

Marriage and Parenting

Topic 12 – Parenting – Discipline and Instruction

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Introduction

So far, we have laid a solid, biblical foundation for parenting. We first saw that...

- Successful parenting is determined by the parents' faithfulness, not results.
- Parents are called to be faithful stewards of their children.
- Parenting apart from submission to God's sovereignty and ways is futile.
- Children are a gift and blessing from God.

❖ **Are you a faithful steward of your children? Are you submitted to God and His sovereignty? Do you view your children as a gift and blessings from God?**

We then identified that the **purpose** of parenting is the same as the believer's general purpose in life – to glorify God.

We next saw that the **mission or goal** of parenting is the same as the believer's general mission in life – to make disciples. We can do this by proactively speaking and living the gospel to our children by:

- Taking God's powerful Word into our own hearts and minds.
- Speaking continually about the Lord and His Word through purposed and opportune events.
- Displaying God's Words in our life, living in a manner worthy of the gospel.
- Teaching our children the whole counsel of God.
- Highlighting the essential truths of the gospel to our children.

❖ **How are you proactively speaking and living the gospel to your children?**

We then looked at specific roles that God calls parents to as they are filled with the Spirit.

- Living out the one-anothers for your children to personally experience and see you practice.
- Being actively involved in a local body of believers.
- Fulfilling your respective husband or wife roles
 1. Provides your children a demonstration of true saving faith.
 2. Establishes security in the home.
 3. Builds unity in the marriage which is essential for God honoring parenting.
- Being a unified authority.
- Being an encourager (the opposite of provoking or exasperating).
- Being a nurturer.

❖ **Are you fulfilling your parenting roles?**

Worldly or Cultural Approaches to Instruction and Discipline

It is easy to get caught up in the latest cultural trends for parenting. If we are not careful, we can almost unconsciously move towards the world's approach to parenting which is child-centered, results-oriented parenting. The reason for this subtle, and almost unnoticeable transition, is because worldly parenting is based on what our flesh wants. Having a smart child, an athletic or coordinated child, and a healthy child are not inherently evil. It is when we place these things, or others like them, above God and His Word that we find ourselves dishonoring God, removing Him from first place in our life. Our lives start to revolve around how to make our children smarter, more athletic, and healthier. And these desires replace an eternal perspective for the soul and heart of our child.

By and large, the world's focus is on how to have a smarter, more developed child. While this can be a noble goal, Christian parents need to reject the urge to simply teach their children intellectual knowledge at the expense of eternal and lasting truth about God and His eternal purpose. Often it is pride that leads parents down this road since they want their child's development to reflect well on them. Our instruction ought to ultimately lead our children to their Creator, and their intellectual development should serve as a means to that end. Once our children have embraced the gospel, our instruction ought then to direct them towards how to glorify God in their walk of faith.

When it comes to discipline, the world's approaches typically center on behavior modification and generating "success" for your child. As one child development expert put it, "It's all about setting your kids up for success, so everyone wins."¹ The problem is, "success" is never clearly defined or explained. In this article, entitled "3 Golden Rules for Great Behavior," the three golden rules were: stay calm, set limits, and encourage cooperation. These are great guidelines, but the problem is not necessarily *what* worldly parenting looks like, it is *why* and *how* it is done. Some of the child psychologists who were quoted in the article said things like, "Kids are supposed to test boundaries – that's how they learn," and, "Recasting a directive as an option creates less resistance." The problems with these statements are obvious, but these are the presuppositions that guide the more specific actions in worldly discipline. Godly discipline in parenting must be built on a foundation that will stand, not on changing worldly wisdom and opinions.

❖ **What steps are you taking to ensure you are parenting according to God's plan?**

Biblical Examples of Negative Parenting Styles

The Scriptures give precepts and principles for parents, but also give examples of parenting styles, particularly negative styles. Let's look at some of them.

The Permissive Parent

For an example of a permissive parent, we look at the account of Eli the priest from 1 Samuel 2. We could also look at the account of Samson and his parents (Judges 13-16).

