

INTRODUCTION

This is the second message in a series called, “No, that’s NOT in the Bible!” There is an alarming amount of biblical ignorance in our churches today. For fun, let’s take a quick Bible Knowledge Test. Here are twelve familiar phrases, put a check mark beside the ones you think *are* found in the Bible. Good Luck!

- _____ “Ashes to ashes; dust to dust”
- _____ “The apple of my eye”
- _____ “Eat, drink, and be merry”
- _____ “Like mother, like daughter”
- _____ “Eat sour grapes”
- _____ “The prodigal son”
- _____ “A drop in the bucket”
- _____ “The Lord’s Prayer”
- _____ “This, too, shall pass”
- _____ “Confession is good for the soul”
- _____ “Honesty is the best policy”
- _____ “The skin of my teeth”

The six phrases found in the Bible are: (1) “the apple of my eye” Zechariah 2:8; (2) “eat drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19); (3) “like mother, like daughter” (Ezekiel 16:44); (4) “eat sour grapes” (Ezekiel 18:2); (5) “a drop in the bucket” (Isaiah 40:15); (6) “the skin of my teeth” (Job 19:20). How’d you do?

Truthfully, you don’t have to know everything about the Bible to be a Christian. I heard about a guy in Smith County who had no Christian background, but he wanted to join a church. At the first church they told him before he could join he had to answer the Bible question, “Where was Jesus born?” The guy was clueless about Jesus, so he answered, “Longview.” The pastor laughed at him and told him he couldn’t join. He went to another church wanting to join, and they asked him the same question, “Where was Jesus born?” This time he gave a different answer and said, “Tyler.” Wrong again. He visited a third church and said to the pastor, “I tried joining two other churches and they made me answer a Bible question before I could join, do you require that?” The pastor said, “No, you don’t have to answer a Bible question to join our church. We open our arms to anyone, and we want to teach you what the Bible says.” The man said, “Great, this is my kind of church—I want to join! But while I’m here can I ask you a Bible question?” The pastor said, “Sure.” He said, “Can you tell me where Jesus was born?” “Why, He was born in Palestine.” the pastor said. The man slapped his head and said, “I was close—I knew it was somewhere here in East Texas!”

You may be like that guy. You may not know where to find the book of Proverbs without looking in the Table of Contents—that’s okay. You’re in the right place—our job is to teach you what the Bible *does* say.

If you really want to know the Bible it will help you discover many of the popular sayings people *think* are in the Bible really aren’t there. Most folks think they’re quoting the Bible when they

say, "Spare the rod; spoil the child." But you won't find it in the Bible. While the Bible teaches the importance of loving discipline, that phrase doesn't appear.

In my studies, I've attempted to find the origin of all these sayings. The first time this aphorism appears in print is in a long satirical poem called "Hudibras" written in the 1663 by English poet Samuel Butler. The poem, which fills up an entire book, is a satirical attack on hyper-legalistic Puritanism. Butler writes: What med'cine else can cure the fits / Of lovers when they lose their wits? / Love is a boy by poets stil'd; / Then spare the rod and spoil the child. (Hudibras, part 2, canto 1, lines 841-844).

The current version of the saying is probably based on Proverbs 13:24: "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him." In our 21st century, post-modern culture, it is not a popular subject, but we cannot escape that the Bible says "sparing the rod" does much worse than spoiling a child—it demonstrates the parents actually *hate* child! So, for all the parents, grandparents, and children, let's see what the Bible says about using the rod of correction in raising children.

I. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

Parenting is the only profession that when you finally have enough maturity and experience to do it well, you find yourself out of a job. That's probably why grandparents often make great parents, and in our culture, we're seeing a growing number of grandparents who have the primary responsibility of raising children.

Any parent who has more than one child would agree parenting attitudes change between the first and the last child. Here's a humorous look at the way maternal attitudes change with multiple children:

Maternity Clothes:

- 1st baby: You begin wearing maternity clothes as soon as your doctor confirms your pregnancy.
- 2nd baby: You wear your regular clothes for as long as possible.
- 3rd baby: Your maternity clothes ARE your regular clothes!

Preparing for Birth:

- 1st baby: You practice deep breathing religiously.
- 2nd baby: You don't practice breathing because you remember it didn't help last time.
- 3rd baby: You ask for an epidural in your eighth month.

A Crying Baby:

- 1st baby: At the first sign of a whimper or frown you pick up the baby.
- 2nd baby: You pick the baby up when her wails threaten to wake your firstborn.
- 3rd baby: You teach your 3-year-old how to rewind the mechanical swing.

