

Parental Leadership

Using God-Given Authority

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Sigmund Freud has destroyed more lives than any other person in world history.

Now, I said this to get your attention, and I think that I have. But, what I said may not be far off the mark. I did not say that he killed them, but that he destroyed their lives.

Sigmund Freud, of course, was called the father of modern psychology, and it is because his revolutionary ideas (which were published in the early twentieth century) propelled the analytical study of the way the human mind works.

If it had not been Freud it would have been someone else. Other schools of psychology have cropped up over the last century or so, and most of them are really just as bad, or worse.

As you can tell, I am not a real fan of psychology. The reason for that (and a very simple reason at that) is that virtually all psychologists, and certainly most schools of psychology have rejected God and His word. No more do people think of the Bible as the authority in the workings of the human mind.

Mr. Armstrong would say that in rejecting the Bible they have rejected the only instruction manual for man's mind.

Now, psychology was the final straw, so to speak, on the camel's back of Western trust in God's authority. This had been in process for quite a long time. We could say that as far back as the Enlightenment human reason began to trump traditional and scriptural religious thought in a big way.

Now obviously, men have been functioning by their human reason for all time since the Garden of Eden. It was made into a study in the Enlightenment, or perhaps a bit earlier in the period of the Renaissance and the Reformation when these things were really beginning to get started.

The Enlightenment produced Deism as a religion. Deism, to put it very simply, is the idea that God exists, but is at best only observing mankind. This is the idea of the Watchmaker God who makes the watch, gets it running, and then goes off and does something else.

Therefore, with this idea in mind, with Deism as a force in Western thought, men began to believe that it really did not matter a great deal what God thought. Men would just do what they felt was best according to their own reasoning processes.

Now, it was soon after this—during the Enlightenment, and while Deism was becoming more of a factor, especially in American and British thought—that the great revolutions occurred. I am speaking of the American Revolution, and the French Revolution. Both of these revolutions put life, liberty, and equality as man's highest virtues.

It was not long thereafter, within about fifty years, that Darwin's theory of Evolution removed

God from His post as Creator. It was about the same time that Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto asserted that religion is the opiate of the masses.

These all set the stage for Sigmund Freud, who came about 50 to 70 years after these other two men labeled all religion, "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity." He, too, thought it was psychosis to be a religious person!

I believe that it was in 1880s that Frederick Nietzsche had written that, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed Him."

Once the movers and shakers in Western thought had declared the ultimate authority to be powerless, if not totally non-existent, it was only a matter of time before these ideas infused every branch of knowledge. These intellectuals—these elites of the world—were ensconced in colleges and universities around the world, especially in the western world. They took these ideas and made them part of their education of the next generation.

So, now these godless ideas—these ideas from men like Darwin, Marx, Freud—have been taught in Western public primary schools and universities for at least four generations if not longer, and we are beginning to reap the whirlwind.

Now, one of the places that it has hit most tragically is the family.

"How?" you may ask.

The process is not hard to deduce. It begins with the word "authority." This word has almost disappeared from the intellectual lexicon. If it is used at all, it is used disparagingly. The modern intellectuals of our day, the ones who are in colleges and universities that count, do not believe in authority (except in themselves, of course). They believe that they have authority. However, even that authority does not extend to anyone else. Nor, is there authoritative truth. Everything is relative. That is the post-modern idea that there is no objective truth, there is no authoritative truth. You are able to believe what you would like to believe, and no one can really call you on it, because there is "no ultimate standard" to measure their ideas against.

So, since no one has any real authority any more, we must just all get along, I guess, by some sort of 'cum-bi-yah,' right? It is just a kind of touchie-feelie cooperation, compromise, and tolerance of one another's beliefs and actions, and it comes down to "live and let live" permissiveness. "You go and do what you want to do, and I will do what I want to do, and we will both be happy."

"Well, can't we all just get along?" said Rodney King. He made that phrase into the motto of a whole generation—several generations, a whole society.