Eli's sons took by force the best sacrificial meat before it was offered to the Lord (1 Sam 2:13-17) and they sexually exploited the women at the Tabernacle where the Israelites came to worship (1 Sam 2:22).

¹²**Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the Lord** ¹³and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. ¹⁴Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. ¹⁵Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." ¹⁶If the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "**No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force.**" ¹⁷**Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men despised the offering of the Lord.**

²²**Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting.**

Eli told his sons that they should not do this, but took no action to actually stop them from continuing in their evil behavior (1 Sam 2:23-24).

¹ Nancy Rose, "3 Golden Rules for Great Behavior," *Parents Magazine*, 2011.
All Scriptures from the '95 NASB Update unless noted otherwise.

²³He said to them, “Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? ²⁴No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord’s people circulating. ²⁵If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death.

God judged Eli severely for his permissive parenting because he honored his sons more than he honored God (1 Sam 2:29).

²⁷Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Did I *not* indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt *in bondage* to Pharaoh’s house? ²⁸Did I *not* choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I *not* give to the house of your father all the fire *offerings* of the sons of Israel? ²⁹**Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded *in My dwelling*, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?’**

Some characteristics of permissive parenting:

1. Equates firmness/discipline with meanness. Therefore does not like the idea of discipline.
2. Gives few boundaries and inconsistently enforces the ones they give.
3. Gives verbal reprimands (or threats), but takes little action to correct sinful behavior.
4. Succumbs to the manipulation and whims of the child.

❖ **Are you permissive? Do you follow up your words with actions?**

The Uninvolved Parent

David is an example of an uninvolved and permissive parent. David had at least 6 wives and as many as 19 sons in addition to daughters. He spent much time away in battle and in ruling the kingdom. He was busy, but that does not mean he had to be uninvolved in the life of his children. However, the Biblical accounts indicate he was not involved with respect to discipline and instruction of his children.

David refused to become involved in justice for his daughter Tamar after she was raped by her brother Amnon.

²⁰Then Absalom her brother said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now keep silent, my sister, he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart.” So Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother Absalom’s house. ²¹**Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry.** ²²But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar. 2 Sam 13:20-22

Absalom spent the next two years hating and plotting vengeance against his brother. It appears that David was concerned about Absalom killing Amnon, but did nothing about it (2 Sam 13:26-27). Absalom eventually plotted and through deception killed Amnon.

³²Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David’s brother, responded, “Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king’s sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar. 2 Sam 13:32

Absalom then fled to Geshur for three years. Apparently, David was actually grateful that Absalom dealt with Amnon, which is strange since Absalom committed murder, not justice.

³⁸So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years. ³⁹*The heart of King David longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.* 2 Sam 13:38-39

Even after David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, David refused to meet with him to resolve the issues and never saw Absalom for another two years.

²⁸Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face. 2 Sam 14:28

David's failure to become involved in the life of his children ultimately resulted in Absalom conspiring to take the kingdom from God's anointed by subterfuge (2 Sam 15).

Another example of David's uninvolved parenting, was when he was old and his son Abonijah attempted to make himself king and David refused to discipline him.

⁵Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. **His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?"** And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom. 1 Kings 1:5-6

Some characteristics of uninvolved parenting:

1. Has little to no involvement with the children.
2. Has few expectations put on the children.
3. Has no meaningful communication with the children.
4. Places other activities above involvement with the children.

❖ **Are you involved in the lives of your children?**

The Over-Protective Parent

The over protective parent is full of fear and insecurity and therefore attempts to control circumstances over which truly only God is in control. This is a manifestation of ungodly fear and is unreasonable and irrational in light of our relationship with Christ and is not rooted in an abiding trust in God. Worry has been called misplaced, ungodly concern about provision, performance, or reputation (see for example Matt 6:25-34; 10:19; Luke 10:41; 12:11; 12:22-32). Worry dwells on and is preoccupied with some fear. Worry weighs down the heart and chokes out the Word of God.

