOVING AND BENEVOLENT MANNER.

In Ps 127: 3–5 the Word of God states, “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they shall not be ashamed, When they speak with their enemies in the gate.” The phenomenon of our culture of the “unwanted child” is unknown to Scripture. Except in such cases, as in the siege of Jerusalem, where mass starvation was taking place, it was inconceivable in the Scriptural record to be upset by a pregnancy or another child. The bearing of children was a spiritual event and not having many children was something which burdened and caused sorrow to the families plagued by it. Women yearned for babies. Men rejoiced in babies. There are recorded virtual “baby wars,” as women sought to outdo one another in receiving the gift of God in the form of beautiful little babies. So, the Word of God views fathers as a blessing. Jesus in Lk 11:9–13 gives one of His many examples of how loving God is by comparing Him with earthly fathers. To be a father, to be a mother, to be a parent, to have children, is viewed by God as a supreme blessing, and a spiritual event. How do *you* view it?

“Oh John, you don’t know how thankful we are to have you in our church. I could just cry.” I was not sure what brought this outburst of emotion from Darlene, but I knew it wasn’t my great ministry in her life. In fact, at this point I barely knew her and her husband Russell. As I inquired further, I found out why and I am afraid my discovery is an indictment of the evangelical church as a whole.

You see, Russell was a graduate student and he and Darlene already had two small children. Darlene had just found out she was pregnant with their third. She had come to church all excited only to be greeted with, “How on earth did that happen?” “My Lord Darlene, you have a college degree, don’t you know anything?” “How in the world will you be able to afford it?” (I love it when people depersonalize unborn babies by calling them “it”). “Good grief Darlene, you live in a one-bedroom apartment, you don’t have room for the children you have, where do you think it is going to sleep?” And, the closest thing to an encouragement, “Well, God is sovereign, I guess you will just have to trust in His decision.”

It never occurred to anyone that Darlene and Russell had planned to have another child. They loved children. In contrast with how most of the world lives, a one-bedroom apartment was no impediment to receiving the gift of God. They were excited and were planning to have another child just as soon as they could, and then another, and then another after that. This is why Darlene responded so emotionally to me. On hearing the news of her pregnancy, I had exclaimed, “Praise God Darlene. What a joy, what a wonderful gift from God, what a vote of confidence from God to entrust you with another baby. I am so happy and so proud of you both!” I could only share her sadness and the sad state of the church as she related to me the comments she had been receiving. Children are indeed the gift of God and the fruit of the womb is His reward. Let us never forget this.

B. SECONDLY: THE WORD OF GOD DOES NOT VIEW PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE AS DEVIATING FROM THIS LOVING AND BENEVOLENT MANNER.

The old phrase, “this hurts me more than it hurts you,” may be discarded on the humanist junk pile. There need be no guilt in discipline nor remorse. It is an act of Grace. It is insuring your child’s success. Although there are many passages in Scripture that allude

to God withholding His judgment and in His being sorry for man's actions which result in His carrying out His judgment, no such statements are made in terms of God's discipline. In fact, just the opposite is true. The Bible says, "*Whom the Lord loves, He disciplines...*" Discipline is for our good. It is a blessing. It results in blessing. God would school us in it, He would refine us in it. He plans it for our good and experiences no remorse whatsoever. In the same way, we must not feel remorse or hesitation in discipling our children. It is for their good and you are performing an act of Grace.

C. IN LIGHT OF THIS, GOD HAS FOUR DEFINITE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PARENT AS IT PERTAINS TO DISCIPLINE.

1. **Instruction:** and, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)
2. **Training:** Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Prv 22:6)
3. **Discipline:** He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently. (Prv 13:24)
4. **Control:** He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (1 Tm 3:4)

Most parents instruct, some train, few discipline and, as for control, this is now considered by most as a form of dysfunctional behavior and is therefore rejected. These are not, however, optional areas of parenting. They are commanded by God. They are doctrinal in nature, spoken universally to all parents, transcending both time and culture. As such, all three must be considered and adapted to our parenting style. We are responsible to God for these as parents irrespective our personal preference or disdain for any one particular area or style.

