

Child Discipline



What the Bible Teaches

Chris Losey

Thanks for your interest in

Child Discipline
- What the Bible Teaches -

It is my hope that the
information in this booklet
will give you a clearer
understanding of what the Bible
teaches about child discipline.

Proverbs 29:17

*"Correct your son,
and he will give you comfort,
he will also delight your soul."*

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for five years as an infantry officer in the Army, he resigned his commission and returned to school receiving his Master of Divinity degree from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon in 1982. During that time he also served in the Army Reserve. After graduation from Western, Chris returned to the active duty military where he served as an Air Force Chaplain retiring in 1994. For the next twenty years he served as senior pastor of Valley Baptist Church in San Rafael, California, retiring a second time in 2014 due to Parkinson's Disease. In 2017 Chris had successful Deep Stimulatlion Brain surgery for Parkinson's and is now an advocate for the same. Chris and his wife Sharon have been married for 43 years and are enjoying life in Elk Grove, California where they both serve as volunteers in their local church. They have two children and five grandchildren. Chris and Sharon enjoy walking, golf, and living close to family. Chris also has a website called "Building Godly Families". The web address is www.chrislosey.com.

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*Dedicated to parents who
want to know what the Bible
teaches about child discipline.*

CHILD DISCIPLINE

- What the Bible Teaches -

The word discipline conjures up different pictures in people's minds. Some people picture the preparation needed for an athletic event – aerobic workouts, strength training and a strict diet. Others think of military discipline – learning to follow orders, wearing a uniform, marching, and rendering proper military courtesies. Still others picture a person living a self-disciplined life by getting up early, and working hard with minimal supervision. But there is another kind of discipline – child discipline. This type of discipline refers to how parents respond when their children need correction. Child discipline is the focus of this booklet and will be explored from a biblical viewpoint.



You may be thinking, "I have children and I already know all I need to know about discipline." Perhaps this message will be good reinforcement. If you don't have children you may be thinking, "Why should I listen?" Perhaps you will have children later. If your children are grown and gone or almost gone, perhaps you can share this material with them as they raise their children. If you are a child, this message will help you understand how your parents should discipline you. The point is, everyone can benefit.

The word discipline used in the Old Testament means to *chasten*, *admonish*, or *correct*. The New Testament word has the same meaning along with the idea of training. Both words imply that there is a proper standard of behavior that needs to be followed. When the standard is broken, discipline is given to the erring person to get him or her back on track.

Child discipline may thus be defined as *the action taken to correct the behavior of a child, when that behavior does not measure up to the proper standard.*

As child discipline is explored, the following sub-areas will be addressed.

The Purposes of Discipline
The Principles of Discipline
The Procedure for Discipline

The Purposes of Discipline

To understand the purposes of child discipline, we need to understand a few things about children. First, children are a gift from God. They are precious souls who have been placed in their parent's care for about a fourth of their lives. Part of a parent's job is to prepare them for release into the big world. When they finally leave the nest, parents want them to be ready.

It is not primarily the school's or the church's responsibility to teach moral and ethical values to children. It's the parents' responsibility. Schools can teach reading, writing and arithmetic, and even encourage children morally, but moral and ethical training must come first and foremost from the home.

I am convinced that a child's success in life is in direct proportion to his or her ability to obey God and follow His principles. When I talk about success, I am not talking about financial success, as important as that is, but success in the eyes of God. This success will in large part come from the values that have been instilled at home. For example, if a child grows up learning that it is alright to lie in certain circumstances, he will likely lie whenever it is to his benefit. If he lies, he will limit God's ability to use him. He may get ahead in business, but even there, his lying will eventually catch up with him.

Here are some specific purposes of discipline.

1. To help children glorify God

Isaiah 43:7 states, "Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made." This verse clearly teaches that God made people to glorify Him. In other words, people were made to honor God with their lives.

Honoring God through thoughts, words, and actions starts when a person is young. Discipline is a tool to help children honor God. If they fall short of God's standards, it is their parents' responsibility to discipline them. Proverbs 19:27 states, "Cease listening, my son, to discipline, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." As our heavenly parent, God disciplines us to help us live up to His standards. As earthly parents we discipline our children to bring them back in line with proper standards. The closer they follow those standards, the happier and more blessed they will be.