²⁵**Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down**, But a good word makes it glad. Prov 12:25

³⁴"Be on guard, **so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life**, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; Luke 21:34

²²"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, **this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.** Matt 13:22 (see also Mark 4:19 and Luke 8:14)

God is faithful, fulfilling every promise. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, and utterly dependable. God is sovereign. All things are under His rule and control; nothing happens without His direction or permission. Nothing takes Him by surprise. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11). In working all things for His own glory, God causes all things to work together for the good (sanctification) of His children.

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; Rom 8:28-29

In light of these truths, we should never worry. When we worry, we are not taking God at His word, we are not trusting Him. In essence, we are calling Him a liar.

Examples of parents who allowed their children freedom by trusting in God are Elkanah and Hannah with Samuel (1 Sam 1-2), Jesse with David (1 Sam 16:11), and Joseph and Mary with Jesus (Luke 2:41-52).

Some characteristics of over protective parenting:

1. Places age inappropriate limitations on activities and circumstances to protect the child from imagined harm (physical, emotional, or spiritual harm).
2. Arranges the family's activities to ensure the child is "safe".
3. Constantly communicates with the child about the dangers of the world.
4. Fails to give the child the freedom to make mistakes and therefore grow in wisdom.

❖ **Are you over protective?**

The Authoritarian Parent

A Biblical example of an authoritarian parent is King Saul. Saul was an angry, threatening, and vindictive man.

³⁰Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? ³¹For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die." ³²But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" ³³Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. 1 Sam 20:30-33

Some characteristics of authoritarian parenting:

1. Rules the children with an "iron fist".
2. Is overly strict and uses anger, yelling, threats, and harsh discipline to maintain control.
3. Is "orders" not "rules" oriented with little or no explanation.
4. Is focused on behavior manipulation and not heart level change.

❖ **Are you focused on behavior through manipulation or heart level change through Biblical character?**

The Command

Permissive, uninvolved, over-protective, or authoritarian parents provoke their children to anger. But godly parents are to be the nurturer of their children. Specifically, the Holy Spirit through Paul in Ephesians 6:4 instructs parents to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The responsibility to ensure this task is being accomplished falls to the father as the head of the household (Eph 5:23). The mother's role is to assist the father in bringing up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord because, according to God's design, she is her husband's helper (Gen 2:18).

⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but **bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** Eph 6:4

"Bring them up" means to provide adequate nourishment to bring to maturity, to nurture. It is a present imperative calling for this to be the parents' lifestyle or habitual practice. It is a command. It is God's will for His children.

“Discipline” means to provide instruction, with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior, of providing guidance for responsible living, of rearing and guiding a child toward maturity. It is a broad term, signifying whatever parents do to train, correct, cultivate, and educate children in order to help them develop and mature as they ought. It includes the idea of correction for wrongdoing. It is the overall training of children.

“Instruction” means putting in the mind and implies the teaching of the Lord's ways through His Word. It is any word of encouragement or reproof which leads to correct behavior.

“Of the Lord” describes the focus of this command – according to His Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

❖ **Do you find yourself provoking more than nurturing?**

Punishment or Discipline?

There is much misunderstanding regarding discipline. This is often due to the influence of worldly thinking, but mainly to a lack of desire to see what God's Word says about it. Consequently, we will seek to understand foundationally what the Bible says on the topic.

Punishment is not the same as discipline. But punishment is a part of discipline. More specifically, punishment is the negative consequence(s) imposed by the parents when deemed necessary to discipline a child. Consequently, there may be discipline that does not involve punishment (e.g., a conversation to explain something to the child). This distinction becomes evident in Hebrews 12 where the author explains that God “disciplines” those who are His (Heb 12:7). The intent here is not punishment, but training.

⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; ⁶FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. ⁷It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, 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? ¹⁰For 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. ¹¹All 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. Heb 12:4-11

When the word discipline is used in these verses, the word denotes training. It is the same word used in Ephesians 6:4.