IV. The Scriptural Basis for the Training and Disciplining of Children: The Rod and Grace

True child abuse is epidemic in our culture. It is epidemic in two ways.

Violent parents who are hurting their children in serious physical and mental ways, and parents who are raising juvenile delinquents through benign neglect and a permissive parenting lifestyle. Both are wrong. If you grew up in a violent home, characterized by sexual or physical abuse, you most certainly should get professional help to aid you in recovering from the terrible and unjust scars meted out on your heart and mind. The scourge of alcoholism, pornography and the abandonment of Christian values, has only accentuated this problem. Hitting in anger or doing any form of discipline in anger is wrong. If you can do it no other way, then you should get help.

"What most mothers and fathers fail to realize is that corporal punishment (spanking) is an ineffective and harmful method of managing children's behavior."

Houston Chronicle, Parenting article

"If you hit your child (spank) then you are teaching your child to hit."

Humanist truism as concerns spanking

"You know, Rev. Mahon, it is not the children whose parents spank them who are violent. I can track each of the children in my class who have trouble with hitting or biting, back to parents who neglect them, and I don't mean material neglect. Some of these families are really well off. I mean moral neglect. These children can get away with anything and they know it."

Sam's third grade teacher

On the other hand, you should not allow children's rights zealots to keep you from disciplining your children in a controlled manner as defined by God. Nothing torks me off more than to see overworked social workers following up leads turned in by children's right zealots, who have taken it upon themselves to police loving Christian homes and as a result, not leaving them time to get to the true abusers who are endangering the lives and minds of their children.

Discipline of children as carried out in accordance with God's Word of God has two key elements. First: the Rod, the implement of our discipline; and Second: Grace, the spirit of our discipline

A. THE ROD

In the Word of God the term used for the Rod is שֵׁבֶט / # "SHEBET." Much has been made of this Word of God by exponents of differing philosophies of spanking, but I have not found it to be that complicated a term. Unlike Greek, Hebrew is a pretty straightforward language, it is what is termed in the computer world, "WYSIWYG" (*pronounced wizzywig*), an acronym for What You See Is What You Get, and that is pretty much how it is with the Hebrew language. Allow me to share with you a few scholarly observations on the word, "rod".

Wilson's Old Testament Word of God Studies— "A stick, rod, staff; a rod or staff for chastening."

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament— "Denotes rod used for beating cummin and dill (Is 28:27), as a weapon (2 Sm 23:21), shepherd's implement (Lv 27:32), to punish slaves (Ex 21:20), to punish fools (Prv 10:13), and to discipline sons (Prv 13:24)."

Zondervon Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible— "Rod was a length of tree limb or brush stock, employed at first for support or as a weapon. SHEBET— to prop or support, hence a shepherd's staff and ultimately a scepter."

Ungers's Bible Dictionary— "A stick for punishment; a shepherd's staff."

1. PASSAGES ON THE ROD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT GOD HAD IN MIND AN IMPLEMENT WHICH WOULD INFLICT PAIN

Prv 13:24— "*He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.*" We are told that it is not to be spared.

Prv 23:13-14— "*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 parent is enjoined to beat the child with the rod and then in a tongue in cheek manner chided, "he will not die".

Prv 20:30— "*Stripes that wound scour away evil, and strokes reach the innermost parts*" This makes it clear that the stroke should be hard enough to leave a red mark and that a bruise is not the unforgivable sin.