So, this idea—this lack of authority, and let us all just get along—infused into the teaching of child psychology, and child development has basically been indoctrinated into the minds of millions of parents, millions of teachers, counselors, and ministers. Psychology is the basis for most Christian psychology, and psychologists themselves.

And so, wherever people turn to for advice, they are more than likely going to get some sort of, "You have no authority, so this is the way that you need to approach your child rearing..." along the lines of self esteem.

Therefore, in short, most of the advice that is given by counselors and teachers, and psychologists, and even ministers, robs the parents of their God-given authority in the family—the God-given authority to rear their children.

That is what I want to let you parents know about today. Along with the responsibilities that you have been given in raising your children, you have authority from God to lead them in the way that they should go. So, use it! That is my SPS (specific purpose statement).

I will repeat it. Along with your responsibilities in raising your children, you have authority from God to lead your children in the way that they should go. Use it!

There is one of David's psalms where he is thinking about how God has worked with him, and with others. He gives us some understanding of the way that God works.

Psalm 103:13-14 As a father pities *his* children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we *are* dust.

"Pities" is the wrong word here. When we think of pitying someone we think of an almost sorrowful way of looking at his or her condition. That is not how God looks at us. The idea of the Hebrew word is more of compassion—God has compassion on us, or tender mercy, or tender care.

Therefore, God, as a Father, has tender care toward us. Or, compassionately works with us. God, we see here, is a parent—a Father. He treats His weak, physical children compassionately—tenderly. He is not out to hurt them. He is not out to destroy them. He loves them. They are His children! This is a basic human emotion to love one's own children. The Bible calls this "natural affection." We have a natural affection toward the produce of our body. God has His own natural affection toward us. He is compassionate toward us. He wants to see us succeed.

Notice here that His children, it says in verse 13, are those who fear Him. Does that mean that we crouch in terror of Him? Perhaps there are times that we should, because we recognize His ultimate authority, especially if we have done something very wrong. However, it does not mean that alone.

It also means that we respect Him; that we reverence Him; that we revere Him; that we understand our place before Him; and so we respect His authority.

Why do those who fear Him do this? I have just said it. It is because they recognize His authority over them—because He is their Creator. It says that He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. How does He know that? He made us. That is the idea. As our Creator, He knows us most intimately, inside and out—our physical bodies, our mental capacities, and our emotions—everything! He knows us. He remembers how frail and weak we are. He treats us tenderly, and compassionately.

In addition, the other reason that His children fear Him is that they recognize Him as their Parent. It works both ways! Just as a parent naturally loves his child, a child naturally loves his

parent.

Look at this in the New Testament where Paul specifically draws this concept out of the Old Testament, and puts it into the New. Here is the idea in a conclusion of a long argument:

II Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore (quoting Isaiah 52) "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." " I will be a Father to you (II Samuel 7), And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

Paul takes this concept of God being a Father to Israel, and he lifts it up, and places it in the New Testament where it obviously belongs. As His called Sons and Daughters, we are His Children! It has gone from a predominately physical concept, to a spiritual concept that God is our Father.

Just as it says in Jeremiah 31:9, that God is a Father to Israel, so God is the Father of His begotten Sons and Daughters in the church.

It is obvious if you do any reading in the Bible in the New Testament, you will know that this Family relationship exists. God is a Father. He says that Jesus Christ is His Son, and our Elder Brother, and He calls us Sons and Daughters of Himself; the church is our Mother. There is a Family relationship here.

Since God is our Father, this establishes two things—a perfect example, and a pattern. What I mean by this is that God is the Perfect Parent. That is established throughout the Bible. I could go to many, many scriptures where He speaks of Himself as a Parent. Obviously, being perfect, that makes Him a Perfect Parent.

The second thing this shows is that He desires that we model our parenting after His example. God is our example in everything. We should base our parenting style on His recorded patterns of behavior toward us, within the limits of physical abilities.

Obviously, we are not God. We do not have the omnipresence, or the omniscience of God. We do not have the almighty power of God. Nevertheless, we are made in His image. We have little inklings of those abilities that God has.

