

PROVERBS FOR PARENTS

In this lesson we discover why discipline is a requirement for children.

Hillary Clinton-*It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us*. The book has been on the New York Times' best-seller list for months. The title is taken from an African proverb, "*It takes a village to raise a child.*" Newsweek magazine quoted Hillary Clinton as saying, "*There is no such thing as other people's children.*"

What she is really saying is, "*Children do not belong to parents; they belong to the state.*"¹

Whose responsibility is it to rear the children and wield the authority in the home? Is it Washington's? The judicial system's? Is it the Department of Health and Human Services'? Is it Dr. Spock's? The pastor's? The Sunday school teacher's? The Christian school teacher's?

The Scripture tells us clearly whose responsibility it is:

Deut. 11:18-21 (KJV)

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. [19] And ye [parents] shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. [20] And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: [21] That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

It doesn't take a village. It takes a mom and a dad. Only loving, parental discipline can place a child's feet on the right path. There is no question that children are a *heritage* from the Lord (Psalm 127:3)—but they are a *challenge* from the Lord as well.

¹ Pastor Dan Burrell, *IT DOESN'T TAKE A VILLAGE: AN ANSWER TO HILLARY CLINTON'S PHILOSOPHY OF CHILD-REARING*, The Sword of the Lord, May 31, 1996, P.O. Box 1099, Murfreesboro, TN 37133. Dr. Burrell is senior pastor of the Berean Baptist Church of West Palm Beach, Florida. He is also the President Elect of the Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools with over 200 member schools, representing over 55,000 teachers and students.

Psalm 127:3 (KJV)

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

In America we have had several generations to witness the results of raising children the world's way. We need to return to the wisdom of the Lord.

In this lesson we will explore what the book of Proverbs teaches concerning the family—specifically, instilling wisdom in our children.

Discipline is an aspect of childrearing on which Proverbs has much to say. One of the most well-known verses on discipline (that is, training) is Proverbs 22:6

Proverbs 22:6 (KJV)

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs is saying that if you pour yourself into your children when they are young, they're going to have what they need to be wise when they are old. The time for training (disciplining) children is when they are young.

Proverbs 24:3-4 (KJV)

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: [4] And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

The flip side of Proverbs' instruction to parents is its instruction to young people, which carries a central theme:

You are never too old to break your parents' heart.

Example: 90 year father worried about 70 year old children
I read of a person who was constantly worried about his kids—what they did, what they ate, how they dressed. That didn't sound too unusual until I learned that the father was in his 90's and the kids were in their 70's! Parents never stop trying to influence their children and children never stop being able to impact their parents' hearts:

Proverbs 10:1 (KJV)

The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Proverbs 15:20 (KJV)

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Proverbs 17:21 (KJV)

He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

Proverbs 19:13 (KJV)

A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

Young people must realize that parents are God's tool in their lives for their good. Parents aren't perfect, nor do they know everything. But children need to choose to honor their parents regardless of mistakes made. Children should honor them both, regardless of the degree of perfection their parents exhibited in raising them. Parents are called to do two primary things in raising their children, both of which are part of the same concept:

They are to **disciple** and **discipline** their children.

Parents Are Called Upon to:

I. DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

A. Every time you see the words "***My son***" in Proverbs, take note.

What follows will be a set of instructions from Solomon to his own son on some aspect of life. To work through these sections carefully is to receive an education in how to disciple your children.

B. Here are some of the sections and a summary statement for what they teach:

- Chapter 1:8–19 -Peer pressure
- Chapter 2 -Paying attention to wise counsel
- Chapter 3 -Putting your trust in God
- Chapter 4 -Protecting your heart
- Chapter 5 -Instruction on proper speech

- Chapter 6 -Parental guidance
- Chapter 7 -Further guidance for parents

C. The training of children has been given to parents.

*"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And **thou** [parents] shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deut. 6:6-9).²*

6:6 - these words ... in thine heart.

The people were to think about these commandments and meditate on them. So that obedience would be a response based upon understanding.

6:7 teach them diligently unto thy children.

The commandments were to be the subject of conversation, both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to its end.

6:8 they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes

The Israelite was to continually meditate upon and be directed by the commandments that God had given to him.