If implements in childraising that cause bruising are to be outlawed and if anyone advocating or using an implement of training that causes bruising is to be arrested that list would look something like this. First: All nurses and Doctors who bruise children while taking blood and giving shots must go to jail. Second: all elementary teachers who supervise play on playground equipment where children are constantly being bruised must go to jail. Third: all coaches and trainers of almost all the sports and arts must go to

jail. Fourth: all makers of women’s shoes must go to jail. Fifth: makers of roller skates, roller blades and all skating rinks will be raided and the proprietors sent to jail. Somewhere in this list we will include the parent who spansks their child, where the occasional bruise or red mark appears. It’s a package deal, if inflicting a bruise or red mark on a child while training that child is an unforgivable sin for a parent, then it is unforgivable for all people who knowingly allow or do this in any type of supervision, instruction or training.

2. TWO PRIMARY FORMS OF SHEBET TODAY

The first is the Switch— this is a long slender branch with which the child is spanked. Generally due to its small size a multiple number of indeterminate strokes are used. This is the classic switch off Grandmas peach or Willow tree. Dad’s belt would fall under this category as would the fly swatter.

The second is the Rod— this is a small dowel, wooden spoon, paddle, etc., with which the child receives a specific and limited number of strokes commensurate the offense, (example 1, 2, or 3) depending on the infraction.

My personal preference is the rod, or wooden spoon. I have three primary reasons for this preference. First, I prefer to use a method where the exact number of spanks or strokes are known from the beginning. This allows the child to concentrate on the offense rather than Mom or Dad’s actions and how to manipulate them. Secondly it is over quickly and you can get on with life. Lastly, it is not subjective, and, as a result, is not prone to being overdone.

Do not withhold spanking from a child who cries easily when faced with discipline. Crying does not drive out foolishness from the heart of a child— it is the discipline of the rod. The Hebrew word for “cry” was available to

“We don’t spank little Tish. All I have to do is look at her sideways, and she cries. She has such a tender heart and she knows she has done wrong. Her sweet little spirit is so sensitive that she feels bad and cries without spanking. This is such a relief to Mom and me.”

Minister on why he doesn’t spank his daughter

God when Proverbs was written. So were words meaning “to feel sorry”, “to repent”, “to regret”, but these were not chosen by the Holy Spirit of God, *SHEBET*, “rod,” was chosen and this is what we are left with. Nowhere does the Word of God equate crying with the desired results of the rod. Crying is not the goal but a by-product. Disciplining the child is the goal. In discipline God does not consider pain, either directly inflicted by Himself upon the child or thorough His agent, the earthly parent, to be a negative factor. In the same vein, God does not equate crying with discipline. In fact, *nowhere is crying even mentioned*. The Word of God does not say, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child, but *crying* will remove it far from him.” But rather, the “*rod of discipline...*” There are many ways of making a child cry, and children can devise many ways of imitating crying. But the rod is the rod, it is not faked and it is not cruel. As a result, it should be a stroke, it should be hard enough to cause sorrow, but do not to force the child to cry. The child may or may not cry. This is not a test of wills to make your child cry, but a discipling process to train your child. Through discipline, your child will be more successful in life by abandoning foolishness in exchange for wisdom. Though foolishness is spiritually bound up in the heart of your child, is being removed far from him by the rod of discipline.

True, the norm will be tears and crying. For the majority of moms, no tears and no crying means their strokes are not doing the job. There is, however, the rare child who

simply does not cry easily. I caution parents not to make it the objective to reduce this child, through strokes of the rod, to tears. The Bible does not command this and the results can be damaging to the child, to the parent, and to the family.

In my experience, when we become subjective in our discipline, relying on man’s intuition rather than God’s Word, more harm is done than good. The issue of crying is one of these. I have seen both extremes: on the one hand men who withhold discipline from the child who cries easily, to men who not only demand crying, but demand a certain type of crying which denotes repentance.

All of the men I have known who withheld the rod because the child cried and since crying signifying sorrow for the action was enough, had children who *used emotions as a manipulative tool*— especially where their parents were concerned.

All of the men I have known that have insisted that every time they discipline with the rod they get a certain kind of crying and persisted until they got that result, had an emotional or controlling agenda, which took priority over training. All of these men, to the number, pursued this agenda at the loss of their relationship with their child. Some knew it, some did not, but the child always did, as did the mother.

