

## **Marriage and Families**

### **Lesson 13 – Parents must correct their children**

We get our word discipline from the word disciple. A disciple is a pupil, learner, and follower. It would appear that many parents misunderstand what discipline is. Discipline and punishment are not synonymous terms. Punishing for wrongdoing is an occasional element of discipline, but discipline is the total training of the child. It not only teaches them the “don’ts” of life but, more important than that, it teaches them the “do” side of human responsibility.

Parents have an awesome responsibility in the rearing of children. **Ephesians 6:4** says to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”. The word nurture involves training and instruction while “in the admonition of the Lord” literally means putting their children in mind of God, his love, his desire for mankind, salvation etc. We have, in previous lessons, discussed many areas in which we should train our children. This lesson will deal with when we must correct or punish children for wrongdoing. There are those who will tell you that to correct or punish your child does them a disservice or can cause them great harm in their development. The scriptures show exactly the opposite. If you love your child, you will correct him or her responsibly.

Some parents drive their children to resentment by negativism (don’t do this, don’t do that), constant criticism (can’t you do anything right?), and harsh punishments. Paul writes in **Colossians 3:21**, “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged”. Phillips’ translation of this verse is very expressive: “Fathers, don’t overcorrect your children, or they will grow up feeling inferior and frustrated”. Parents sin against their children when they violate this instruction.

What are the proper ways to correct our children?

1. Establish your authority over your children.
  - 1.1. It must be established that the father, as well as the mother, has the authority over children.
    - 1.1.1. Children are to obey their parents in all things (**Col. 3:20**).
    - 1.1.2. Ask yourself, who controls the actions of our household, the parents or the children? Who runs the house?
    - 1.1.3. Father’s must be a strong, controlling influence in the home and, as children grow older, a father’s hand on the reins becomes increasingly important. Boys especially need a strong image to identify with.
  - 1.2. Have fundamental and simple rules within whose framework the family lives.
    - 1.2.1. Allow the child the freedom to make honest mistakes of immaturity and to make up his or her mind on things. But the rules you do have apply without fail.

- 1.3. Parents must be careful not to be so strict that they exasperate their children into rebellious anger. Punishment can be administered in such a way as to be harsh, cruel, and unloving. This will provoke children to wrath or anger and will be destructive rather than constructive. We must avoid this type of punishment.
2. Punish the child when he or she defies your authority.
  - 2.1. It is an irresponsible form of parenthood to spank a child for their ignorance (using a dirty word whose meaning they don't know just because they heard some older person say it) or an accident (spilling something just after you mopped the floor).
  - 2.2. It is equally irresponsible to allow a child to get by with challenging your authority. Whether it is a small child who throws a temper tantrum when told to put up his toys and get ready for bed or a teen-ager who says he is going to do something you have forbidden, you have an obligation to God and the child to check that behavior (**Proverbs 13:24**). Such punishment is not harsh abuse but a loving reminder against sinful behavior.
  - 2.3. Punishment should be as consistent as possible. Children are confused and do not know how to respond if punishment is not dependable. If a child is able to get away with certain behavior on one occasion and not on another, he/she is receiving unclear signals.
  - 2.4. Punishment and reprimand are elements of discipline.
    - 2.4.1. Punishment should be Godly
    - 2.4.2. Make sure the child understands that the discipline is done in love not anger and that the punishment is based on disapproval of the action, not of the child themselves. Punishment is necessary but must be exercised patiently, and for the good of all concerned. Parents should take the time to hold their children in their arms and tell them such things as "I love you; I'm proud of you; you are a wonderful boy/girl; when I punish you it is only because I love you." The actions of the punishment should reflect this.
    - 2.4.3. The Bible upholds spanking for rebellious children (**Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14**)
    - 2.4.4. It is clear the punishment must never be administered when the parents are angered. Parents should not angrily or harshly scold, berate, slap, and/or beat their children. When a child submits in these cases, it could be only because the parent is bigger in size and stronger, not because the child feels the parent is right. The child should be able to realize (by words and actions of the parent) that they are being punished by parents who truly love them and who want them to do what is right.
    - 2.4.5. Harshness and bitterness – ruling with an iron hand will only serve to provoke children and run them off.
    - 2.4.6. Bible instruction for punishment:
      - 2.4.6.1. **Prov. 3:12; Prov. 22:13; Heb. 12:5-9; Prov. 29:15**
    - 2.4.7. If you have more than one child, the disposition of the child should often dictate how one punishes them. What may require a firm hand

with one may only need a chastening word with the other.  
Remember that children need to be viewed as individuals.

- 2.4.8. Should parents shout at their children?
  - 2.4.8.1. Obviously there are times that a parent will raise their voice. But far too often a parent “screams” or “yells” at a child when it is totally unnecessary.
  - 2.4.8.2. A child learns what he/she lives. If they grow accustomed to their parents shouting at them, then that is how the child is so trained.
  - 2.4.8.3. We need to ask, “what would Christ do?” It is likewise appropriate to ask, “Would Christ shout at children? I just cannot comprehend his doing that, but instead visualize him a loving, tender, compassionate, and firm instructor and example.
  - 2.4.8.4. Children equate yelling, and screaming with harsh, unloving, and unkind. You can be firm without shouting, yelling, and screaming.
3. Be consistent in your attitudes and expectations.
  - 3.1. If you have the right to make a rule for your child, give it and insist on its obedience; if there is no justification for the rule, don’t waste your authority or confuse the child with it.
  - 3.2. When you say something, stick to it. Don’t punish today what you laughed at yesterday or show partiality in dealing with the same misdeed in different children.
4. Be an example of the things you want your children to learn.
  - 4.1. Whatever parent gives his children good instruction, and sets them at the same time a bad example is a hypocrite. No one will spot his hypocrisy quicker than the child who lives under the same roof. The rejection of the church by many young people is neither more nor less than the rejection of their church-member but ungodly parents.
  - 4.2. The life of a Christian parent should say to his children: “Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ” (**1 Corinthians 11:1**).
  - 4.3. Parents need to take heed lest they “sin against the child” (**Gen. 42:22**). One of the greatest crimes would be for the child NOT to be able to see proper examples in his/her parents.
5. Communicate with your children
  - 5.1. Talk to your children. They have concerns, worries, and troubles just like adults. They need someone to share this with. They also want someone to share their successes with; parents need to be there for them. It is natural for children to look to parents for guidance. When there is no communication between parent and child, this is a real danger signal.
    - 5.1.1. Parents might not consider the issues that a child talks with you about “big”, but they are big to the child. You build trust and respect when you show genuine interest and emotion about the events in your children’s lives. If children feel free to discuss whatever is on their minds with their parents, this is indicative of a very healthy relationship.

- 5.2. Take time to get to know your child. Each child is unique in their own way. We must take the time to understand their desires, wants, wishes, and ambitions.
6. Encourage the child with honest praise.
  - 6.1. Two times during the Savior's earthly ministry, the Father spoke from heaven to say, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."  
**(Matthew 3:17; 17:5)**
    - 6.1.1. Do we express appreciation as we should for the good things our sons and daughters do?
    - 6.1.2. When they do a good job with something, do we brag on them? Or do we wait until they do wrong to say anything at all and then scold them?
  - 6.2. Children gain most of their self-confidence and self-worth from how they are treated by their parents.

Correcting our children when disobedience occurs is a parental responsibility. God commands it, god expects us to obey his command. We do a disservice to our children when we fail to correct them.

We also do them a disservice when we correct them out of anger instead of love. The correction that God commands is firm and just, not abusive.