“Reprove” means to bring to the light (to reveal hidden things); to rebuke someone in such a way that they are compelled to see and to admit the error of their ways; to show someone that they have done something wrong and summon them to repent or to correct their wayward ways; to expose someone's sin in order to bring correction.

“Scourge” can mean a literal or figurative flogging. It comes from the Greek word for whip, and is used to describe the flogging phase of Jesus' crucifixion (John 19:1). Regardless if the term is used figuratively or literally, it is negative and as such can safely be called a means of punishment.

So we see here in these verses that there is a distinction made between discipline and punishment, and that punishment is a means of discipline. This is important to know in parenting because not all situations call for the same type of discipline.

Not all discipline calls for “the rod” (i.e., spanking). We are given a clear guideline for when and why it would be wise to use physical discipline in Proverbs.

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

Punishment, and more specifically physical punishment, is to be used to remove foolishness from the heart of a child. When taking a closer look at how the Bible describes foolishness, it becomes clear that foolishness is not the same as childishness. Children will do childish things often: spill their grape juice on the carpet, break a precious heirloom, blurt out embarrassing comments or questions in the grocery store, wet the bed, draw on a wall, cut their own hair, etc. We should not punish for childishness even when childish acts make our lives terribly inconvenient. Keep in mind that when your child looks at you and smiles and pours out his grape juice on the carpet a second time, that is not childishness, but rebellion (foolishness).

Punishment is reserved for manifestations of foolishness. Proverbs describes the foolish one as the one who does not fear God and this is reiterated in Psalm 14:1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

When a child is concerned only with their own agenda, they live out of the immediacy of their lusts, cravings, expectations, hopes, and fears. As Tedd Tripp states in *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, “It is a question of authority. Will the child live under the authority of God and therefore the authority of his parents, or under his own authority—driven by his wants and passions?”²

It may seem harsh to refer to children as being foolish, but consider how often children from the beginning of their lives resist being controlled by others: resistance to a diaper change, or to wearing a coat in the winter, or to eating the meal that has been prepared for them. This resistance to authority, if left unpunished, leads to a life of rebellion to all authority, including God’s. For a parent not to discipline these behaviors (through punishment) is actually one of the least loving things they can do.

²⁴He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently. Prov 13:24

It is important to note that the physical or circumstantial punishment alone you impose upon your child is not what saves them from this life of rebellion. We have to remember that punishment is a part of discipline. The punishment must be administered in a loving and biblical manner. Simply meting out various punishments, or the same punishment, leads to embittered and exasperated children. The big picture of discipline is training a child up to maturity. Therefore punishment needs to be preceded and succeeded with clear warning, instruction, and correction that orients the child back to God and away from their rebellion.

❖ **What is your view of physical discipline?**

The Rod, the Spoon, or the Hand?

The question must be asked: What constitutes biblical punishment? If we were to follow these sayings from Proverbs word-for-word, we would be punishing our children using a literal rod. Many Christian parents understand these verses to mean that parenting without spanking is sinful parenting. This is not true. The most definitive statement that can be made about parenting that does not involve some sort of physical discipline (e.g., spanking) is that it is *unwise*. Proverbs is the Word of God, but it should be read and understood as wisdom sayings.

² Ted Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 105-106.
All Scriptures from the ’95 NASB Update unless noted otherwise.

Another question that must be asked is: When should I punish my child? Tedd Tripp answers that question in this way: “When you have given a directive that he has heard and is within his capacity to understand, and he has not obeyed without challenge, without excuse or without delay...”³ The situation Tripp has described in this quote is a situation that clearly shows a child in foolish rebellion against their parent’s authority. He then goes on to explain the effect this punishment will have.

❖ **Do you discipline for childishness?**

“Properly administered discipline humbles the heart of a child, making him subject to parental instruction. An atmosphere is created in which instruction can be given. ...[It] renders the child compliant and ready to receive life-giving words.”⁴

What is “properly administered discipline? To answer this question, we must simply remind ourselves of some of the most foundational guidelines for our own personal walk with God.