Certainly as a parent you have a great deal more omniscience about your children than they have about themselves. You know what is going on. You see a bigger picture. You can see things in "advance" because you have had experience. You, hopefully, have wisdom, and understanding about cause and effect. You can see things that your child cannot see, and so you must use your developing omniscience to guide and direct that child in the way that he should go.

It is the same thing with your power. The child is not aware of all your powers. To him, your power is awesome! You have abilities that go far beyond his, and you can make him in awe of those abilities. If you use them properly as God uses His awesome powers, we can make some points that need to be made. This is what I mean.

You are in the place of God to your child. We must be using God's attributes, which have been

given to us in our limited abilities to impress upon that child the way that he needs to go.

I will be spending some time in Ephesians 6 and one other chapter of the Bible because we are now starting to get into the nitty-gritty. This is probably the definitive New Testament passage on Christian childrearing:

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

I want you to notice that Paul covers both sides of the equation here. He speaks to children, and he speaks to parents—not one or the other. He gives instruction to both because this is a cooperative effort, and as the child grows he needs to grow in cooperation with his parents in these things.

Obviously, an infant is not going to understand, "Honor your father, and your mother so that you may live long on the earth which the Lord God has given you." That is just a bunch of babble to a baby. However, as the child grows up and begins to learn that commandment, he begins to take on some of the responsibilities of cooperation with that commandment and with the parent.

If both the child and the parent cooperate in this endeavor, Paul is implying what good and Godly successful families will be produced!

Children, it says here, are to obey their parents based on the principle found in the fifth commandment, and then Paul quotes it. The idea of honoring your parents is very similar—it is the physical counterpart to what we saw back there in Psalm 103:13, "the fear of the Lord." Honoring one's parents is very similar to fearing the Lord. Remember we said that to fear the Lord is to honor Him, respect Him, and reverence Him, among other things. Children are to do the very same thing toward their parents. Remember, the parent is in the place of God toward his children.

The child, at some point, has to recognize the position, the rights, and the authority of the parents, and this leads, then, to truly honoring the parent in such things as obedience. If the parent says, "Pick up your clothes," and the child says, "Yes, Dad," or "Yes, Mom," and picks up his clothes, he submits to his parents because he wants to honor them. If the family rule is that you do not stay out past sundown, then in submission to the parent's rule, the child makes sure that he is inside by sundown. He submits to that rule and authority.

Another point is humility before his parents. He will not get proud and think that he is more than his parents are, that he is the boss. Rather, he will be humble and know his position before his parents. In addition, he will start to take responsibility because he respects his parents, and honors them.

He knows, then, that the parents like to keep a clean house, and so he will take the responsibility to make his bed, put his clothes in the hamper, clean his room, etc. He will begin

to take those responsibilities upon himself out of respect and honor for the parent. He will gain understanding because the parent has put down certain rules, and given certain teachings, and if he really honors his parents, and follows through, he will see that those things work.

I could go on and on with various virtues and attributes that are developed through honoring the parents—wisdom, and of course, love. You learn love through honoring your parents because the parent loves you. Later when that child has children of his own, he will know how to properly love his children, as well, because he loves his parents and learned the lesson. As I said, we can go on and on with these good virtues which are learned through proper honoring of the parents.

What this does in the larger aspect of things is that it gives the child the proper perspective of life, and knowledge of the child's place within it. Of course, as Paul points out here as he goes on in verses 2 and 3 of Ephesians 6, there are rewards that come from honoring one's parents, not just the fact that one learns all these good virtues (which is a great reward). He says here that two things come from this scope of the commandment: that it will be well with you, and that you will live long.

The first one has to do with success. Things are going to go well. You are going to be outfitted for all those good things to happen to you. You will be able to take advantage of opportunities. You will deal well with your fellow man. Your business is going to be run properly because you know all the virtues that will make it work right.

It will go well with you. He promises long life as well. Therefore, this is the child's side of it. If he learns to honor his father and mother in obedience to the commandment, things are going to go well. That one side is taken care of.

