

How to Bring up Children -- Biblical Discipline – Proverbs 6:20-35

INTRODUCTION – An article written on 7 February 2012 states that spanking children will have long term developmental damage and might even lower the child's IQ. Quote taken from "TORONTO (Reuters) - Spanking children can cause long-term developmental damage and may even lower a child's IQ, according to a new Canadian analysis that seeks to shift the ethical debate over corporal punishment into the medical sphere." [<http://health.yahoo.net/news/s/nm/spanking-kids-can-cause-long-term-harm-canada-study>] This seems to be the trend in the 21st Century.

Thankfully, there are still many in certain countries who still believe that spanking their children is one of the more effective ways of disciplining them. However, many parents know that they are fighting a losing battle against this 21st century cancerous trend. Children will grow up without the fear of God and will become a law unto themselves doing what is right in their own eyes. Children are encouraged by their own parents to address them by their first names. Titles like "father", "dad", "mother" and "mom" are outdated and no one calls their parents by these titles anymore. The result is that homes are destroyed. Respect for parents fades into oblivion; parents are viewed as friends in the best case scenario and as hindrances to be tolerated or gotten rid of when they are useless to them, like used tea bags.

The Christian churches do not fare much better. The reason is that Christendom is falling away by becoming like the world. When we look for the church, we find her in the world. When we look for the world, we find it in the church. This death nail is about to be nailed onto the coffin of our children's lives. When they lose respect for their parents, their own children will inherit the same disrespect from them. This will result in the crumbling of societies and nations becoming immoral or amoral. Absolutes are jettisoned and anyone who believes or teaches otherwise is branded and castigated as bigoted, and ultimately ostracised or even criminalised. What we see today in our society are the fruits of parental failure. Children are placed in our care like soft pliable clay to mould and shape. Yes it is true they all possess the sinful nature. However, as believing parents, we can influence our children for Christ by teaching God's Word, holy living and prayer.

Disciplining the children is the key to a disciplined family. Discipline at home is the beginning of this process of helping our children. To save our society from decay and our children from self destruction, biblical discipline is the indispensable approach. To do otherwise is to destroy our own children!

- I. **Train when Young – Proverbs 22:6**, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
 - a. The word for "train" comes from the root meaning "to narrow." It means to narrow the way of the child. How does one narrow the way of the child? Can the child not teach himself and find out on his own? Apparently not, God's Word argues. The use of the imperative in the verb "train" points to the urgency of the command. It is not an option.
 - b. The world's concept is not to teach the child the faith but let him choose when he grows up. God's Word says otherwise. Narrow the way of the child as he begins to grow.
 - c. The Bible says that this narrowing must begin in a child. The reason is obvious. The character of the child is pliable like soft clay before it is hardened into stone. The character gets harder and harder as the child grows older. The character begins to form as the child matures.

- d. If parents do not narrow their children's character in the right direction, they have failed their own children who trust them to do it for them since they do not know how to do it themselves. The time of narrowing is short.
- e. The direction of "the way he should go" is God's way. God's way is found in God's perfect Word. God's way is always the right way. God's way is made up of two categories. The first category is called the "thou shalt not" and the second is the "thou shalt." The negatively stated commandments and statutes are to keep the child from sinning. The positive ones are to keep the child in holiness when he obeys.
- f. The child does not know God and God's Word and trusts the parents to show him by narrowing the way for him. The parents are to warn him of the dangers i.e. the do not's and must also constantly remind him of the "do's" (to do what is right).
- g. The child will soon learn how good and gracious God has been to him through parental narrowing of his life. He will then see the wonderful and merciful Christ in the lives of his parents. Soon he will receive Christ into his heart because of the testimony of his parents.
- h. When he grows old he will not depart from the faith. This is the promise of God to every believing godly parent. It is not perfection but obedient holy living in Christ Jesus. The phrase "he will not depart" has the same strength as the Ten Commandments. It means he will definitely NOT depart, i.e. turn off or rebel or withdraw from the faith!
- i. Will this promise of the LORD be enough for parents to live a holy life?