Babysitters:

- 1st baby: The first time you leave your baby with a sitter, you call home five times.
- 2nd baby: Before you walk out the door, you leave a number where you can be reached.

3rd baby: You leave instructions for the sitter to call only if she sees blood.

Activities at Home:

1st baby: You spend time every day just gazing at the baby.

2nd baby: You spend time making sure your older child isn’t poking, or hitting the baby.

3rd baby: You spend a little bit of time every day hiding from the children.

Swallowing Coins:

1st child: You rush the child to the hospital and demand an X-ray.

2nd child: You carefully watch for coin to pass.

3rd child: You deduct it from his allowance!

Let me share with you five practical guidelines for applying Biblical discipline to your children or grandchildren:

1. Never use your hand to punish your child

God instructs parents to use a “rod” for an important reason. A rod is a neutral object. It’s much better to use a switch or a small stick to punish your child than to use your hand. You should only use your hand to caress and to soothe your child—you don’t want your children growing up in fear of your hand. It’s tempting for parents to spontaneously slap their misbehaving child on the leg, but that’s a bad habit to begin. It’s never appropriate for a parent to use their fists or hands to beat their children on their head or face—it is child abuse. I recall one of my uncles used to “thump” my cousins on the head with his hand. They seemed to fear their father.

The word “rod” in Proverbs is the Hebrew word *shabat*. It was used to describe the rod a shepherd used to tend his sheep. The shepherd rarely used the rod to “beat” a lamb; instead, he firmly struck their hindquarters to get them to go in the right direction. The sheep came to fear the rod without fearing the shepherd. If a lamb wandered off beyond his reach, the shepherd tossed the stick in front of the lamb, and it would send the lamb scurrying back into the flock.

There’s a great lesson here for parents. It’s no fun to use a rod to punish your child, but the Bible says it’s an important part of “directing” their lives. God has equipped children with a perfect spanking place that has plenty of padding and no vital organs. Someone once said, “When your child is good, pat them on the back. When your child is bad, pat them a little lower on the back.

My mother used a switch to punish us. She kept the switch hanging on the wall over the stove in the kitchen. Beside the switch hung a picture with the words, “I need thee; every hour I need thee.” written on it. When I learned to read, I thought saying applied to the switch—I didn’t know it was the first line of a hymn!

My older sister didn’t get as many spankings—she was too busy telling on me and my brother. When my mother used the switch, my brother and I screamed and hollered like we were dying, then we’d go off and giggle. But we knew judgement day was coming when my Dad got home. He used his belt doubled over—it was a good old fashioned business meeting—my dad made the motions and we carried out the action! I got more spankings than I can count, but I can say I

deserved every one of them, and there were times when I deserved one and didn't get one. I don't ever recall my parents striking me or slapping me with their hands. I loved my parents, but I didn't particularly care for my dad's belt or switch in the kitchen.

2. Never punish your child in anger

In our enlightened American culture, spanking is no longer in vogue. In fact, some people will hear or read my words and will immediately classify me as someone who advocates child abuse. There is a huge difference between child abuse and loving, caring biblical discipline. There is no excuse for abuse and the parent who abuses their child deserves to be publicly beaten. Abuse often occurs when a parent loses his or her temper. Loving discipline is always applied calmly and in a measured fashion.

In Proverbs 13:28 the word "careful" speaks of timing. The King James Version translates it, "He that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." The word "betimes" is the word "carefully." It's a bad time to punish your child when you're mad. It's a bad time to punish your child in front of his or her peers. There is a proper time and place for spanking, and it should be done in private after you've had a chance to calm down.

A lady passed by a man in a grocery store. He was standing behind his shopping cart and inside the cart was a three-year-old boy screaming at the top of his lungs. As she got closer she heard the man saying, "Easy, Albert. Settle down, Albert. Take it easy, Albert." She stopped and said, "Sir, I want to commend you on the gentle way in which you are speaking to Albert." He said, "His name is Sam. My name is Albert. Easy Albert." Physicians have a saying, "When the patient is having a heart attack the first pulse you take is your own." This means unless they are calm they won't be able to help the patient. The same is true when you use the rod of correction.