Then, Paul turns his eye on the fathers. This includes the mothers as well. He specifically addresses fathers because they are the most likely to do what he says NOT to do; but mothers do it too. It is probably better to say, "parents."

Ephesians 6:4 And you, fathers [parents], do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

He cautions them, "do not provoke your children to wrath...." That is kind of curious to me. Why did he not just say, "do not make them mad or angry?" This becomes more understandable when we see it in its context, which we just read, seeing it in terms of the children. The apostle has just told the children that parents hold all the cards in their relationship. They are the ones to be honored, submitted to, and obeyed. They are the ones who have all the rewards to give out while a child is young. In addition, it says in verse 1 that this is right; this is the way that God has established things. The parents are like Him.

In our relationship with God, who holds all the cards? God does! It is the same thing with us parents in the parent/child relationship. We should also remember (if we want to see this in context) that in the Jewish, Greek, and Roman societies of the times, the child had no rights whatsoever. Among Romans, if the father did not want to recognize a child he simply ignored it,

and left such a child to die.

Even if they did recognize the child, it was the practice among most men of the time to severely beat their children in order to bring them up the way that they wanted them to go. It was just a part of the childrearing routine.

The father, as Paul addresses this, had ultimate authority over his child. Paul is saying in his teaching that this severity needs to be avoided. Yes, parents still have authority, but it does not go quite that far. We will see this later in something else. Paul wants to avoid harsh treatment by what he is saying here, by not provoking the children to wrath. Nevertheless, it does go a great deal farther than, "do not make them angry."

This is talking about negative emotions that one could drive a child to through the wrong kind of childrearing. So, it is not just anger that a child produces when a parent is doing it wrong, but sometimes other things happen, like a child's spirit gets broken to the point that he takes anything, and has no "get up and go" anymore.

So, we could say, "fathers, do not break your child's spirit."

Another one is, "do not humiliate your child." They should be humble, but humiliation is different.

"Do not terrorize your child." Terror is different from just being mean. It produces a different reaction. One way will make a child respond in anger, another way will make them so fearful that they are in abject terror of their parents.

You should not do either.

We can also say, "do not cause your child to resent you," or, "do not confuse your child," or, "do not belittle your child."

What I am saying is that Paul is using "do not provoke your children to wrath," to get the parents to think about the ultimate outcome of their parenting style. If you see some of these reactions from your children, then you can bet that your parenting style has gone off the track.

Now, there may be times when some of these reactions are just rebellion. However, you have to be aware of when it has crossed the line into a real attitude and long lasting emotional state.

Generally, Paul is telling parents to realize what their parenting methods are ultimately producing.

God says in Malachi 2:15 that He seeks Godly offspring. That is the standard. He tells fathers and mothers that they need to stay together. He hates divorce because it causes problems within the family. He wants Godly offspring. We can apply this to other areas of the parent/child relationship. Nevertheless, if we are not doing things properly we are not going to produce the result that God wants—Godly offspring. This has got to always be the goal.

We human parents must have this as a goal also. It must be our goal to produce Godly offspring, to work to produce well-adjusted children—children who God can later call and work with when the time is right. That is the goal. We want to make things as easy as possible for God when the time comes for Him to call our children. They should already be shaped and

molded to the point they are going to grasp the truth when God opens their minds to it in a greater way. They will grasp it because they have already had the discipline and the instruction at home. It is our goal to produce a well-adjusted person whom God would be delighted to call into His Family. We cannot do more than that, because we do not do the calling, God does.

Paul says Ephesians 6: 4 to raise them, or bring them up, in the training and admonition of the Lord.

This training ("nurture" in the Old King James) is the Greek word, "paideia." It means training (a good translation of the word). It also means discipline, correction, and most broadly the instruction of children. It is a broad term. It could be said to be the Greek term for childrearing or parenting.

What it suggests is more than just childrearing in general. It suggests, according to Paul's way of putting it, an organized, developed, purposeful program for raising a child.

Training covers things like the child's behavior. The child has to be trained so that he behaves properly in any kind of situation. It means things like deportment—how they carry themselves. It includes such things as manners, and courtesies. Children should be pleasant, and should say all the nice things they should say like "Please," and "Thank you," and "Excuse me," and "I am sorry," and that sort of thing—and mean them, too.

