

Discipline of Small Children

The outline below summarizes three messages on disciplining our younger children. The messages, along with two question and answer sessions led by three experienced fathers, are available from SGBC's media ministry. There is no more productive and blessed time to discipline our children than when they are in their earliest years.

Summary Outline

I. Introduction

My premise is that God is a perfect father and our discipline of our children should be patterned after His discipline of His children. Our main text is Heb. 12:3-11.

II. Thinking Correctly About the Discipline of My Child - Heb 12:3-11

- A. My child *needs* to be disciplined, Heb. 12:7b, Prov. 23:13; food, shelter discipline. The *essentials*.
- B. The discipline your child needs, and that you must administer, will be painful and grievous to him/her for a *short* season; Heb. 12:11, Lamentations 3:25 - 33.
- C. Discipline is correction for the purpose of giving instruction and not primarily a means of controlling your child; Psalm 119:65-68, 71, Prov. 29:15, Prov. 22:15.
You must be thinking *instruction of the heart* when you discipline. What are you “teaching” by this act of discipline?
- D. God has put you are in charge; Prov. 6:20-23, Eph. 6:4.

III. Am I Qualified to Discipline My Child?

- A. Who feels qualified? But given God's wisdom, commands, and promises you can be!
- B. Love and Compassion; Hebrews 12:6, 10, 11, Prov. 3:12b.
Love equals seeking the good of your children. If you are deeply convinced that it is *good* for your children to be disciplined, you will discipline them, assuming of course that you do love them.
- C. Justice. Am I prepared to deal *justly* with my children?
 - 1. The laws or rules you intend to enforce must be just.
 - 2. The laws must be published and made *clearly* known.
 - 3. The laws do not change.
 - 4. The consequences for broken laws must be *clearly* made known in advance.
 - 5. The consequences for broken laws do not change without prior notice.
 - 6. The degree of consequence should relate to the seriousness of the disobedience.
 - 7. Since you are not God, there should be an appeals court in your home.
 - 8. In regard to *character* laws there is no partiality for *anyone* in the household.
- D. Preparedness
The time to determine what laws and consequences should be enforced and how to discipline, is not when the disobediences begin!
- E. Am I qualified *at this moment* to discipline my child?
Am I under control, bearing the fruit of the Spirit? If you are angry you are not qualified, at that moment, to discipline your child. James 1:20 - “for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” Lam. 3, “He does not afflict willingly.”

IV. Practicing Daily Discipline

- A. You must establish and maintain the environment for discipline ahead of time.
1. Establish a *few* rules and be resolved to enforce them, consistently and without compromise.
 2. Do not verbally express a rule you are unwilling to enforce by discipline.
 3. Make sure your children know the rules.
 4. Make sure your children know the consequences.
 5. Be resolved to train your children to obey the *first* time you give a command and to respond to your *normal* voice.

B. Discipline them when they have disobeyed.

1. Breathe out a prayer to God for self control and a heart of compassion for your child. Gently but firmly get your child's attention.

Then gently but firmly speak to him/her, even when they are too young to understand your words. Discipline is instruction and they should learn early that this process is always accompanied with words for them to hear, mom's and dad's words.

You must explain what he/she has done to disobey and why you are going to spank him/her. You should try to elicit an admission of guilt. "Dear, I asked you to pick up your toys. But you have not picked them up. Have you disobeyed mommy?" "[yes] or a nod."

"And if you have disobeyed mommy who else have you disobeyed?" "[God]"

"Now I told you that if you disobey I would spank you. What does God require me to do?" "[spank me]"

"I will spank you 3 times and I want you to learn that it is much better for you to obey God instead of disobeying Him"

Telling them the number of times you will spank ahead of time will give further evidence that you are under control and reassure your child, and be a check upon yourself. Be calm, gentle, and deliberate. Our children know when we are controlled and when we mean what we say.

2. Hold him/her over your lap and make sure you do not harm the child. But make sure the sting is sufficiently painful to be remembered. You do not want to convey dislike or rejection to your child when you discipline him. That is why holding him over your lap is a good idea as opposed to making them lie on the bed or face a wall, etc. Discipline *is not about rejection or separation or I don't like you*. It is not about our relationship, i.e. in a negative way. It is about that fact that God ensures there are consequences for disobeying Him and we need instruction to direct us onto the right path.
3. After you have spanked him/her express affection both physically and with words to him/her.
4. Do all of the above with respect for your child. Do it in private and not in front of his/her siblings or others. Do not publicly humiliate the child.

C. You *must* praise your children when they have obeyed. You are praising them to give them instruction and encouragement; "this is the right way walk in it!" This is only one point on this outline but it is equal or "bigger" than all the rest.

God's Wisdom, Promises and Commands - Scripture

Carefully, prayerfully, read these through often.

Heb. 12:5-7 - "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 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?"

Heb. 12:10-11 - "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. How 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."

Psalms 119:66-68 - "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes."

Psalms 119:71 - "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes."

Lam. 3:27-33 - "it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him; Let him put his mouth in the dust - there may yet be hope. Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, and be full of reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies, For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

Prov. 3:12 - "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights."

Prov. 6:20 - "My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother."

Prov. 13:24 - "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly."

Prov. 19:18 - "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction."

Prov. 22:15 - "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him."

Prov. 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."

Prov. 29:15 - "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

Prov. 29:17 - "Correct your son, and he will give you rest; Yes, he will give delight to your soul."

Eph. 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."