2. To help children obey and honor parents

Exodus chapter twenty contains the Ten Commandments. The fifth commandment is the first commandment with a promise. It reads, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you." Part of honoring is obeying. If parents set standards and their children fail to abide by those standards, discipline will get their children get back on track. A child's

obedience to his parents is a good indicator of how he will obey God. If parents want their children to obey God, they need to realize that it must start by helping their children learning obedience at home.



3. To prove a parent's love

Proverbs 13:24 states, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently." This Scripture clearly teaches that parents who love their children, discipline them. Those who do not discipline them, actually hate them. These words are hard but true. This verse is perhaps where we got the saying, "This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you." Because we love our children there is a tension. On the one hand we don't want to inflict pain on them, but on the other hand the pain helps them

learn obedience. We must not hold back discipline that is due.

Sparing the rod means to hold back discipline that should be given. If a child does not get what is coming to him, he loses respect for the people (perhaps parents) who fail to keep him accountable for his actions.

When a child became unruly at a restaurant, his father took him outside for a spanking in the parking lot. One lady customer observed what was happening and went outside to reprimand the man for laying a hand on his son. After she left, the boy stopped crying and said to his dad, "What was her problem?" He obviously knew that he deserved a spanking!

4. To keep a child from death

Proverbs 19:18 states, "Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death." This verse insinuates that those who do not discipline their children actually desire their death. How can this be?

There are at least two ways. First, if a small child does not learn to obey, there may come a time when his mother is on one side of the street and tells him not to cross. If he disobeys and crosses anyway, he may be killed by an oncoming car. Second, if a child grows up without discipline he may run with the wrong crowd leading to his death.

5. To remove foolishness from a child's heart

Proverbs 22:15 states, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him." There is no doubt that foolishness is bound up in the heart of children causing them to do some pretty foolish things. Discipline helps remove foolishness by making the consequence painful enough that a child doesn't want to repeat it.

When I was a child I got a BB gun at a fairly young age. We lived in the country and my parents apparently believed that other people and their possessions were not in danger from my new rifle. One day my friend and I walked down the driveway to a small cabin that had multiple windows in an adjacent garage. I never saw anyone there and thought the place was abandoned. My friend and I proceeded to shoot out all the windows in the garage. Two days later the owner drove up to our house and questioned my dad about whether or not his boys had BB guns. My dad questioned me. I got many spankings as a boy, but I did not get one then. My friend was not so fortunate. The spanking he received from his father scared me enough to make me vow never to do something that foolish again.

6. To give wisdom to a child

Proverbs 29:15 states, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother." The Bible uses three very important words: knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Although they sometimes are used interchangeably, they might be defined as follows:

- a. **Knowledge** = knowing the facts.
- b. **Understanding** = knowing how the facts apply.

c. **Wisdom** = applying the facts.

Many people have **knowledge** regarding exercise. They know it is important. Many people have **understanding** regarding exercise. They can explain different exercises and how they benefit the body. Unfortunately, fewer people have **wisdom**. In other words, some who have knowledge and understanding never exercise on a regular basis.

A person's success in life will be directly proportional to his ability to reach the **wisdom** level in different areas. It is not enough to know the truth or even to understand how it applies. It is only enough to do it. That is wisdom!

When a child shows a lack of wisdom by falling short of a standard, discipline helps him get back on track. Discipline is directly related to wisdom.

7. To avoid shame

Proverbs 29:15 states, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother." If a child does not receive proper discipline he often brings shame to his family. All too often I have seen bewildered parents apologizing for the uncontrolled behavior of their children. A little discipline would correct the problem.

Picture your family having another family into your home. Their child begins to play with items on the coffee table. The visiting parent tells the child to put the items down. The child completely ignores this directive and the battle ensues. Finally the parent gets up and takes the things from the child. Then the excuses start, "Little Johnny must be having a bad day," or "I think it is time for his nap."