It also includes controlling emotions, and having proper attitudes. Those things can be trained. If you think your child was dropped off by the stork and preset in everything, then you have got another think coming. All these things I have just mentioned are trainable—behavior, deportment, manners, courtesies, emotions and attitudes. You can shape their personalities. Personality is not set in stone. It becomes more set as the years go on, and nothing is done. It eventually turns into character, good or bad.

All of these things can be trained if one is organized, purposeful, and has a developed plan for getting the right results.

Paul goes on to talk about admonition. This is the Greek word, "nouthesia." This means the instruction of the mind, or more specifically it means, training through words. It means teaching—what you teach your child. It implies proper Godly education. Paul may also be emphasizing religious education here. He does say, "the training and admonition of the Lord." That prepositional phrase, "of the Lord," can also apply to training. It could mean the training of the Lord, as well as the admonition of the Lord. Either way, God is involved.

We can sum this up by saying that all of our methods we use, both in training our child's behavior, as well as educating his mind, should be based on and guided by God's word—what God has revealed as proper to produce well adjusted children.

Now, if you notice, Paul did not mention the word at all, but the overall concept that he is teaching in these four verses is parental leadership.

This is what I have called my sermon today, "Parental Leadership."

We do not have any trouble saying that an officer in a corporation, or a teacher in a school, or an office holder in your city government, or a policeman out on the street has authority. We

have no problem with that. These people have very serious positions in our society, and we expect them to do certain things to produce certain results.

Now, my question is: Why in this society do we have so much trouble calling parents leaders? Why do we have so much trouble giving them authority to lead their children? Why do we have so much trouble in the church when we know that God Himself has given the authority to parents for the purposes of producing Godly seed?

I think that a lot of us have been indoctrinated in this world's way of thinking, and we have abrogated our leadership positions in our family.

I want to show you how far God has in the past given authority to parents. Probably some of you are already with me in saying Deuteronomy 21, verses 18 through 21. Notice how far this goes:

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and *who*, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, "then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. " And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' "Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

So, what were the God-given limits of a parent's authority under the Old Covenant? Absolute! They had the power of life and death. Of course, this was an extreme case, one whom they worked with, and what we would have called in times past, a "bad seed." This one is incorrigible. God says to get that wicked person out of society.

But, who had the power? It was the parents. They were the ones to decide whether this one is incorrigible or not.

Now our authority under the New Covenant does not extend this far. As far as I can tell, as far as the Bible is concerned, no Israelite parents are recorded to have used this law. I think the reason is that it goes against human natural affection. It goes against a mother's love to have her child stoned to death no matter how bad he is. And a father's love probably approaches that. There are some cases, perhaps, when parents have given up on their children, but it is very rare.

This also makes me think; perhaps God included this law in His word not so it would be necessarily used, but that the authority of parents over their children should never be questioned or eliminated by law or practice.

Do you understand what I mean?

He probably calculated that this law would be used very little. That it would be so severe and extreme that it would make sure that the parent's authority in society was unquestioned over

their children.

Just so we are clear, I am not advocating this law be re-instituted in the church of God. However, we need to realize how much authority God has invested in parents. God does not give stupid laws. He may have exaggerated this law just to drive the point home that parents have huge amounts of authority over their children.

If this were not the case, then we could come back to God and say, "You do not have authority over me!"

Remember, the parent is in the place of God. What applies to God in His authority, applies in our physical authority to parents. He is teaching us something. He is showing how far parents need to go to make their children behave, and become well-adjusted members of society.

Now, of course, I do not want you to think that a parent should use his authority in an abusive way. That is not it at all. God does not use his authority in an abusive way. He uses His authority in love to bring a desired result. That result is to bring you into His Family for all time. Parents should have a similar, loving purpose for the use of their authority. As I mentioned before, it is to bring well-adjusted children into adulthood so that when God calls them, they will be able, willing, and desirous to respond.