- Ensure that you have communicated clearly what expectation is for your child as God does in His word.
- Are you walking in the Spirit or are you angry, bitter, anxious, or impatient? If not, take time to pray, confessing and repenting from sin, before administering punishment.
- Gather appropriate information as best as you can.
- Be prayerful, for yourself, for your child, and for God’s glory.
- Communicate clearly why your child is being punished.
- Love your child throughout the process which is a reflection of how God deals with us.

❖ **In what way do you discipline: in anger or in godliness?**

Instruction on Spiritual Things

Previously, we looked at Deuteronomy 6:4-9 to understand what God wants from parents for the instruction of children.

⁴Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deut 6:4-9

Parenting begins with the parents walking in the Spirit, submitted to God and His Word, cultivating a deep love for the Lord.

⁴Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Parents are to speak with the children about God and His Word at purposed times.

⁶These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your sons ...

Parenting are also to speak with their children about God and His word at opportune times.

...and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

³ Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, 150.

⁴ Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, 107.

All Scriptures from the '95 NASB Update unless noted otherwise.

Finally, the parents are to display the work of God's Word in their own hearts in a consistent manner in all areas of life.

⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Though this passage was written to the people of Israel thousands of years ago, it is still a description of what God wants His people to do with His Word. We would do well to heed these instructions in our own lives, and specifically within our families. The principle is clear that God's truth is to be taught and discussed within the family.

❖ Are you spending time in God's Word and imparting it to your children?

Instruction on Life Skills

There is also an aspect of instruction that requires a parent to strive to ensure their child has the ability to live independent of them as an adult.

⁵²And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:52

⁸But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Tim 5:8

Both Jesus and Paul were taught skills to ensure they could provide for themselves.

³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. Mark 6:3

³and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, **for by trade they were tent-makers.** Acts 18:3

❖ Are you ensuring your child is prepared to live independent of you?

Age-Appropriate Guidelines Regarding Discipline

What follows is an opinionated framework put together from a parenting conference held at Valley Bible Church in 2011. It is meant to be a guideline and a resource arranged by godly, seasoned parents. As such, it is not to be raised to level of God's holy Word, but to be considered as wisdom.

- 0 - 1.5 Years
- Have your child get used to hearing your voice inform them that they are either in danger or being defiant. They should be able to tell the difference in your voice.
 - Love on your child a lot, but don't be afraid to start to have rules that are for their safety (like not squirming on the changing table).
 - Ensure there is significant positive encouragement. Praise your child when he/she is responding in a way that honors God.
 - Openly discuss God's Word often at purposed and opportune times.
 - Physical punishment is less effective, but can begin to be implemented very gently.
- 1.5 - 4 Years
- Work very hard at understanding the difference between childishness and rebellion. Teach the child that rebellion is sin.
 - Ensure there is significant positive encouragement. Praise your child when he/she is responding in a way that honors God.
 - Openly discuss God's Word often at purposed and opportune times.
 - Multiple forms of discipline can be used: timeouts, removal of privileges and correctly administered physical punishment can be implemented as a regular form of discipline.
 - Have simple, consistent rules (e.g., don't say "no" to mom and dad, don't hurt sister).
 - Teach, remind, and discuss motives when your child is entering an area of temptation.