Such incidents cause parents a certain amount of shame. Their children are out of control and they don't know what to do about it. As an unruly child gets older and begins doing more serious things, the shame grows.

1 Samuel 2:12-24 tells the story of Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli the priest. They sinned openly and their father did little to stop them. Eli's lack of discipline undoubtedly had gone on for years. As Hophni and Phinehas' sins increased so did the shame it brought their family. Because of Eli's lack of discipline, God finally stepped in and judged Eli and his sons with death. How sad that Eli hadn't dealt with problem himself! If Eli had disciplined his sons at an early age he might have saved their lives and avoided great shame. His lack of discipline cost all of them dearly.

The consequences of inaction on the part of parents may be much greater than if they had stepped forward and administered appropriate discipline in the first place.

8. To make children a blessing to their families

Proverbs 29:17 states, "Correct your son, and he will give you comfort, he will also delight your soul." When a child receives correction and his behavior is raised back to the proper standard, he becomes a blessing to his family.

Some parents who raise teenagers say the teenage years are a curse. They don't understand what happened to their nice little boy or girl. It seems their children reached a certain age and became little monsters. Other parents report that the teenage years are a delight.



Certainly, every child comes with his or her unique personality and parental challenges, but parents who discipline their children early get to

enjoy the fruit of their labor when the dreaded teen years arrive. This doesn't mean that parenting is easy, but proper discipline applied appropriately to a child can make parenting a whole lot easier! Parents who properly discipline their children are not only helping them, they are helping themselves.

The Principles of Discipline



There are many principles parents need to keep in mind regarding child discipline. Some parents might say, "Child discipline is easy. You just give a disobedient child what's coming to him." Actually, it's not quite that simple. To properly administer discipline, there are a number of important principles to consider.

1. Parents must have standards and communicate them to their children

Many businesses have performance and behavior standards. These standards help employees know what is expected of them. They know when to start work and how to treat fellow employees. For example if work starts at 8:00 AM but some workers choose to arrive at 10:00 AM, they can expect to get reprimanded. In addition, if workers sexually harass fellow co-workers they know they are subject to dismissal.

Standards create expectations and stability in the workplace and help eliminate confusion and inappropriate behavior. Standards are good for all concerned.

The government also sets and communicates behavior standards to its citizens. Speed limits signs are a good example. If citizens drive faster

than the posted speed limit, they know they are subject to fines. Law enforcement officers with the power to write tickets help motivate citizens to obey the law. Could you imagine the confusion and frustration if there were no speed limit signs? How would you like a speeding ticket if no speed limit signs were posted? You would be angry! You would scream, "Unfair!" The same is true for children. They should be informed of the standards expected of them so there are no surprises if discipline comes.

Here are standards that parents need to consider adopting and communicating as part of their family's core values.

Biblical standards

God set foundational standards for His people and communicated them in Exodus chapter twenty. These standards known as "The Ten Commandments" were the bedrock of Jewish society and became the bedrock for western society.

A study of the Ten Commandments makes a great family activity especially for children five and older. The first four commandments relate to our relationship with God. The last six relate to our relationship with others. Here is a summary.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me – Exodus 20:3
2. You shall not make idols or worship them – vv4-6
3. You shall not take God's name in vain – v7
4. You shall remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy – vv8-11
5. You shall honor your father and mother – v12
6. You shall not murder – v13
7. You shall not commit adultery – v14
8. You shall not steal – v15
9. You shall not bear false witness – v 16
10. You shall not covet – v17

Some family standards that can be gleaned from the Ten Commandments are:

- We don't swear in our home or use God's name in any other vain or inappropriate way (3rd Commandment)
- We don't steal (8th Commandment)
- We don't lie to or about one another (9th Commandment)

There are many other possible standards as well.

Behavior and attitude standards

Besides biblical standards there are other general standards a family can choose to follow. Here are a few examples written as you might write them for your family.