II. Use the Rod -- Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

- a. The word "foolishness" does not refer to a child's lack of intelligence. He can be a genius and more brilliant than Einstein but he will still be called foolish in the sight of God. The foolishness here refers to sinful conduct and evil motives.
- b. The sinful nature that is in every person is the focus here. All mankind inherited the sinful nature of the first Adam. When Adam sinned against God in the Garden of Eden, all mankind born of human parents fell with him. There is no exception to this truth. The evidence is that all mankind will die!
- c. This foolishness is bound, i.e. tied or joined together in the heart of a child. The foolishness and the heart of the child are tied tightly together. This is the reason for the naughty behaviour of children even before they go to school.
- d. It is not true that every child is born good. Every child is born evil and sinful. This foolishness is bound in his heart the moment he begins to exist in the mother's womb. Education will not remove this foolishness. Education cannot because it deals with matters of the world. Its impotency is seen by our own experiences in life. When the people in a nation are educated, the nation does not have cultured people but cultured depraved sinners.

- e. Therefore when parents leave the children to decide for themselves, they will choose foolishness. Foolishness is in them. They cannot get rid of this foolishness by themselves. Moral education will not help either because it is only external and is powerless to remove this foolishness.
- f. Educating the mind trains the mind only in a certain direction which will make specialists today. There are specialists in every field of life. In the medical field we have specialists that treat only the heart, the brain, the ear, nose and throat, the bones, etc. This is a “specialists” world that we are living in today. But a trained mind in the arts and sciences of the world is totally impotent against the foolishness that is bound to the heart of every child. It is a fallacy that changing the mind will change one’s life. Positive thinking is the mumbo jumbo of the world that is anti-biblical. “Change the mind and everything around you changes” is the dictum that is the bedrock of many professions that deal with the mind. This is not true. Do not confuse this with Romans 12:1-2 which teach that the renewing of the mind through the study and memorization of Scriptures is the power and work of God.
- g. The “rod of correction” is the instrument proposed by God that will certainly drive away this foolishness. The rod is a short stick that is to be used on the child. This will inflict pain. This rod is for chastisement or discipline. When the child has done something wrong, then the rod is used. The rod of correction is meant to be the last resort rather than the first. Rebuke comes first. Remember that “Open rebuke is better than secret love.” (**Proverbs 27:5**)
- h. The error or sin in the child is based upon God’s Word. The world has no absolute and therefore everything is relative and subjective. The world cannot discipline anyone since there is no absolute. There is no absolute right or absolute wrong in life. The Bible is the guide Book of every believer. There are absolute rights and wrongs in life. When the child disobeys God’s Word, the child ought to be told to stop. If he refuses and stubbornly rebels against the Word of God, then he has to be chastised, even with the rod.
- i. The child does not know what is right and wrong. He needs the parents to guide him, i.e. narrow the way for him so that he will know what is right and wrong. This is what narrowing the way for the child means.
- j. The child must learn that there are consequences when a sin is committed. Pain is one of the most effective ways to learn this truth. Adults also learn the same truth. In reality, it is the same truth that is taught because when a sinner dies in his sin without the Saviour, he ends up in Hell and is punished for the sins he has committed against God.
- k. Parents must understand that the rod of correction is not meant to injure or kill but to save. If the child is not taught while he is still teachable, he will die in his sins and end up in Hell. The Bible says, “Withhold not correction from the child: for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.” [**Proverbs 23:13**] If parents do not correct with the rod, then he shall die!
- l. However, when the rod of correction is used judiciously and biblically, the foolishness of the child is driven far away from him. This means that the foolishness is removed permanently and it will be replaced by wisdom and discernment. The child will know how to live. He knows

how to make righteous decisions according to Scriptures. The LORD will be pleased with his life. This can only take place in the life of the believer. This must not be misconstrued as salvation by good works. Bear in mind that certain serious sins like lying or stealing must be dealt with severely where the rod might have to be used immediately because of the gravity of the sin committed.