We must not abuse that authority. Remember Paul said not to use it so much that you provoke your children into some sort of extreme emotion. There is a happy medium between permissiveness and abuse. We have got to find that. Permissiveness is no authority at all. Abuse is overuse of authority. We have got to find that place in the middle, which works, bringing our children to the desired result.

Hebrews 12: 5-11 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him [Proverbs 3: 11-12]; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Paul uses the illustration of human fathers disciplining their children to show that God works with His members of the church in the same way, and for a far greater purpose.

Now, I want to turn it back around to show how God works with His church in order for us to understand how we should parent our children. Paul turned in one way, I am turning it back the other.

Do you think that God, when one of His children does something wrong, is afraid to use His authority? Do you think that God sits upon His throne on the edge of His seat as He peers down upon sinning church member "A," and says, "If I correct that poor sinner, he might get upset with me!"?

I do not think so.

Do you think He says, "I had better not correct that sinner, because she might cry!"? Or, "He might not like me any more!" Or, "She might suffer lasting psychoses!"?

Do you think God thinks in this fashion? I do not. I think God says, "That sinner needs correction. I am going to apply what is necessary."

God disciplines in wisdom and love—not in fear or anxiety by any means. God is not afraid to use His authority as Our Father.

I want to concentrate on Hebrews 12: 6 for a moment.

He says, quoting from the Father, "for whom the LORD loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." You see, the way God does this is not out of fear. He does not worry that something is going to go wrong. He corrects or disciplines, or chastens because He loves us. And that gives us the right attitude in disciplining our own children.

Chastening, or disciplining, or training is to be done because one loves his child, not in spite of our love for that child. Do you understand the difference? We chasten them because we love them, and want to bring out a certain result. We do not worry or fear that the child is not going to love us back if we should happen to chasten him more severely than he thinks he ought to be chastened. Notice what the scripture says:

Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly (or consistently, or when necessary.)

This does not mean that we are always behind them with a switch. However, when it is needed we give proper discipline.

Notice that I have not said that bad "s" word that people are so afraid of these days—"spanking." "Ooh! Bad! Terrible! He who spans, goes to hell," or something like this.

This is not true. God just talked about sparing the rod, or switch, or whatever comes to hand that is not going to permanently scar or maim the child. Usually it is a paddle of some sort, sometimes the hand. It is an appropriate punishment. It has its place. It can also be overdone.

There are many other ways to discipline child without spanking. But a parent needs to know when it is appropriate, and when it is not; how much, or how little to use; when does the child get the point, or not. A parent has to be sensitive to these things.

Remember, Paul said not to provoke that child over the use of a switch or paddle. Whatever you would use is going to provoke that child to a certain degree, but you do not want to provoke him to one of those terrible, negative, lasting, scarring emotions. That is something a parent needs to come to understand. He needs to know his child, and know what disciplines works for that child, apply them consistently, and to the correct extent.

It might take a bit of experimentation, but the overriding purpose for disciplining that child is love. You are trying to produce a Godly result.

I am not talking about beating your child. I am talking about discipline, correction. It need not be harsh, but it does need to be appropriate.

Proper discipline runs the gamut from a cautionary look—the look. Some parents have established their authority so they never have to lift a finger; an eyebrow will do. That is the point where you want to be—where you do not have to raise your voice, where you do not have to physically spank them, where you do not have to send them to their room, all you have to do is give them the look. They know that you either approve, or disapprove. Once he gets to that point, a child disciplines himself, or should. You only need to come up and help clean up the messes when they stray beyond that—when they test the boundaries.

As I said, it runs the gamut from a cautionary look, to verbal instruction: "Billy, you should not be doing that," to yelling at them, "Hey! Stop that! You are going to hurt yourself!" to corporal punishment of some form or another.

You have a great wide spectrum of options in discipline. To use just one is very limiting. I know because I have four children. If I would spank one of them, it would do absolutely no good. Now if I spanked another one, it would break the spirit, almost. I am giving you the extremes here. You have to know what works and what does not. Some kids have very tough butts. They do not take spankings well. It does not get through that this is discipline. But take away that kid's favorite toy for a while, and he responds better. That is something you have got to come to understand yourself. What works for your child? Find out.