- Temper tantrums are unacceptable in our home and will be disciplined.
- No talking back to parents. As parents, we expect you to listen to us, obey us, and honor us. We are not perfect parents, but are trying to do our best. We also understand that you are not perfect children, but we expect you to do your best.
- If we ask you to do something, we expect you to do it with a good attitude. If you don't like what we've asked you to do, we can discuss it after you do it. Sulking or nasty attitudes are not acceptable.
- If you forget to do what we've asked you to do, you may be disciplined. Forgetting may or may not be a good excuse. We'll decide. If you deliberately disobey us, you will be disciplined.
- We will treat each other with respect and kindness. We will do our best to be fair, kind parents. We expect you to be a respectful, obedient child.
- We will love and support one another.



- We will build up one another.
- We will always try to help one another.

Chore Standards

- You are expected to keep a clean room.
- You are expected to do your assigned chores.
- We will all do our part to help around the house.

Here are a few insights regarding standards.

Children must not be disciplined for violating unknown standards

Romans 5:13 indicates that sin is not taken into account when there is no law. God gave us the law as a standard to live by. We all fall short, but without a standard we would not know what God expected. It is critical that parents only enforce standards that children know about. If teens are not given a curfew, it is improper to discipline them for staying out late. On the other hand, if they are required to be home by 10:00 PM and arrive at 11:00 PM, they are subject to parental discipline.

Ephesians 6:4 states, "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Disciplining children for violating standards they know nothing about, provokes children to anger and frustration. Family standards that are clearly understood help eliminate anger and frustration.

Sometimes standards will need to be set on the spot. For example, if a mother stops to get gas for the car, she may tell her child to stay in the car. At this point, the standard has been set. If the child disobeys and gets out of the car, discipline is appropriate.

Children should be included in setting standards when possible

When possible, children should be included in setting standards. Talk to them about standards and the consequences of breaking those standards. How late should they be allowed to come home? How clean should their room be before they leave for school? What should happen if they lie? Ask them what they think is reasonable. You may find that they are

pretty hard on themselves. Other times you may discover that they are too lenient. The key is to get their input ahead of time and use it if it is reasonable. If they buy into a standard, they will be more apt to follow it, and more ready to accept any needed discipline.

Standards should not be so rigid that no one could keep them

Be reasonable. Being strict is OK. Being unreasonable will drive your child away from you emotionally. Don't burn bridges, build them. For example, if a child goes to a party it is unfair for his parents to require him to call home every half hour to check in. I think you get the idea.

Too many rules are not good

Having more rather than fewer rules and standards is not necessarily good. It is not possible or desirable to set standards for every situation. Some specific standards are necessary, but there are a few verses in the Bible that give good overarching standards for how we should treat others. For example Matthew 7:12 states, "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:35-40 is another helpful passage where a lawyer asked Jesus to identify the greatest commandment.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

These passages pretty well sum up God's main standards – Love God and love one another!

When Israel was a young nation, God gave it all sorts of laws. When Jesus came, He gave the Jews an overall summary principle - love. Doing the same with children is not a bad idea. When they are young

parents may have to spell things out quite clearly. As they get older, hopefully parents can give them general principles to guide their behavior.

Set standards appropriate to a child's age and abilities

Standards change with age. As a child gets older and shows more responsibility, the standards will be different. For example, a thirteen year old will likely have an earlier curfew than a sixteen year old. Don't expect too much or too little. Remember, you can't expect a child to have the same wisdom and proficiency it took you twenty, thirty, or forty years to attain.

All of us have seen the small harnesses that some mothers use for their toddlers to keep them from wandering off. Picture a child having an invisible rope attached from his parents to him. As the child gets older the rope should get longer and the child should be given more freedom. The goal is to train a child so well that one day the rope can be severed and the child released. Along the way it may be tough to know whether or not the rope is too loose or too tight. Prayer helps.

If standards require training, train the child

If you expect a toddler to pick up his toys, show him how. If you expect a young child to clean his room, show him how. If you expect your child to mow and edge the yard, show him how.

Now back to principles of discipline.

2. Discipline, don't punish

There is a big difference between discipline and punishment.

Discipline's goal is restoration.

Punishment's goal is retribution.

When God disciplines us, it is for the purpose of getting us back into fellowship with Him. His punishment



is reserved for the unrighteous who eventually will receive His wrath.