3. HUMANIST ALTERNATIVES TO THE ROD

The use of the rod is a pattern given to us by the Word of God. The rod is far better than humanist alternatives. These alternatives to God’s first choice are not all equally as damaging, but in my opinion, they are usually emotional time bombs waiting to explode. Each damages in a small way the relationship and postpones dealing with the root matter in the child. There are basically five popular alternatives to the rod being utilized in the world today, finding themselves at work even in Christian families, sometimes in many subtle ways.

“It’s time to go Janie, please put down the nice toy and come with Mommy. That belongs to the store, not to us and it is time to go.”

Now in a sterner voice stepping towards her little darling, “Now, Janie, Mommy said to come and I want you to put that down and come here now... I don’t have time for this.”

Janie backs off with ball in hand, mother aware other shoppers are beginning to notice. “Janie pleeeese come now and put the ball back, Mommy is tired and has to get home and make dinner. Pleeeese don’t make Mommy sad.”

Janie begins to listen again still holding on to the ball. Mommy, sensing hope, bargains, “Janie, when we get home Mommy will get out your ball and you can play with it and Mommy will give you some gum when we get into the car. You will like that wont you? Now come on and let’s go.”

Mommy turns to go but Janie opts out, a ball in the hand is better than gum promised, besides, this is starting to be fun, people are looking and talking. “OK, Janie, Mommy is going home, you can just stay here and they will turn off the lights and lock you in. Good bye.”

Now earlier in the game Janie would have come screaming at this point, but over time she has learned that Mommy does not abandon little Janie to strangers, in fact she is afraid of loosing little Janie in a crowd. Now Janie plays her trump card, as soon as Mommy turns to leave, she picks up the ball and hightails it down the aisle in the opposite direction.

Mommy chases her down, picks her up and with Janie kicking and crying and leaves the mall, uttering threats and thoroughly embarrassed.

a. THE WAR OF REASON

This is the classic model. You reason, you ask, you demand, you plead, your bribe, you threaten and then, if your bluff is called...you control by restraint.

I’ve seen this scene played out in a hundred malls, grocery stores

and shopping centers across the country. It has got to be the most ineffective method combined with the most damaging relational method that I can imagine. I guess that’s why it is so universally popular with humanists. The main fallacy with reasoning with a child as if the child were an adult is that the child is not an adult. Even if the child can

handle the vocabulary, the child has neither the spiritual nor the moral capacity of an adult. That is why the child has you as a parent. To instill these traits in the child so that the child can move successfully into adult behavior.

b. SENSORY DEPRIVATION

This, too, is classic. After scolding the child you place him in a secluded room. Perhaps with the lights out, you make him stay there for no telling how long. He gets to hear the family going on without him. He gets to reflect on the unjustness and left alone with his thoughts, a root of bitterness begins to develop in his life. This coupled with the fear of being stuck in this room forever makes it the most cruel of the discipline methods. The Koreans developed sensory deprivation into a veritable art form. They found that they could reduce a Marine officer to a babbling baby through sensory deprivation alone. Prisons and those engaged in psychological manipulation love it. I cannot think of any means more likely to produce bitterness and fear in the relationship than this.

c. BEHAVIORAL MODIFICATION

Thanks to modern psychology's marriage to the evolutionary model, we are but animals and many homes have become one great Pavlovian laboratory. Stimulus response reigns. Do good, get good; do bad, get bad. What a great value system. Psychiatrists have developed a model for the sociopath that this training produces. He is called the marginal personality type. All his decisions

"If you don't obey right now you get the garage!" The statement obviously got the child's attention, but I did not quite get it. "The garage?" I asked. "Oh that," the mother responded. "I got tired of fighting with these children all the time. So, if they don't respond, then I stick them in the garage with the lights out. Five minutes in there and I find them to be very cooperative." I stared in amazement, here was a woman violently opposed to spanking, but using a most cruel method to intimidate her children into cooperation. The bitterness of the older children revealed all too clearly the toll this was taking on their long-term relationship.