You are trying to produce a Godly result.

Come to understand your child, know your child, to know what works, and make the best of use of that knowledge. Of course, you are doing all of this in love because you are trying to produce that Godly result.

You are trying to bring the child to emotional and behavioral maturity. That can be done only if you know your child, and you apply the proper childrearing or discipline to bring the result to fruition.

Child training is not something that you do willy-nilly. It is not something where you have a jar full of options, and just reach in and take one out, and say, "Today, if he is bad, then I'll take away his dessert tonight." It is not like this. It is something that parents really need to think through; think about their children; think about their methods; think about what works; and of course, maybe most importantly, think about what they are trying to accomplish. If you know the goal, it is much easier to fashion a method to reach it. A child training method should be purposeful, with forethought, and realistic intentions.

It also says in Hebrews 6, "God scourges every son whom He receives." This word "receives" means, "that He accepts, or acknowledges, or takes into possession, or into His care." In God's case, it means one who He has called. He has received that person into His Family. It is a person who He has a parent/child relationship with.

This means that if we really want to have a good and proper relationship with our children, we have to discipline them. Because, God has called us to have a relationship with Him, we are training our children to have relationships with them. We are not going to have a perfect adult/adult relationship with that child until he matures. It is our job to bring our child to the point that we can have a fine relationship with them when they are adults.

To put this negatively, if we do not discipline our children properly, they will fly the coop as soon as they can, and will want little or nothing to do with us. Where is the relationship then? At the very least, if we do not train up our children, our adult/adult relationship with them once they are grown up will be strained at the very least.

If you want proof of this, just put down I Kings 1: 5-7 where it says that David never rebuked his son Adonijah. The implication is that he did not do this with any of his children, and what happened? Most of them rebelled against him at one point or another, especially Absalom, and Adonijah. Several of the others went with them in their rebellion. Look at what happened with Amnon and Tamar. These children were not well adjusted. They had horrible relationships with their father.

If you want your children to have a good relationship with you, discipline them. Bring them up in the training and the admonition of the Lord.

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

I just wanted to read that again because this means is that if we fail to discipline our children, we for all intents and purposes disown them. That is what this verse says. In the culture of the day, if a man had illegitimate child, he usually left him to his own devices. He would not want to have anything to do with the child.

If you want to do the same thing with your child, then do not discipline. You will make him into an illegitimate child by default. He had no parent.

In a sense, if we do that, we are treating them dishonorably. Like an illegitimate child in most of history has been considered, and we are casting them adrift without any support.

Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

Paul is telling us here is that proper discipline automatically produces respect in the child for the parent.

Now if you think disciplining the child, smacking his little hiney, or slapping his hands, or denying him something that he wants, or taking away a toy, or putting him in his room, or whatever it is that you decide to do, is going to make him hate you, you are wrong! It is going to make him respect you. That is what the verse says. We have had our human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. It is a given.

Discipline, in contradiction to what is taught by child psychologists now, actually produces respect, and self-esteem in the child. That is what the Bible says. They know their place, and over time they come to understand that the parent is right, and they are happier for it.

It is just something in the makeup of a child to follow, respect, and please his parents. However, it must be brought out because the child has other stronger inherent tendencies, particularly a nature that tends toward sins and evils because of Satan's influence, and the pulls of his own fleshly desires. Because of this, babies and toddlers are little narcissists. Have you ever thought of it that way? Think about it. For about two years until they are weaned and potty trained, a mother (and the father too sometimes) are virtual slaves to the little "monster." The kid is fed, cleaned up, diapered, clothed, entertained, cuddled, transported, comforted, and at the end of the day put to sleep. By this time, the mother is dragging. A mother's whole day is devoted to fulfilling the needs of this cute little "terrorist."

In most families, by the time the child reaches the "terrible twos" (as they are sometimes called) he is a full-blown narcissist. "Everybody exists in order to please me."