From God's perspective, His discipline is always motivated by love even though it may seem painful. His punishment is never directed at His children but at those who reject Him. Hebrews 12:9-13 helps reveal the difference between discipline and punishment.

⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! ¹⁰ Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ¹³ "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Hebrews 12:9-13 may be summarized as follows. We had earthly fathers who disciplined us as they thought best. How much more should we trust God in His discipline. Discipline can be painful but its ultimate purpose is to help us live righteously. Discipline helps people overcome weaknesses and makes their paths straight. It is like putting a damaged joint back in place.

Did you catch the last phrase of verse thirteen, "so that the lame may not be disabled, but healed."? Discipline is like putting a damaged joint back in place. Picture a person with a dislocated joint. No doctor would take a damaged joint and twist it to do further damage. Instead he would pop it back in place to start the healing process.

If you have ever been around a football field, perhaps you have seen a joint out of place. It can be painful popping the joint back in place, but it is for the player's ultimate good. Punishment's goal would be to pull on

the injured joint to cause further damage. Discipline's goal is to put it back in place. Discipline is motivated by love. Punishment is motivated by wrath. Children need to be disciplined not punished.

If a parent is so angry that the foremost thing on his mind is to make the child pay for his wrongdoing, he will probably administer punishment. This may result in abuse. If a parent can look past the wrong, and have restoration as his goal, he will likely administer discipline.

3. Discipline under control

Is it alright for parents to be angry with their children? Yes! Ephesians 4:26,27 states, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."

God does not expect us never to be angry. Perhaps He even wishes that more people had a righteous anger about sin. The parent who thinks he must never be angry with his children is only fooling himself. In disciplining children, anger is not the problem. The problem is allowing anger to get out of control so that a parent sins. Loss of control causes parents to abuse children.

God disciplines us in anger at times. He is not pleased when we sin. The difference between God and us is, His anger is always justified and never out of control. Here is a good rule of thumb for parents. If you find your temper at the boiling point, wait before administering discipline because your discipline may really be punishment.

4. Understand the difference between childishness and willful disobedience

Many parents make the mistake of disciplining their children for childishness rather than for willful disobedience. Childishness is accidentally doing things that are associated with growing as a child. Willful disobedience is doing things that are wrong on purpose or in



a defiant way. Examples of childishness are:

- spilling milk at the table
- running through a mud puddle
- dropping a grocery bag accidentally
- forgetting an occasional homework assignment from school

Children go through clumsy and forgetful stages. Many times they do not intend to make mistakes, they just do. We must be careful not to discipline them during these times unless forgetfulness becomes a habit. A gentle talking to, coupled with training can go a long way.

Examples of willful disobedience are:

- failing to obey a clear directive from a parent
- looking at a parent and saying “No!” when that parent has clearly asked you to do something

Picture Mrs. Smith after a long day at work. She arrives home and in a whirlwind prepares a nice dinner. The family sits down to eat. Soon, little Billy accidentally tips over his glass of milk. It runs everywhere; all over the clean tablecloth, down through the leaves of the table, onto the freshly cleaned carpet. Mrs. Smith has had it. This is the last straw. She grabs Billy by the scruff of the neck, yanks him out of his chair, and sends him to bed with a swat, all the while scolding him for being so clumsy. Mrs. Smith has confused childishness for willful disobedience. What Billy did was childishness. It was an accident. In a stress-filled world, it is easy to confuse childishness with willful disobedience.

If, on the other hand, Billy looked right at his mother and said, "Mom, watch this..." and proceeded to knock over his glass knowing he shouldn't do it, that would be willful disobedience. In this case he would need appropriate discipline; perhaps the rod of correction on the seat of learning!

5. Be sure the discipline fits the offense

As a nation we don't give shoplifters the death penalty. In the secular world we hear the phrase, "Let the punishment fit the crime." In disciplining children our motto should be, "Let the discipline fit the offense." We need to be sure that whatever discipline is administered is appropriate to the offense of the child. Parents should have a good idea ahead of time about what discipline methods they will use. Here are various methods that apply to various age groups. There is no one cure-all. Parents need to be wise about which method they use. The method will depend on the child, the situation, and the offense.