It was hard for me to understand the bitterness in the eyes of Gretchen's children. There was a very, very sweet side to these children, but there was also a resentful bitter side. As I got to know the family and saw the dynamics of the relationship, I began to understand why. Gretchen would allow the children to challenge her authority until she finally lost her temper. She would then strongly scold the child and send the child to the bedroom. There the child was allowed to cry, kick, pout, throw things and act out all the aggression in earnest. If it went on for too long Gretchen would shout out, "You're not coming out 'til you have calmed down." After a period, which was determined both by the mood of the child and of Gretchen, the child was let out. But you could see it in her eyes. Nothing had been solved; all that anger had been mulled over and internalized while in the room, sometimes acted out in violent outbursts of anger, and sometimes internalized in growing bitterness towards authority. Either way, the foolishness remained bound in the heart of this child. There was an evident, bitter streak in this child's heart that is so common in children whose mothers resort to this method.

"Please come and help your father pick this stuff up" the mother called to her son as he sat in front of the TV. "What will you give me?" Was his immediate reply. "It's not what I'll give you if you do, it is what I'll give you if you don't," was the mother's quick retort. A fight was brewing and the father broke in. "Come on son, we have company coming. You help us out. Get your room cleaned up and behave yourself at dinner and tomorrow you can go to the mall with your friends and we will treat you to a movie and give you some spending money." The boy thought it over and after a little more negotiation, he hopped up, and helped out. There was a quiet dinner and pleasant evening with the church Sunday School class. Then, on the next day was the pay off. The parents had gotten off cheap. I knew only too well what this young man was capable of. His sullenness can cast a pall over an entire evening and spoil any get-together. He is only now learning the price he can charge for allowing his parents to entertain or have a nice evening at home. In the future his services will be negotiated for a higher price.

are made on the stimulus response model in relationship with society without reference to morals.

d. TIME AND SPACE BREAKS

This may work on the football field, or basketball court, or ice hockey rink, but it is alien to Scripture. It presupposes that the child is basically good. That he gets into a bad rut, outside his basic nature and all he needs is a time and space break. Take a break, recoup, get back on the right track, and all will be well. The only problem is that this does

“Excuse me just a minute John, I can’t talk right now.” I could hear the chaos of Larry’s three-year-old in the background as an argument over Kool-aid was erupting. “Daddy’s on the phone....” and the war of wills continued to escalate. “OK, that’s enough, time for a “time out.” Little Heather was placed on a stool and cooled down for a few moments. “OK, now I’ll be off the phone in a minute and then we’ll talk,” and Larry was back on the phone. Larry did not like to discipline with the rod. He just did not see it. If he ever could use the “time out” break instead, he always did. Without ever really admitting it to himself or to others, deep down in his heart Larry viewed spanking as an act of violence against his child. He really trusted the books he read on this subject, more than the Word of God. Little Heather was sweet, but she was also selfish, just like her other brothers and sisters. The time out break was more than putting off her desires and getting her temper under control on her end. It was also a way when she could command the total attention of her parents with very little lost on her side whenever she wanted. It was great indoor sport for Heather, and Larry was completely oblivious to the selfish and manipulative streak that was developing in his children.

not deal with foolishness that is in the heart child. All it deals with are the limits to which Mom and Dad may be pushed. These, over a period of time, given an intelligent child can be stretched further and further as the parent’s pain and chaos threshold increase.

e. INSTITUTIONAL

This is the most cruel. The parent leaves it to an institution, be it day care center, schools— be they public, private, military or Christian. It could be a social worker, coach, teacher, etc., to deal with the behavior problems. I can guarantee you that an institution will be far less caring and far harsher with your child than you ever will be. You can forget about love and turn your child over to the cruel rules of institutions, but this is to abrogate your responsibility before both God and man.