² Parents are commanded to teach their children all that God has revealed to man. The Hebrew word translated "teach" here means "to inculcate." [Hebrew, shanan "to sharpen;" here meaning "to teach by repetition" or "to inculcate."] It means to train God's standards into the child intensively by the use of repetition. Notice that this teaching is to be on a consistent basis and at every opportunity. Training is a constant process until the results desired are achieved. Positive teaching will have to be repeated time and time again since it runs counter to the natural inclination of the child. These verses also show that parents need to know God's Word in order to teach their children properly. If you are going to teach your children the right way of life, you first must know what it is. The word translated "children" in verse seven is not a word that refers to a specific age, but instead emphasizes the family relationship. [Hebrew, ben "children." This word corresponds to the Greek word, teknon "children;" Biblical meaning "progeny"] In other words, parents are responsible for teaching their own children. Our churches and Christian schools would do well to teach parents the importance of teaching their own children God's Word. God uses another word for teaching in passages similar to the one just studied (Deuteronomy 4:10 and 11:19). The Hebrew word used in these passages means "to teach by intensive drill."⁶ It is the same word that is used to describe the training of a soldier for war. The derivative of this word is the word for a goad, a stick sharp enough to penetrate an animal's hide, used for prodding cattle or oxen. The prodding this word suggests relates to child training. Parents may need to prod their child with a sharp rebuke occasionally to get the child's attention and to cause him to go the direction he must go. In conclusion, child training is the process used by parents that will cause a child to reach the objective for which he has been trained. The process includes both restraining the child from following his natural inclination to sin and also teaching him the right way of life. The desired objective is for the child to learn God's Word, which can then direct him throughout his adult life. What is the antithesis of proper child training? What are some of the pitfalls parents can encounter if they do not clearly train their child to reach God's objective? The next chapter deals with the problem of negative training. (Rich J. Fugate, What the Bible Says about Child Training)

Later in Jewish history, this phrase was taken literally and the people tied phylacteries (boxes containing these verses) to their hands and foreheads with thongs of leather.

Questions to ask yourself to see if you are applying the bible to your children.

1. How well do you know the scriptures yourself?
2. How often do you refer to the bible in the course of normal conversation with your children?
3. How good are you at teaching and relating the bible to everyday life?
4. How effective do you use the scripture to reprove (convict) them of their sin?
5. How do you use the bible to train your children in righteousness to help them do better in the future?³

Parents Are Called Upon to:

I. DISCIPLE THEIR CHILDREN

II. DISCIPLINE THEIR CHILDREN

Discipline has almost gone out of style. All you have to do is take a flight or two on a commercial airliner and you will know what I mean. Because I travel quite a bit, I am exposed frequently to the lack of discipline in the lives of many young children. Where has this lack of discipline come from in our society? I can tell you where it did NOT come from: From the wisdom of Solomon.

Proverbs is filled with exhortations and instructions on how to train children so they are not a scourge on the family or societal landscape. Proverbs 3:11–12 says that discipline is for every child whom the Lord loves.

³ Great help in dealing with children and the issue of salvation has been found in the following resources:
Ray Comfort, *How To Bring Your Children To Christ and Keep Them There*
Dennis Gundersen, *Your Child's Profession of Faith*
Marian Schoolland, *Leading Little Ones to God*

1. DISCIPLINE IS PROPER FOR EVERY CHILD

Proverbs 29:17 (KJV)

Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Proverbs and the New Testament make it clear: Every child needs to be disciplined (Proverbs 29:17; Hebrews 12:7).

Hebrews 12:7 (KJV)

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

Unfortunately, the world has adopted the perspective that children should be allowed to blossom with little or no guidance (training). The same thing has happened to children that would happen if you suddenly ran a locomotive off the end of the tracks with no more rails to guide it—a train wreck. The landscape of our society is littered with the lives of undisciplined young people, and adults in age who have grown in years but not in maturity or wisdom.

Jesus didn't preach unlimited freedom. He bound Himself personally to the truth of God's will and said,

John 8:32 (KJV)

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

God is all for freedom, but within the constraints of His will and His Word.

2. DISCIPLINE PROVES OUR LOVE FOR OUR CHILDREN

Proverbs 13:24 presents a seeming paradox, of which there are many in Scripture:

Proverbs 13:24 (KJV)

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

The Hebrew word translated “spareth” means “to restrain, or to hold back.”⁸ Parents who withhold the use of physical pain administered by a rod

⁸Hebrew, *chasak* “to keep back, withhold.”

are said to hate their children. The Hebrew word translated “son” means “a child of special relationship.”⁹ It is used for the legal heir of the family. The word translated “early” means “to break forth—as a new day.”¹⁰ This pictorial word declares that parents who truly desire the best for their children will chastise them in the dawn of their lives.