What started as, in John Roseman's term (a child psychologist who actually has a few things right, I think), what he calls, "a flickering flame of narcissism has now become a raging inferno."

Our job as parents must be to tamp back that firestorm into a little spark, or maybe a mild glow because as a human being, this little spark or glow never goes away. Deep down inside of us all, we all think that everyone exists for our pleasure. It takes character to tamp that down.

Now, if it reaches the point that a child has this raging inferno of narcissism in him, the parent must begin to establish his leadership authority immediately. It is far better to begin this earlier than the "terrible twos." Actually, an infant is capable of recognizing a parent's authority at a very young age. The infant may not realize it, but he responds to it.

If a child is left undisciplined during his first two years, he will become an absolute terror and will need to be jerked back hard to overcome his narcissism. The parent is going to have to take a firm stance and not give in one inch, not any bit whatsoever.

May I give you one suggestion? I will give you only one suggestion today. I purposely left it just to this one because it is easy to remember, and it works.

Command your children!

That is it. Command your children. When you give them an order to do something, tell them to do it. You can be nice, using "Please," even. You do not have to be a cruel ogre. You do not have to be a monster in return.

But do tell them. Do not ask. Do not cajole. Do not bargain, or wheedle, or whine, or complain, or in any other way undermine your own authority. Tell them to go and do whatever. Tell them

you want it done by such and such a time. Maybe, "Go, now, and clean up your room." Make your command clear, but command nonetheless.

Tell him plainly and simply whatever it is, and expect him to do it; hop to it. If he does not do this, then punish appropriately, and tell him again. Repeat this process as long as it takes, raising the level of punishment if need be until he does what you have commanded him to do.

The parent should never, ever compromise. He should never give in when he has issued a command.

I will tell you what. If you follow through with this, you will establish your parental authority fairly quickly. It is very simple, but effective. A child is very smart. He knows when he can get away with something. He knows when you do not mean it. He knows when you are being hypocritical. He knows when you are just about at the end of your rope. He will use all that information to his advantage.

You have to establish your authority by saying whatever it is in a plain command. And then back it up as needed. Do not ever give in. If the parent gives in, he has given up his authority to the child. The child is now in control. "Oh, he did not mean that! Ha, ha, ha! I will get you next time, too!"

A child is not afraid to take authority. He is less afraid to take authority than the parent is. In fact, a child naturally wants the authority and will do whatever he can to get it. That is why parents must be strong. They cannot be afraid. They cannot be afraid of using their authority thinking it is going to harm their child. That is nonsense. Children are resilient. They may cry and moan, but you follow through, and eventually they will be far happier for having loving authoritative parents.

You might want to write down Proverbs 23: 13-14 (Do not withhold correction from a child, For *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, And deliver his soul from hell.), and Proverbs 19: 18—I will read that one from the Old King James Version:

Proverbs 19:18 (KJV) Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Meaning, give the discipline, do not worry if the child cries, you are not going to kill him. That child will come around if you discipline properly. If you discipline early you will not need to discipline as much later. Get them early. Get them before they are two years old. Establish your authority, and as they grow they will test it, but hold the boundary firm, give clear commands, and that should re-establish things quickly.

Back to Hebrews 12: 11, God says discipline is not easy. And, we should realize this too. If we have allowed our authority to slip, it is going to be difficult to get it back at first, but we need to be clear, and firm, and we need to get control once again.

Proper discipline done correctly produces good fruit (verse 11), it produces peace in the family, and cooperation, and right behavior. It has to be done if we want our children to be well behaved, mature, and prepared for adulthood.

So, do not allow yourself to lose your grip on your family. You have been given the authority to lead it in a proper way.

I want to end in chapter 5 of Hebrews:

Hebrews 5:5, 7-8 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, *but it* was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." ...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

If the Father, the Great God Almighty was willing to make His Son, Jesus Christ suffer to teach Him obedience, why are we modern Christian parents afraid to make our children bear a bit of discipline to teach them proper behavior.

Use your God given authority to lead your children in the way that they should go.