III. To Love is to Chasten -- Proverbs 3:11-12, "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." And **Proverbs 13:24**, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

- a. A parent who loves his child will discipline. When parents do not discipline, they are actually hating their child and want him dead. These may sound like harsh words but they are true. A child before the age of accountability does not know right from wrong. He just behaves and acts. Since he has a sinful nature the moment he is born, he will do wrong things and exhibit sinful behaviour
- b. The duty of parents is to guide and show the child what is right and what is wrong. This is the love which is shown by action which includes discipline or chastisement. This is what Proverbs 3:11-12 teach. The example is God Himself.
- c. The child is commanded by God not to despise the chastening of the LORD. He is also not to be tired of it. It is because the LORD loves His children that He uses the rod of correction on them. If He does not chastise them when they have sinned, then God would be a derelict heavenly Father. It would be like He has denied Himself and has failed us.
- d. Thank God for chastisement, for it comes only when we have sinned. When there is no sin, there is no need for chastisement. God cannot reward a disobedient sinner. To reward rebellion is to encourage more rebellion. When a professing believer has sinned against God and nothing happens to him, he should check his salvation. He might not be God's child in the first place. A sinner cannot adopt the heavenly Father as his own. Only the heavenly Father can adopt sinners to become His children through Christ Jesus.
- e. Every time chastisement comes, do not be tired of it. God is never tired of disciplining His errant children because of His great love, thus His children must never be tired of God's love and constant care. Children must appreciate parents' chastisement. The reason is that parents love them and want the best for them. If they ignore their children, it means that they have given up on them or have stopped loving them.
- f. Proverbs 13:24 says that the parent who spares the rod hates his son. This is a very serious statement. The hatred leads to death and Hell. To leave him to his own ends is as good as condemning his son to the gallows. Every child needs his father to know God's Word so that his father can guide him rightly.

- g. The father who loves his child will chastise him betimes, which means early while the child is still pliable clay. The word “early” could mean that he will not delay at all. He will do it as soon as circumstances allow which will bring out the best for the child.
- h. Chastisement can come in many forms and the rod of correction is one of the many ways to chastise. Rebuke or forfeiture of certain privileges in the child’s life will be other forms of chastisement. The important point to note is that chastisement must be biblically practised. The child needs it because God says so in His holy Word.

IV. Before it’s too Late -- Proverbs 19:18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."

- a. The imperative is used here for emphasis. Chasten your son because he is your son! This is the duty of the father. The best time to do it is when there is hope.
- b. The “hope” used here refers to the hope of change and proper righteous upbringing. The character and mind and heart of the child are not fixed yet. He still listens to and obeys his parents; the influence of the parents over the lives of the child is still 100% or at least more than 50%.
- c. When the son becomes a man and he turns wayward, it is too late for parents to begin involvement and discipline. It is too late to exercise parental control. While there is hope for the child to learn what is right and wrong, parents must begin to chasten.
- d. Parents must not stop disciplining when their son cries. Discipline must be carried out no matter how pitiful he looks. The word for “crying” is the root word for death or to die.
- e. The parents who hear their son crying and stops disciplining him are in for a lifetime of sorrow. Any child will cry for sure. The ultimate aim of chastisement is that the child must weep for sins committed and for wrongdoings.

APPLICATION

The bottom line is whether the professed Christian decides to believe God’s perfect Word or Man’s subjective opinions. God’s Word is clear on the matter of exercising discipline. To not discipline is to hate your son. Failure to discipline is tantamount to sentencing him to death and Hell. The parents’ duty is to discipline. The child expects and desires his parents to discipline. The child might not realize it now but when he is older and understands more, he will appreciate his parents who disciplined him.

Discipline while there is hope in the child to change through you. There will come a time when the parents’ influence is over and they can only pray for God’s mercy and sovereign intervention.

Do not be afraid to use the rod. The rod is to be the last resort but when certain grievous sins are committed, it is to be used immediately. Chastise early before it is too late. Your children will live when the rod is used. They will die when the rod is not used. The pain they feel is nothing compared to the pain they will feel in Hell!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do unbelieving parents know how to train up their children? Is right training of children a prerogative of Christian parents only?
2. Have you ever thanked your parents for disciplining you? At what age (children) do you think that parents should stop disciplining their children? At what age should parents begin to discipline their children?
3. How can love and discipline go together? Why do you think that many in the world believe that using the rod of correction is always wrong?
4. How do you counsel a parent with teenage children who has just become a Christian? The children are not believers and love the world.
5. Share how the LORD disciplined you in the past which has helped you grow in the LORD and become more Christ-like in your conduct.