The Hebrew word translated “rod”² in the Old Testament passages concerning the chastisement of children is a symbol of God’s delegated authority to the human race. This rod refers to the right of human rulership of either government or parents. When the authority of a legitimate ruler is challenged, a rod is to be used to inflict pain sufficient to end the rebellion. Figuratively, the rod refers to military conquest by one nation against another that is being rebellious to God or His plan. Historically, the rod has been used in this manner on many such nations (Psalms 89:32; Isaiah 10:5, 24; Lamentations 3:1; Ezekiel 20:37; Micah 5:1). Literally, the rod is a narrow flexible stick used on a rebellious child by his parents (2 Samuel 7:14; Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13 & 14; 29:15).

The world is totally confused by the idea that love could be expressed by firm discipline, even corporal punishment such as spanking. How could making a child cry be a loving thing to do?

The number one reason parents give for not disciplining their children is because they love them too much (to hurt them). But the Word of God says if we don’t discipline our children, we don’t love them—we hate them. It’s as if parents want their children to grow up and become living “train wrecks.” And to ensure that happens, they don’t give them any tracks to run their lives on—they don’t discipline them.

Parents must learn that discipline is not something they do *to* their child but something they do *for* their child. They must get to the point where they love their child too much to allow him to practice destructive patterns of behavior. They must follow the philosophy of the football coach who

⁹ Hebrew, *ben* “son, offspring.” This Hebrew word relates to the Greek word, *huios* “son, heir” (see Appendix C). (Ibid.)

¹⁰ Hebrew, *shachar* “to go out early” (to anything), it does not here denote the early morning, but the morning of life. (Ibid.)

² Rod. There are four distinct Hebrew words translated rod in the Old Testament. The most common word is *shebet*, “rod or tribe.” Its most distinctive Biblical meaning is: delegated authority by God (like the twelve “tribes”) or the “rod,” the physical instrument for chastising rebellious children, or slaves, or fools, or nations (figuratively). The second most used Hebrew word is *matteh*, Biblically: “the rod of God’s authority on earth.” This is the rod Moses and Aaron used to represent God before man. It was also used to establish God’s authority over each of the twelve tribes. So, each tribe had a rod (*matteh*) as a symbol of being God’s chosen representative on earth; and each was called a (*shebet*) a rod to be used to destroy the heathen nations. The other two words mistranslated “rod” are *choter*, which means sprout (like a plant); and *maqel*, which means staff (to lean on).

reprimands his players occasionally because he recognizes their value to the team and wants them to succeed.

God wants every child to succeed on His team and provides parents with the coaching wisdom in Proverbs to make that happen.

3. DISCIPLINE POSTPONED WILL BE INEFFECTIVE

Proverbs 19:18 (KJV)

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

You must begin to discipline your children “while there is hope,” meaning while their lives can be shaped and directed. The age at which to begin disciplining your children is not a chronological one. Rather it is when you see the seeds of willful defiance to authority begin to germinate in their hearts.

Children (all humans) are born in a state of rebellion against God, inherited from their forefather Adam. That rebellion is exercised toward all God-ordained authorities—especially parents. Defiance must be confronted early or it will blossom into full-fledged rebellion.

4. DISCIPLINE PURGES WRONG CONDUCT FROM A CHILD’S LIFE

Proverbs 22:15 says, *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him”* (KJV).

Making children understand that wrong behavior brings negative consequences is Proverbs’ way of discouraging them from choosing such behavior. And by “negative consequences” I don’t mean threats or loud lectures.

“The rod of correction” in Proverbs is what some have come to call “the board of education applied to the seat of knowledge.”

Psalm 119:71 (KJV)

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

He learned that though discipline and chastening from the Lord were painful at times, by those experiences he was trained to follow God's statutes. And the same will be true of a child who receives correction from his parents.

Is chastening enjoyable? No, says the writer to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:11 (KJV)

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

This philosophy of childrearing is considered "cruel and unusual" by many outside the church of Jesus Christ—and even some within it.

But the fruit of righteousness which it produces gives testimony to its inspiration.

5. DISCIPLINE PROPERLY ADMINISTERED WILL NOT HURT YOUR CHILD

Proverbs 23:13 (KJV)

Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

It doesn't say your child won't sound like he's dying, or try to convince you he's dying. It just says he won't die as a result of your discipline administered with biblical wisdom. I've been told by parents that they don't discipline their children physically because they're afraid they may inflict some sort of physical harm on them. This is only one reason parents have offered in recent decades for neglecting to discipline their children. "I don't want to hurt them physically." "I don't want to scar them emotionally." "I'm afraid I'll be reported to the authorities for child abuse."

These are all excuses which fly directly in the face of Scripture: Corporal discipline, administered lovingly and with wisdom (skill) will not harm your child. In fact, it is what will save his life. Many times, various reasons for not disciplining children are a smokescreen for the real reason: It's usually inconvenient to do it.