For younger children:

- "time outs"
- a swat on the hand
- going to bed early
- loss of privileges... missing a friend's birthday party
- going without dessert
- applying the trapezius squeeze (the trapezius muscle is the muscle between a person's neck and shoulders. When it is squeezed it creates a sharp pain without doing any physical damage. It certainly gets a small child's attention.
- taking away what is precious... a toy, watching TV...
- extra chores

For older children:

- loss of privileges
- taking away what is precious... an i-pod, the keys to the car, TV
- grounding/restriction
- writing sentences or a paper about the offense regarding how to make better choices
- no friends over
- limiting school activities... take away sports participation
- a monetary fine
- extra work around the house



Another option for discipline addressed repeatedly in the Bible is spanking. Some parents over react when spanking is mentioned saying it is harsh or cruel. Perhaps they were beaten as children. Their bad memories influenced them to take a vow never to spank their children. Such a vow goes directly against Scripture. If God's Word says that spanking is an option parents may use, it must not be dismissed. Human psychology, no matter how well meaning, cannot overrule God's Word.

By the same token, there is no place in the Christian home for child abuse. Excessive or improper spanking is wrong. In addition, it is inappropriate and even dangerous to spank an infant (a baby). Infants cry because they are hungry or wet, not because they are willfully disobedient.

If needed, spanking should start sometime after a child is two and when the child is willfully disobedient. Parents will usually know when the timing is right. Children understand pain, and that's what a proper spanking delivers.

One reason why spanking is appropriate for younger children involves their difficulty in grasping abstract concepts. This understanding comes to fruition as they get older. For example, a parent may try to reason with a four year old about why the child shouldn't do certain things, but the child will likely not fully understand all of his parent's insights. But the child certainly will understand a swat and associate it with his inappropriate behavior. A proper spanking communicates volumes to a child and can readily change bad behavior when reasoning may not.

If a child is spanked for willful disobedience when he is young, spankings will hopefully become more infrequent as he grows older.

Normally by age twelve spankings should cease and other forms of discipline used.

If you choose to spank your children there are some important things to keep in mind. Only spank on the bottom. God gave bottoms for more than sitting! Next, use a rod, rather than your hand or a belt. If you use your hand, the next time you reach out to give your child a loving squeeze, he may flinch. Using a belt is dangerous and can cause physical harm. Instead, carry a rod in your purse and the glove compartment of your car. A rod should be the appropriate size for a child. It should be somewhat flexible so that it will sting but not do permanent damage. But please remember, any implement including a switch can be excessive if it is used when a parent's anger is out of control. To ensure that a spanking does not become a beating, know ahead of time how many swats you intend to give. Perhaps have an understanding with your child regarding the number of swats for certain infractions. For example, "If you are willfully disobedient, lie or steal you will receive four swats."

Some parents say that spankings do not work. Perhaps it is because they do not make them hurt. When my mom spanked us as kids it wasn't a big deal. We would even fake like it hurt. Dad's spankings were a different story. When we got a spanking from him, it left a lasting impression that made us think, "We never want to do that again!"

Spankings are not a cure-all, but they are certainly in order when a child is willfully disobedient.

Consider using progressive discipline. Depending on the offense, give a warning for a first offense. Take more stringent action on a second offense.

I know of one parent whose child refused to clean his room. He received warnings, grounding and finally removal from his Little League team. He finally got the message. Since he was being willfully disobedient, the parents might have solved the problem early with a spanking.

Someone said, “When dealing with children you need to know which end to pat. You pat them up high to praise and encourage them. You pat them a little lower when they need correction.”

6. Let the discipline fit the person

Each child is different. Some children are compliant while others are not. Those parents who have compliant children don't understand what parents of strong-willed children go through. Experiment to find out what discipline works for each of your children. Some children will rarely need a spanking.

7. Discipline in private but have no sacred ground

Discipline is humiliating, especially for the one being disciplined. If possible do it in private. By the same token, do not allow your child to have any sacred ground like the car, a restaurant or the mall.