*The mothers exasperated comment was filled half despair, and half prayer, “My only hope is that the _____ will straighten him out.”
Now all that is left is for you to do is fill in the blank: school, Scouts, Army, church, camp— you name it, I have seen mothers and fathers put their hope in it. How much better to have trained their children in a loving atmosphere of discipline than to have to abrogate this authority now to an institution! In most cases, all that is accomplished is that the child develops a network of similarly disposed rebels from which he can learn.*

Now these methods are not all equally as damaging and harmful. In fact, a Christian in good faith can use methods other than the rod, *unless the new method is used to replace the biblical standard*. That, of course, would be sin. In a very limited and controlled manner they may, if the parent so chooses, be employed as a secondary aid in the discipling and training of children but you should recognize that they are not sanctioned by Scripture, though they could have been if God had wanted to include them. The vocabulary was there for God to draw upon. The concepts were in existence. God could have easily introduced these methods along with the rod of discipline, but He did not. They must never replace the biblical method and, in my opinion, are for the most part more damaging than helpful in the discipling process. We took a pass on them all. The reason being, they are experimental, by their very nature. The Word of God clearly teaches that the rod is the Holy Spirit’s method of choice in the discipling and training

of children. No other method is specifically taught or mentioned in the Word of God. These other methods are developed by man. They are not inherently evil, but they are experimental in nature. We have no confidence— other than our own reasoning powers— that they will work. The movement away from the rod in the evangelical church does not have its roots in a deep biblical study of the issue coupled with sound exegesis of scriptures by the conservative biblical scholars of our day. Rather it is a response to the world’s reaction to the principles in the Word of God and the influence of modern child psychology upon the evangelical church. If God’s Word presents us with the rod as a disciplinary tool then it must be a part of our training methods. You may or may not choose to employ modern experimental methods in raising your children.

B. GRACE: THE SPIRIT OF OUR DISCIPLINE:

In disciplining in Grace these keys must be kept in mind.

1. Discipline is done *for the well being of the child* and as a result, is not done in anger. If you are waiting until you get angry to discipline then discipline has become a selfish tool to deal with— an irritant, and not a work of grace in the child’s life.
2. Discipline is done *for the well being of the child* and as a result, is not punitive. Discipline is carried out without reference to punishment. You are not punishing the child... you are not getting even with him... you are not making him pay. Rather you are training the child for success.
3. Discipline is done for the well being of the child and as a result *is done in love*. **The relationship must never be in question.** There is no need to send the child away, no need to break fellowship. After disciplining there should be love and emotional reinforcement and then life can go on as normal. Discipline, far from creating a rift between the parent and child, is relationally intensive.
4. Discipline is done for the well being of the child and as a result *is goal oriented*. The goal of disciplining the child is to make the child a success. This should always be in the forefront of your mind and the child’s. This presupposes thought-through goals and plans, not just, shoot from the hip, stimulus-response child-raising methods.

V. Summary

I. THE BOTTOM LINE

- A. The bottom line is Eph 6:1– 4, children who obey, and parents who discipline and instruct.
- B. God has taken the moral prerogative away from parents. He has already decided what the right reaction of children to their parents is and should be. A key question all parents should ask themselves, “When you ask your child to do something, is his response to obey?”
- C. God’s first choice is intervention by the parent on behalf of the child. Without this, the child is left to his fallen nature.
- D. Failure to discipline your child results in tragedy not only in his own life but also in the family and in the Christian community as a whole.
- E. The failure by man, or by his institutions to enforce God’s standards on those employed in full-time ministry and Christian service does not mean that God has gone condoned their lack of faithfulness.

- F. Discipline is an act of Grace in the child's life on the part of the parents. It affects him spiritually, socially and mentally, preparing him for a fruitful and fulfilled life and bringing blessings on his home, his community and his spiritually family as well.
- G. The Word of God presupposes that you will view children and parenting as a blessing in a loving and benevolent manner.
- H. The Word of God does not view physical discipline as deviating from this loving and benevolent manner.
- I. God has definite expectations of the parent as it pertains to discipline:
1. **Instruction:** *“and, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”* (Eph 6:4)
 2. **Training:** *“Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* (Prv 22:6)
 3. **Discipline:** *“He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”* (Prv13:24)
 4. **Control:** *“He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.”* (1 Tm 3:4)
- J. The Rod is the tool of our discipline while Grace is the spirit of our discipline
- K. Ample Scripture references establish the value of spanking your child.
1. Other methods may not be anti-scriptural but they are definitely man's attempts, man's experiments and do not carry the weight of Scripture.
 2. The vocabulary and concepts were in existence if the Holy Spirit had wanted to bring out other methods besides physical discipling of the child, spanking. Yet He choose not to. We should recognize and accept this.
 3. There are no illustrations of discipline in the Scripture where the rod is not spoken to either directly or indirectly.

Chapter TWO

Post-Study Projects

Author's
Note:

At this point, there may be a real tendency on the part of the reader to make some radical changes in how you are handling your children. Let me stress to you not to do anything until at least after chapter four. The application section of the workbook is designed to give you time to make prudent thoughtful decisions based on a growing conviction in the Word of God. I would encourage you to follow the lead of the workbook and not make any rash decisions concerning your children. Of course, you and your spouse know best and this is not a hard and fast rule.

Scripture Memory Verse— Prv 13:24

He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

Last Week's Verse— Prv 23:13 *“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.”*

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR TRAINING AND DISCIPLINING
CHILDREN

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: EPH 6: 1–3

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: EPH 6:4

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 22:6

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 SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR TRAINING AND DISCIPLINING
CHILDREN

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: PRV 23:13

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: 1 Tm 3:4

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: HEB 12:4–11

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?

Discipline Survey

Husbands and wives should do this project together and then discuss the results. If your children are too young for any of the questions then reflect upon the norm of behavior in your family, church, neighborhood or circle of friends. Answer Each Question T = True and F = False

I. Home

- _____ 1. Our toddler makes a mess when he eats, so we put newspapers or some type of covering under him.
- _____ 2. When our child is in another room, we can call to him in a normal voice and he will stop what he is doing and come.
- _____ 3. Our child picks up after himself.
- _____ 4. Our child has regular chores to do around the house.
- _____ 5. When told to come, our toddler runs to us.
- _____ 6. Our child sits quietly at the table until served.
- _____ 7. Our child gets up, gets dressed, does his chores and then comes to breakfast.
- _____ 8. I look forward to meal times with the children.
- _____ 9. Our family eats at least one sit down meal together each day.

II. Car

- _____ 10. Trips are fun with our children.
- _____ 11. Our children amuse themselves on long trips in the car.
- _____ 12. Our children play well together on long trips in the car.
- _____ 13. On car trips, our children go to sleep when told.
- _____ 14. When driving I can tell my children to hush...and they will.
- _____ 15. I look forward to running errands in the car with the children.
- _____ 16. The children will play quietly while I am having to concentrate on traffic.
- _____ 17. My children can eat or play without trashing the car.

III. Visiting

- _____ 18. There are some homes into which we cannot take our children.
- _____ 19. There are some stores into which we cannot take our children.
- _____ 20. Shopping with our children is twice as much work as without them.
- _____ 21. When shopping I can elicit my children's help...and it will actually be helpful.
- _____ 22. When shopping, my children follow my instructions.
- _____ 23. I am embarrassed by my children when shopping or in public.
- _____ 24. People often comment on how well-behaved my children are.
- _____ 25. If my children were well behaved we could have a lot of fun together on outings.
- _____ 26. My children can accept the disappointment of changed plans without throwing a temper tantrum.