We'd rather yell at the top of our lungs than get up, go where the child is, and discipline him. When my children were young, they always seemed to misbehave the most during an NFL/NBA game on television. Oh, how I hated to get up in the middle of the game and correct a child! But I did it because I loved him and knew that if I didn't correct him then, I'd have a much bigger problem to deal with later.

6. DISCIPLINE PROCEEDS IN SPITE OF CRYING

Proverbs 19:18 (KJV)

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

That is probably not the most accurate translation of the verse, but it illustrates a common issue parents face when disciplining their children: the wails and cries of the child. Some parents just cannot stand the thought of being the cause of their child's crying.

They will do anything to avoid the guilt they feel when their little one breaks out in wails. Some children have it figured out so perfectly that they will start crying at the very suggestion they are about to be spanked. Other children steel themselves against the pain and refuse to shed a tear. But if they do cry, don't be thrown off track by it. Tears and crying are God's way of allowing us to release the pain we feel; tears are normal and healthy.

7. DISCIPLINE PROVIDES HELP FOR THE CHILD, NOT RELEASE OF ANGER FOR THE ADULT

It is important to clarify what should be obvious to any Christian who knows the fatherhood of God: No Christian parent should, under any circumstances in the name of biblical discipline, do anything to emotionally or physically abuse a child. That simply must be said clearly. But that truth points out the reality of true discipline, that it is corrective, not abusive, in nature.

God has provided a padded area of the anatomy which can receive mildly painful corrective measures without harming a child in any way. When parents use physical or verbal correction as a means for taking out their own frustrations or anger, children can easily become embittered (as Paul warns in Ephesians 6:4).

Ephes. 6:4 (KJV)

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Too many parents can identify with the mother who said, “My children were misbehaving so badly that I spanked them. It didn’t seem to help them much, but it did me a world of good.”

Discipline of children is not a means for parents to let off steam or retaliate or seek vengeance against their child. If you are angry at your child, wait to discipline him. The line between discipline and abuse is too thin to risk doing anything that would harden your child against you, and ultimately against God.

8. DISCIPLINE PREPARES A CHILD FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION IN HIS LIFE

There is often a high correlation between young people who come to know Christ in their early teen years and those who were raised in Christian homes. That correlation reflects another of God’s purposes for wise discipline of children:

To prepare them for the process of repentance and faith, which will lead to their salvation.

Proverbs 23:14 (KJV)

Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

When a child, from an early age, is made to confront his own sins of disobedience or defiance, he learns that there are standards in life which must be obeyed. Ultimately, when he is brought face to face with God’s standards, the idea is not a foreign one. But if a child has been allowed to live with the idea that sin and standards do not apply to him, he will feel the same way about God’s standards and be far less likely to sense the need for forgiveness and salvation.

Children who have parents who lovingly confront them and correct them are well prepared to meet a loving heavenly Father who will do the same thing throughout their adult lives.

The best way for parents to prepare their children to know God is to know Him themselves and act like Him as consistently as possible. And that includes the application of loving discipline to teach them the way they should go.

Sometime in the late 1960's, a report was issued by the Chief of Police at Houston, Texas entitled:

Twelve Rules for Raising Delinquent Children

1. Begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he's cute. It will also encourage him to pick up "cuter" phrases that will blow off the top of your head later.
3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait till he is 21 and then let him "decide for himself."
4. Avoid use of the word "wrong." It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.
5. Pick up everything he leaves lying around-books, shoes, and clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility on to others.
6. Let him read any printed material he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage.
7. Quarrel frequently in the presence of your children. In this way they will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later.

8. Give a child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as YOU had them?
9. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink, and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. Take his part against neighbors, teachers, and policeman. They are all prejudice against your child.
11. When he gets into trouble, apologize for yourself by saying “I never could do anything with him.”
12. Prepare for a life of grief. You will be apt to have it.

NOTE:

These twelve rules were originally created by Dr. Paul Cates and published in *Strictly for Parents*, a newsletter and radio show on WMBI in Chicago, III. About 1961.

Recommended Books on Child Training:

***What the Bible Says About . . . Child Training Parenting With Confidence*
2nd Edition**

by J. Richard Fugate

<http://www.rfugate.org/>

Excellent book and highly recommended because of its biblical and exhaustive content.

Tech them Diligently: How to Use the Scriptures in Child Training

(Timeless Texts, Woodruff, SC)

By Lou Priolo

Shepherding a Child's Heart

(Shepherd Press, Wapwallopen, PA)

By Tedd Tripp

***Successful Christian Parenting: Raising Your Child With Care,
Compassion, and Common Sense*** (Bedford, Tex.: Word Pub., 1998)

By John F. MacArthur