My brother told me a story about traveling with some friends who had small children. In the car the children got out of hand. Apparently the children thought their parents were preoccupied with driving and would do nothing to correct them. After a clear warning, the father pulled off the side of the road and gave both children a spanking. The result was instantaneous; the fighting and bickering stopped for the rest of the trip.



8. Be sure that discipline and acts of love are balanced

If you don't build up your child and praise him often, he will look at you as a policeman rather than a loving parent. Praise your child for doing things right! Make a goal of praising him several times a day. Keep “love and discipline” in balance. To do this a parent has to show much more love than discipline. In business it is said that for every corrective word said to employee, it takes numerous

pats on the back to convince him that he is appreciated. In the home it takes many affirmations of love to counterbalance one episode of discipline.

9. Be sure discipline is enforced

To help parents follow through on discipline, they may need to write the discipline on a piece a paper and put it on the kitchen cabinet. For example “Susie may not have dessert for two days.” If discipline is not enforced, it becomes meaningless to children. If discipline is enforced, children realize that mom and dad mean business. Don't tell your children that they will receive a certain consequence unless you plan to follow through. Don't say, “You're going to be grounded for a month,” if you don't plan to make it stick.

10. Avoid common errors that parents can make

Avoid attacking a child's worth. Never say or imply that a child is unwanted, unnecessary, ugly, dumb, a burden, an embarrassment or a mistake. What they did may be foolish, but do not call them fools or you may see a self-fulfilling prophecy – if you tell a child he is a dummy, he may start acting like one.

Avoid saying "No" too often when a child asks to do things. Too many "No's" make children angry, especially if what they ask for is no big deal. Avoid comparing siblings. Don't say things like, “Why can't you be like your brother?” This is a sure way to alienate siblings and to make them dislike you.

The Proper Procedure for Discipline

Looking at the various biblical principles regarding discipline, it seems logical and appropriate to divide child discipline into five steps. Each step is critical to the overall process:

- **Control**
- **Consider**
- **Counsel**
- **Chastise**
- **Comfort**



1. Control - Be sure you are in control of your emotions

The first step in child discipline is not, “Get a big stick.” If you are not in control of your emotions your actions may be abusive. Here are some ways to be sure that you get and stay in control:

- count to 10 and take a few slow deep breaths
- send a child to his room until you calm down
- pray and ask for wisdom, understanding, and control

When some parents get angry, they lash out and try to hit their children. Some slap, shove, or grab. These are wrong! Before doing anything, a parent needs to be in control. Your first reaction will often be the wrong one. GET IN CONTROL!

2. Consider - Ask yourself some important questions

In this step, there are a few important questions parents must ask themselves. First, "Is what my child did, childishness or willful disobedience?" Second, if it was willful disobedience, "What will be the discipline?" Third, if it is to be a spanking, “How many swats should my child receive?” Remember, let the discipline fit the offense.

If you are really angry and yet determine that your child's actions were simply childishness, you must not take disciplinary action. Don't spank him to make yourself feel better. Don't ground him because you are having a bad day. Don't take his bike away because someone did something mean to you at work. Only take disciplinary action if you determine that your child was willfully disobedient.

If you determine that your child was willfully disobedient, or if you need to gather more facts, move to step three.

3. Counsel - Talk with your child

There are two main purposes for talking with your child. First, to gather more facts if necessary in order to decide whether your child was childish or willfully disobedient. Second, to tell your child what standard he violated. You do not want the child to think he is getting disciplined because he made you angry.

4. Chastise - Administer the discipline

This is where discipline is administered. Tell your child exactly what the discipline will be. If he is grounded, tell him. At this point the child may beg and plead for mercy but don't let this sway your good judgment if discipline is appropriate.

Be sure to follow through and enforce the grounding. If the discipline is going to be a spanking, remember to position your child for the spanking. Perhaps have him hold onto the bed, dresser, or desk. Perhaps put him over your knee. Do not spank fingers. Only administer the appropriate number of swats.

5. Console - Comfort the afflicted

If chastising means “afflicting the comfortable,” consoling means “comforting the afflicted.” Perhaps wait a minute or two before consoling your child. If your child received a spanking, let him cry a bit and then come back and console him. Assure your child you took no pleasure in disciplining him and that you don't desire to do it again. If appropriate, hold or hug your child. Some parents make the mistake of consoling their child too soon. Children need some time to think about what has just happened to them before they are consoled.

If you spank your child and his cry is defiant, there is a good possibility that he is not repentant. If he rejects your comfort, even after being given time to calm down and to think about it, this may be a sign that he still

has a rebellious spirit. In discipline it is important to deal with rebellion. Parents need to break a child's **will** without breaking his **spirit**. Rebellion is a sign that the will has not been broken. If a child never says he is sorry for what he did, or if there is no sincere remorse, his **will** probably has not been broken. If he continues with a rebellious **spirit**, discipline may need to be re-administered.

Helpful Examples

Here are some examples of how all of these steps work.

Your three year old is told to come to you but refuses. If he will not come when he is told, here is an appropriate way to handle the situation. First, stay in CONTROL of your emotions. Next, be sure the child heard you (CONSIDER). Perhaps ask him one more time to come. Perhaps say, "Billy, maybe you didn't hear what I said. Daddy is telling you to come here, now." If he still won't come, get up and go to him and explain that he disobeyed and must now be disciplined (COUNSEL). Give him a swat or whatever you have decided is appropriate (CHASTISE). Go back to where you were and again ask him to come. If he still won't come, repeat the process until he decides to come on his own. Do not go to the child and drag him back to you. You want to apply discipline until the child chooses to come on his own. It may be a battle. Hang in there! When he finally comes, hold him and tell him you took no pleasure in spanking him and hope he does not disobey you again (CONSOLE).

Your young child has been told not to cross a certain boundary with his bike. He disregards this instruction and rides several blocks to a friend's house. You frantically look for him and finally find him at his friend's house. You are steaming. Before taking action you walk him home. During this time you gain CONTROL of your emotions. You then CONSIDER the situation and ask him why he did what he did. He says that he forgot your instructions. After further investigation you learn that he knew full well what he was doing. You decide to take his bike away for two weeks and give him a spanking. When you get back to your

house you take him to his room and tell him why he is being disciplined and what the discipline will be (COUNSEL). You then administer the discipline (CHASTISE) in his room. He cries, and you let him stay in his room to think about what he did. After a few minutes you go back to his room and CONSOLE him. You write on a piece of paper that he is grounded from riding his bike for two weeks and put the paper in an appropriate place.

Final Thoughts

When children disobey they often are asking the question, "Who's in charge." You need to let them know that you are! If a child wins this battle and thinks that he is in charge, he may become more disobedient and harder to control. If you let him know from the beginning that you are in charge, he will learn to obey and become a joy to be around.

God has given a wealth of "Child Discipline" information in His Word, the Bible. It is up to parents to take the time to understand and apply it. Doing this is not an easy task. Every parent will make mistakes. Parenting is a learning process. If parents continue to apply God's truth in a loving yet firm way, they will watch their children become the blessings God intended them to be.

May God richly bless you as you help mold your children.

Verses on Discipline

Verse to parents:

Proverbs 13:24, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently."

Proverbs 19:18, "Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death."

Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him."

Proverbs 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."

Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."

Proverbs 29:17, "Correct your son, and he will give you comfort, he will also delight your soul."

Ephesians 6:4, "And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Miscellaneous Verses:

Proverbs 19:27, "Cease listening, my son, to discipline, and you will stray from the words of knowledge."

Ephesians 6:1-3, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment

with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."

Proverbs 15:32, "He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding."

Proverbs 19:20, "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days."

Hebrews 12:9-13

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

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. ¹² Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the things that stand out in your mind regarding child discipline?

2. What **purposes** of child discipline were covered in this booklet?
Briefly describe each in the space below.

3. What principles of child discipline were covered in this booklet?
Why is each one important?

4. What are the five steps in the child discipline process? Why is each step important?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

5. Based on the information in this booklet, what changes, if any, do you need to make in the way you discipline your children?