- 5 - 9 Years
- Continue to work very hard at understanding the difference between childishness and rebellion. Teach the child that rebellion is sin.
 - Ensure there is significant positive encouragement. Praise your child when he/she is responding in a way that honors God.
 - Openly discuss God’s Word often at purposed and opportune times.
 - Discipline may include teaching, verbal correction, rebuking sin, physical punishment, taking away privileges and freedoms, etc. Thought and prayer should be given to consider which will deal with the heart most effectively. Physical punishment can be used still, but typically only for serious disobedience.
 - Discuss choices and consequences, and how to think biblically about temptations.
 - Learn their strengths, weaknesses, motives, and desires then offer biblical instruction on how to deal with those.
- 10 - 13 Years
- Continue to work very hard at understanding the difference between childishness and rebellion. Teach the child that rebellion is sin.
 - Ensure there is significant positive encouragement. Praise your child when he/she is responding in a way that honors God.
 - Knowing and understanding your child is more important than ever.
 - Puberty results in emotional challenges for both girls and boys. Be understanding, but approach emotional situations from a Biblical perspective.
 - Keep lines of communication open and active as much as possible. Use these conversations to guide them through their struggles and experiences. Ask heart-level questions in order to understand your child and then impart biblical wisdom.
 - Openly discuss God’s Word often at purposed and opportune times.
 - Sins become more serious at this age. Typically physical punishment comes to an end at this phase. It is good to communicate when that has taken place and why.
 - Lovingly helping the child use biblical truths to avoid further wrong choices.
 - Discipline consists mainly of training by reasoning through what God’s Word says and how to live it out in real life situations, teaching them to prepare for upcoming issues and choices, verbal correction, rebuking sin, and removing privileges or freedoms.
- 14 - 18 Years
- Ensure there is significant positive encouragement. Praise your child when he/she is responding in a way that honors God.
 - Openly discuss God’s Word often at purposed and opportune times.
 - Don’t stop teaching, training, loving, and disciplining children during these ages. Critical issues like relationships, sexual temptation, money, work ethic, college and/or career direction, and cultivating a relationship with God are all issues that need to be discussed and dealt with at this phase.
 - It is good to spend extended one-on-one time with them.
 - Freedom can be granted liberally or restricted based on their responsibility with it.
 - Communication is critical! Ask heart-level questions in order to understand your child and then impart biblical wisdom. Openly discuss God’s Word often. The family dynamic is becoming a group of equal sinners, saved by grace, loving each other, and working together to become doers of the Word.
- Adult Children
- Children who are not under your authority (i.e., they are living independently) are not required to obey you any longer.
 - Keep communicating with them and offer biblical and practical wisdom when it is asked for or when you feel that they need it.
 - Remember, your advice may not be heeded and that is not wrong.

Concluding Thoughts

The world has much to say about discipline, but no real hope to offer since their presuppositions about parenting and what children need in error. Thankfully, God's Word provides the presuppositional foundation needed to discipline and instruct in a way that honors Him and serves our children well. Punishment, as a part of discipline, needs to be carried out in the same way we should live the rest of our lives (i.e., Spirit-filled and loving). Biblically administered discipline provides soft soil for instruction of the Word. However, biblical instruction should not just take place in these discipline moments but at all times. The discipline and instruction of the Lord Paul exhorts his readers to live out with their children in Ephesians 6:4 is a rich, exciting, and God-honoring path for parents to seek to follow.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: Your 8 year old child has just clearly disobeyed a directive you had given them. You are angry and offended that they would disobey you so defiantly. They have been sent to their room and are waiting for you to come "deal" with them. What needs to happen before you go into their room? What needs to happen when you go into their room?

Yourself #2: Your 15 year old wants to date. What questions would you ask of them? What biblical truths would you share to guide their thinking?

Someone Else: A friend of yours from church has had problems with their rebellious children (ages 3, 6, and 8). For months they have told you how they just don't understand why their children are so disobedient, but they have never asked for your advice. Then the day comes when they finally break down and ask you what they need to do to have well-behaved children. What do you say?

Marriage and Parenting – Additional Study
Topic 12 – Parenting – Discipline and Instruction

As best as you can, write out your presuppositions for the following items:

- Children

- Behavior of children

- Parenting

- Discipline

Consider: How biblical are the presuppositions above?

In what ways can you see that the world's approach to parenting has influenced your own approach to parenting?

How can you begin to make the necessary changes to be more biblical in your parenting?

What are your sinful tendencies when you go to discipline/punish your children?

How should you approach discipline/punishment biblically?