3. Don't make idle threats

The worst thing you can do is to threaten your child with punishment and then not deliver on your promise. For instance, you warn your child *not* to cross the street in front of your house alone because you don't want him to risk being hit by a car. Then you tell him if he wanders across the street you are going to spank him. Later you find your child across the street and you rush over and drag him back, fussing the whole way. If you say, "I told you I was going to spank you, but I'll going to let you off this time, but don't you do it again, or I'll REALLY spank you." That behavior will create a belief in your child that they can disobey the rules without facing the consequences. That's a dangerous lesson.

Don't threaten to spank your child for everything (there are other tools for punishment). Spanking should be reserved for the most serious acts of willful disobedience and attitudes of rebellion. If you threaten to spank your child for every little mistake, your child will grow up fearing the consequences of trivial mistakes. For heaven's sake, don't spank your child for mistakes, accidents, or for acting childishly.

A few years ago, Ann Landers offered a newspaper column entitled "How to Be a Stupid Parent." She wrote: "Let your kids get away with anything until you get fed up. Then lose your

temper. Holler. Scream. Go wild and clobber them. If they turn out well, it won’t because of you; it will be a miracle.”

4. Talk before and after the punishment

Before any punishment is inflicted, the rules of engagement need to be clearly communicated to your child. Tell them what the rules are, and explain *why* you have these rules. Then tell them what the punishment will be if the rules are violated. When you tell your child they can’t do something and they ask, “Why?” The answer, “because I said so, that’s why!” only produces sullenness and anger in them.

When your child deliberately violates the rules, then it’s time to apply the punishment you promised. Talk to them before the punishment and tell them what they have done wrong and remind them of the punishment you promised.

God is the same way. He always warns us before He inflicts punishment. In Revelation 3:21, Jesus said, “Those I love I rebuke and discipline.” Like parents, God only disciplines those He loves, and He does it two steps: First, there is the warning, and then there is the discipline.

Sometimes the “rebuking phase” is the most painful part of the punishment stage—for both parent and child. When our girls were at home we had a trouble stick we kept in a bottom drawer in the kitchen. When punishment was due, Cindy or I would talk to our girls about the rules and the punishment, and then we would have them go to the drawer and get the trouble stick. That’s when the crying would start—before the first blow! After the actual punishment we would leave them in their rooms for a few minutes to think about their action. Then we would go and hug them and tell them how much we loved them and how we only wanted the best for them. We certainly weren’t perfect parents, but we both agreed on this method of loving punishment.

5. Praise more than you punish

This message is more devoted toward the punishment phase of discipline because it is addressing the popular saying about “sparing the rod.” But it’s much more important to give your child positive encouragement than punitive discipline. Punishment discourages bad behavior, positive praise encourages good behavior. A shepherd used his rod to direct the sheep and to protect them from harm. By teaching your child right and wrong, you are actually protecting them from the dangers they will face in the world.

Parents are given a warning in Colossians 3:21, “Fathers (parents) do not embitter your children or they will become discouraged.” Eugene Petersen paraphrases it, “Parents, do not come down too hard on your children or you’ll crush their spirits.” (*The Message*)

If your child brings a report card home with four A’s and one B, are you the kind of parent who focuses on the B and asks, “What happened in class?” Or do you celebrate the A’s? I heard about one boy who brought his less-than-sterling report card to his dad. He said, “Dad, here’s my report card along with one of yours I found in the attic!

You will embitter your children if you constantly focus on their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Give your children ten times more compliments than complaints and make sure they receive a hundred times more hugs than spankings.

II. POSITIVE RESULTS OF BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

Spare the rod; spoil the child speaks of the negative consequences of withholding punishment. But according to the book of Proverbs there are many positive benefits of correctly applying the rod of correction to the seat of the problem. Let's notice three.

1. Biblical discipline is a lesson in love

Our primary text says the parent who spares the rod hates his son. The word "hate" means to "consider as an enemy." Sometimes parents say, "I can't spank my sweet little angel because I love him so much." Well, the Bible says if they need spanking and you spare the rod, you really hate them. The second half of the verse says "he who loves his son is careful to discipline him." When my daddy used to whip me he usually made two statements. First, he'd say, "Son, I'm doing this because I love you." I wanted to say, "Well, dad, don't love me so hard!" Then he would say, "This hurts me more than it hurts you." And I just didn't believe that—but I do now.

God loves us unconditionally, yet sometimes He has to punish His children. The Bible says in Proverbs 3:11-12: "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves." When we are in the middle of God's chastisement, we may not think God loves us very much—but He does. The most loving thing you can teach your children is there is a difference between right and wrong and doing wrong results in unpleasant consequences. That's a good lesson they'll use for the rest of their lives.