IV. Church

- _____ 27. My children sit still during church.
- _____ 28. We need a church with a good children's program, or we cannot enjoy the sermon.
- _____ 29. I often go to church tired because of the work it takes to get my children ready.
- _____ 30. We rarely go out after church because the kids are so cranky.
- _____ 31. My children make cute things at Sunday school but they are ruined by the time we get home.
- _____ 32. My children pay attention to the sermon, the older ones taking notes.
- _____ 33. My children participate in the worship time, standing we when stand to sing, singing, sharing the hymnal even though they cannot read, etc..
- _____ 34. After the service my children will stand quietly while I get a chance to talk with my friends.
- _____ 35. I see parents with well-behaved children in church and wonder how they do it.

The Atmosphere of Our Family

In thinking back over this chapter of the workbook you should have begun to get a "feel" for God's desires in this area as compared to the atmosphere of your family. Is the atmosphere of your home and family the same as that revealed in this section of the workbook? As you discuss this with your spouse, write down your thoughts, then your spouse's thoughts. Then list the similarities and differences of your feelings.

Your Thoughts

Spouse's Thoughts

Similarities Differences

The Joy of Parenting

Reflect on your children. What aspects of parenting is a real joy for you as a result of their actions and behavior? In contrast, what aspects are a strain or drain on you because of their behavior?

Areas of Parenting
Your Children Make a Joy
Drain

Areas of Parenting
Your Children Make a Strain or

My Heart... God's Word

There are certain scriptural terms or principles which, because of our secular culture, we tend to react emotionally against. Each of the following Biblical terms or phrases has been used in this study. Reflect on the term or phrase and your reaction to it. Record your thoughts.

Biblical term used in the context of your children

My emotional reaction to this term

INSTRUCTION

TRAINING

DISCIPLINE

CONTROL

ROD

BEAT WITH A ROD

STRIKE

STROKES THAT WOUND

OBEY

HONOR

Reality Check

Sometimes we do not notice something because we do not think about it or we just get used to it. Anyone who has sold a house or done an exit walk though on a rental property has had this experience. Things are pointed out to you that you had simply ceased to notice. Perhaps you did at one time, but now you are used to them. Answer the following questions on a scale of 0–10, 0 being not at all, and 10 being perfection. Now for the reality check, go to someone who will be very honest with you: a sister or brother, parent or in-law, a friend you can trust, and ask them to rate your children. How do the results compare? Write a short one or two sentence summary.

- _____ 1. Do your children obey you?

- _____ 2. Are your children under control?

- _____ 3. Do your children respect you in public?

- _____ 4. Do others think of your children as obedient and well behaved?

- _____ 5. Do your children show you honor and respect in public?

- _____ 6. Can you have friends over to visit without your children constantly interrupting you.

- _____ 7. Can you meet a friend at a mall, coffee shop or favorite place and enjoy the time together, if your children are with you?

- _____ 8. Do you use the rod to discipline your children?

"From the Mouth of Babes"

The world has taken an incident in the life of Christ and turned it into a doctrine for their own purposes. We find in Matthew 21:15–16 an incident surrounding His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. "But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant, and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" and Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast prepared praise for Thyself?'"

The phrase, "out of the mouth of babes" from the King James Bible, does not refer to an innate unspoiled wisdom found in children, but rather the fulfillment of prophecy concerning Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Yet many have jumped on this passage, and whenever a child says something precocious or true, this verse is often quoted as if God has extended a special grace to children because of their unspoiled state.

What do the following passages have to say of the spiritual condition of children at birth as a result of the sin of Adam?

Rom 5:17 For if by the transgression of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one [Adam]...

Rom 5:18 So then as through one transgression [Adam's sin] there resulted condemnation to all men...

Rom 5:19 For as through the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners...

1 Cor 15:21–22 For since by a man [Adam] came death, by a man [Jesus] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

In secular thought, we are born pure and unadulterated. We are the philosopher Rousseau's clean slate... a pristine creation, which, as time goes by, is marred by the world.

1. Can you think of any ways in which your view of children has been marred by this perspective?

2. How would this perspective effect your approach to raising your children?