2. Biblical discipline roots out rebellion

There are two basic moral philosophies in the world. The humanistic philosophy says man is basically good at heart and any evil in his life is because of his wicked surroundings. On the other hand, the Bible teaches we are all born with a wicked, rebellious nature. Humanism says all man needs to excel is a boost from below. The Bible says man needs a birth from above.

We're reaping the bitter fruit of the liberal indoctrination from the 1950s and 1960s, which taught parents should never punish their children because it may stunt their development. The philosophy of Dr. Spock and other "experts" was if Junior wanted to saw the legs off your dining room table, you just make sure the saw is sharp so he won't be frustrated.

But the Word of God says we are all born with a rebellious nature. Proverbs 22:15 says "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him." Some parents don't want to spank their little precious because they think they are a tiny rose just waiting to bloom and develop. Sadly, if you don't do something to break the stubborn, rebellious will of your child, that little rose may grow up and blacken your eye.

Sadly, we have many adults who have grown up and are just big babies. They still possess this childish, selfish attitude. If you don’t think grownups can act like babies, just go to a Little League baseball game and listen to the parents whine!

Sometimes when a toddler stomps his foot and says, “No!” Parents laugh and say, “Isn’t that cute?” But it’s not cute, it’s dangerous. When your children willfully disobey you, and you spank them, you are teaching them an important life lesson: *They are not a law unto themselves.* Someone (parents) has moral authority over him and there are unpleasant consequences to disobeying authority. If your child doesn’t learn that lesson they will have trouble in school, trouble at work, and trouble with the law. Most kids only need about four or five real spankings in their life to get the point—although it took many more than that for me. There are some things a child can learn through the seat of his pants that otherwise he would have to learn later in life at the cost of much greater suffering.

3. Biblical discipline steers toward salvation

When you teach your child they will be held accountable to you for their actions, you are also teaching them that they will be held accountable to a higher authority—God. Even before a child reaches the age of accountability before God, they should be held accountable to their parents.

The Bible says by punishing your child when they are disobedient, you are teaching them about the reality of eternal punishment for rebelling against God. Proverbs 23: 13-14 says, “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.” If you could have heard my brother and I scream when my mother used the switch on us, you would have thought we were dying—but we weren’t. I’m sure my parents spoke many life-lessons to me as a child—but I don’t remember a single verbal statement. But I do remember learning for disobedience and rebellion judgement day was coming! My parents loved me dearly, but they loved me enough to discipline me. I grew up understanding God loves me, but I will be held accountable to Him for my life and actions. Today, my brother and I both are serving God today in vocational ministry.

CONCLUSION

Parents, your children will only be with you for a few short years. Enjoy them! But you must understand the values and beliefs they develop in their first few years will be ingrained on their hearts forever. Francis Xavier wrote: “Give me the children until they are seven and anyone can have them after that.” They really are like wet cement.

When it comes to discipline, it’s easier to let things slide. No parent wants more stress, and spanking a child raises a parent’s stress level. But you will do yourself and your child a great favor by lovingly applying the rod of correction when it is needed.

It’s tough being a parent of only one child, but could you imagine being a mother of 17 children? Suzanna Wesley was the mother of 17 children, most of them became ministers or married ministers and two of her sons, Charles and John Wesley are heroes of the faith.

Although she had 17 children, she took time each day to personally interact and talk with each of them. Later in life, she wrote this about parenting: “The parent who seeks to subdue the self-will of their child works with God in the saving of a soul. The parent who indulges the child’s self-will does the devil’s work—and does all to kill their child’s body and soul forever.”

Those are strong words from a mother, but her words are reflected in the scripture we’ve examined. “Spare the Rod; spoil the child?” No, that’s NOT in the Bible. But the Bible does teach loving, Biblical discipline can keep your child out of trouble and ultimately out of hell.

If you are an adult, you may have bad memories about your childhood—whether or not you were spanked or beaten or slapped. But right now you need to know God loves you and He will be a perfect Father to you, if you will surrender your heart to Him. His arms are wide open to receive you today.

OUTLINE

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2. Never punish your child in anger
3. Don't make idle threats
4. Talk before and after the punishment
Jesus said, "Those I love I rebuke and discipline." Revelation 3:21
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II. POSITIVE RESULTS OF BIBLICAL DISCIPLINE

1. Lesson in love
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"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him."
Proverbs 22:15
3. Steers toward salvation
"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death." *Proverbs 23:13-14*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes