

Parenting Like God

Training Children How to Live Life Well
Teacher's Edition

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Part 1:

Our Father Gives Love

INTRODUCTION: GOD IS OUR EXAMPLE

We love our children. Because we love them, we want them to grow up to live life well, meaning that they live fulfilling God's purpose for their life in joy and peace and love. To live life to it's fullest, we know that our children need to make right choices - choices that follow God's ways.

To make right choices, our children will need to be able to have a relationship with God to experience His love and grace, knowledge of God's Word to grasp kingdom principles, revelation of who they are in Christ, wisdom to have understanding for discernment, training to bring their body and soul under subjection, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit to give them guidance and strength.

In this series we are going to look at training our children to bring their body and soul into subjection through learning self-discipline. In order for our discipline to be effective, we need to discipline in the way that God's Word instructs us; otherwise, our discipline will be used as a tool to tear our children down rather than to build them up. **In these lessons we are going to look at how God disciplines us and how we can follow His example.**

GOD TRAINS HIS TRAINERS

Not only do our children belong to us; our children also belong to God. Raising children is a large responsibility; a responsibility that God would not leave us unequipped for. **For parenting, God has given us a personal trainer, who is the Holy Spirit, and a training manual, which is the Word of God.** They are both vital to us for raising up men and women who will take their place in the earth.

You don't have to be perfect! There are many parents out there that have feelings of insecurity about raising their children. Their insecurities may stem from a lack of knowledge about parenting or inexperience with children. Insecurities may come from feeling alone as a single parent. A parent might feel insecure about the challenges of bringing children into a blended family. Insecurities could also arise if that parent was raised in a dysfunctional or abusive home, concerned that something unhealthy could repeat itself. **It's not unusual to feel apprehension about caring for a young life, but we can have the confidence that God will give us what we need when we are seeking Him for it.**

God is that He is bigger than anything that we have ever faced in our past or will ever face in our future. God’s love is continually working to bring restoration in our lives and in our relationships. **Our qualifications for parenting aren’t just based on our abilities, but they are based on God’s ability to take us up and over our own shortcomings.** Thank God for grace.

WHAT IT MEANS, “TO TRAIN”

A basic definition for the word “train” is: To develop thoughts or behavior.

Some synonyms for the word “train” are: coach, cultivate, develop, discipline, equip, get into shape, ground, grow strong, guide, hone, instruct, make ready, qualify, rear, season, shape, sharpen, show the ropes, teach.

Antonyms of the word “train” are neglect and forget.

One illustration for training is the use of training wheels on a bike. The training wheels give support to help to make a child ready to ride a two-wheel bike. Once they have experience and knowledge on how to ride the bike, the training wheels come off and the child rides on his or her own. The training accomplished its purpose. When we train our children, we are preparing them to live life on their own. We are guiding, instructing, shaping, teaching, and cultivating our children for their destiny.

Psalm 127:4 “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth.”

An arrow is an instrument that an archer carefully aims towards a target. As we raise our children, we are aiming our children towards becoming men and women of God, persons who know their purpose and fulfill God’s plan for their life.

CHILDREN IN TRAINING

God gives very clear instruction in His Word that part of our responsibility as parents is to provide training for our children.

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Ephesians 6:4b says to fathers, “...bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

There is a principle at work here, that if a child is trained in the way he (or she) should go, they won’t leave it when they get older. Most people, when they have received training and understand the choice between life and death, will choose life. There comes a time when a child will need to make his or her own choices, not out of obligation to the parents, but because the young person has adopted that training as their own conviction. Some young people will go through this transference of conviction without too much

testing; others will need to experience the pain of the consequences of sin before they fully embrace their training. Once a person has lived life for a long time, they usually recognize from experience that what they were taught is true. The verse says, “When he is OLD he will not depart from it.” Life has a way of showing us that God’s ways are better than our ways.

However, each person has their own will and has the right to make their own decisions. There have been occasions where Christian parents trained their child in the ways of God and aimed that child towards God’s purpose for his or her life, yet the person decided to turn away from what they were taught, even into their old age. That’s because God will not override their will. They have the right to choose.

OUR FATHER GIVES US LOVE

God is our example for a Father – on how we nurture, protect, and correct our children. He wants us to follow His example, and through His example, we can see that His purpose in training us is LOVE.

Ephesians 5:1-2 “(1) Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. (2) And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”

A. We need to get to know God as our Father

We tend to imitate what we’ve known. If our earthly parents were good parents or not, our tendency is to repeat our experience. The words “father” or “mother” bring up different feelings for different people. That is why it is important for us to get to know God as our Father. His image is the correct one.

The better we know God as our “Abba” Father, the better parents we will be.

B. God is love

*I John 4:7-8 “(7) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (8) He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**”*

God doesn’t just possess love; He is the embodiment of love. Love is who He is. He loves us, each of us, with all of Himself. It isn’t until we know God that we know what real love is.

I John 4:19 “We love Him (God) because He first loved us.”

C. God disciplines us because He loves us

God’s motive for everything He does, is love. He teaches us, instructs us, and shapes us because He loves us. When He disciplines us, it is because He wants to keep us from harm, because He loves us.

Proverbs 3:11, 12 “(11) My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.”

God knows that His best requires right choices. When He disciplines us, He is correcting our wrong choices.

Hebrews 12:5-11

God’s motive for His commandments is not to control us. God doesn’t want to selfishly use us, He doesn’t need us to build up His ego, and He doesn’t want to punish us to vent His anger.

God loves us. He knows that He is want we need to have true life. He knows that if we go against our design, we will bring harm to ourselves. When He disciplines us, God wants us to get back on the right track. He also wants us to learn to control ourselves so that we can follow the right choices.

When we discipline our children, it is because we want what is best for them. We want them to learn to make right decisions and keep themselves in line to follow the right path.

Children need to know that our motive for discipline is not to control them, but for children to learn to control themselves.

CONCLUSION

Love values the person it cares for. We expect children to honor their parents, but parents need to first show their children that they honor them. Respect is a two-way street. If we expect our children to honor us, we need to be the example that they imitate and honor them first. They have a high value and are worth being treated with dignity. If we treat children as less than they are worth, we will instigate self-disrespect and rebellion.

BREAK OUT GROUPS

If you are a Christian, describe a time when you experienced the love God has for you.

Describe the relationship that you had with your parents as you were growing up. Also include how you were disciplined as a child. You will not have to discuss this information unless you choose to.

Write how your relationship with God is different or similar from the relationship that you had with your parents. You will not have to discuss this information unless you choose to.

Part 2:

Our Father Gives Instruction

God is our example of how to train our children to do well in life. In this lesson we are going to look at how God dealt with Adam and his disobedience to glean some principles on how we should discipline our children.

GOD IS JUST AND FAIR

God does not discipline us without first giving us instruction. It would be wrong to arrest a person and put them in jail if no one ever first established the law. God did not discipline Adam without first informing him on what was right and wrong.

Genesis 2:16, 17 “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

- A. God did not discipline Adam without first setting the boundaries.

God told Adam what was right, what was wrong, and what the consequences would be if he chose to do what was wrong. I don’t believe that the consequence of dying was simply about eating a piece of fruit. God wanted Adam’s reliance upon Him. God wanted Adam to surrender to His loving leadership and authority. To eat the fruit was to position himself against God and to stand apart from His lordship. God is life. The result of turning away from life was death.

We as parents should imitate our Heavenly Father and communicate rules to our children. **When setting boundaries for our children, our goal is not to see our children fail, but rather to succeed. Let’s help our children do well by giving them realistic and attainable goals.**

1. Rules should be age-appropriate

Is the child capable of adhering to the rules that you have set in place?

2. Rules should be concise, simple, easy to understand

Rules should be concise so that they are memorable. Remember that God Himself only had ten commandments. If there are too many rules or if the rules are too complex, you could overwhelm a child. If the rules are unattainable, you are setting your child up to fail. Keep the rules at an attainable goal.

Parents may have to be educated to understand the development of their child. For example, sharing is not a concept that toddlers usually can grasp because of where they are at in their mental development. Your expectations of your child need to be realistic.

To assure that your children have heard you, ask them to repeat the instructions back to you. Ask them these questions:

- What are the rules?
- What will happen if you obey?
- What will happen if you disobey?

Children will be more confident to make choices when they have knowledge of what the boundaries are. If you haven't made the boundaries clear, children won't have the security of having your support.

3. Rules should be communicated verbally and visually

Read Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Children retain more information when they see it visually. It is helpful to post a sign with the rules on them in a place where the children continually see it. It is even more memorable if the children help to make the sign.

If children are disciplined, but they were disciplined for something that they were unaware of, they will feel that they were treated unfairly. **Injustice can breed resentment and rebellion. It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure the rules are understood from the beginning.**

Children learn more from what we do than from what we say. God expects parents to teach their children to know Him. In order for any of us to know God intimately on a continual basis, righteousness is a requirement because God is a holy God. What is upright? Anything that is found in God is right. Anything outside of God is not upright – it is twisted and wicked. What is not holy will keep us from having a close relationship with God. Teaching our children about choosing salvation is only the first step. We are to lead them by example to have a holy, surrendered life to God.

B. God also communicated beforehand the rewards for obedience and the consequences for disobedience.

Discipline (#4995, sophronismos) in the Greek means:

To call to self-control or soundness of mind, good judgment, to make right decisions

The goal of discipline should not just be to control our children. Our goal should be to teach our children how to control themselves.

If we love our children, we will discipline them in love, teaching them the importance of self-control and living a righteous life.

Proverbs 22:15 “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him.”

Proverbs 19:18 “Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.” If you love him or her, you will discipline them, not wanting to see their lives destroyed.

Proverbs 29:15 “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” When parents don’t care about their child, they leave them alone to do whatever they want to do. The soul of the human race is bent on sin. If left alone, we wander away from what is right. We have to be taught about God. We have to be trained for righteousness. This is part of the role of being a parent.

Proverbs 23:13-14 “Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. (14) You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.” God is not telling us that it is okay to abuse our children. There is no love in that. This is a scripture on spanking. We will take a look at spanking later on.

THE PURPOSE FOR REWARDS AND CONSEQUENCES

The purpose for rewards is to give children an incentive for obedience. Rewards are also a teaching tool to communicate our approval. A reward will help a child to learn what is acceptable to us as parents.

If our motive for rewarding is merely to manipulate our child's behavior for our benefit, our rewards are nothing more than bribes.

Part of God's reward for our obedience is His presence. Our children want to know we love and believe in them by the way we spend our time with them.

The purpose for consequences is to bring correction. Punishment should cause a child to realize that they did something wrong and they need to correct their attitude and behavior.

We want our children to know that our motive for administering consequences is our love for them and our desire to see them make right choices.

C. Parents should remind their children of the rules, rewards and consequences.

Throughout the Bible we see God reminding people about life and death and their choices. How easily we get caught up in the world around us that we forget to consider God and the things of the spirit!

Punishment should only be applied for rebellion, not for ignorance or forgetfulness.

Forgetfulness is not the same thing as laziness. Someone who is lazy may claim that they have “forgotten” but in reality they have not honored the instruction because they don’t want to do it. In this case, laziness is a form of disobedience and rebellion.

1. Remind your children of what you have taught them.

Children are forgetful – some more than others. God tells us to remind our children about obedience. We can talk to them about the way the house is run. For children who are old enough to read, we can make a poster with the rules on them. *Deuteronomy 6:6-9*

2. Remind your children of God’s Word.

Teach your children what the Bible has to say about obedience and the responsibility you have as a parent to raise them to honor the Lord.

3. Remind children of the blessings for obedience.

Sometimes when you see a young child getting ready to do something they shouldn’t do, remind them of the blessings of obedience.

4. Remind children of the punishment for disobedience.

Teach children to think before they act. If a child is young and has been forgetful, give them warning. God gives us warnings, trying to help steer us in making right choices. A good parent wants to help their child make the right choices.

As we discipline children, we must remember that if we do it incorrectly, we could cause that child to not only to disassociate with us, but even more seriously, to disassociate with God. God wants us to be able to open our hearts to Him with trust in His loving authority.

BREAK OUT GROUPS

Discuss how God gives information to the world about salvation through Jesus Christ. Do you feel that people have been informed about their decision between heaven and hell?

Part 3:

Our Father Gives Us a Choice

CHOICES ARE THE RIGHT OF A FREE-WILL HUMAN SPIRIT

If children feel that you are trying to control them, they may try to control you right back. They usually want to do well, but they want it to be their choice.

Read Genesis 3:1-8

God gave Adam a choice.

A. We are to give our children the right to choose.

1. We show our children that we love them and that we want what is best for them.
2. We give our children instruction and inform them of both the rewards and the consequences.
3. We are to let our children make their own choices and let them experience the rewards or the consequences of their choices.

When we discipline, we are teaching and training our children to know and follow after God. Part of learning godly behavior empowers them to choose their own actions. Part of learning also includes letting them experience the blessing of obedience and also the trouble associated with consequences.

We need to teach our children that the way to have a successful and blessed life is to learn to surrender our will to God's. To know God we have to be dependent on Him, realizing that our life is found in Him. Our children naturally depend on us when they are young. They look to us to care for them and to steer them in the right direction. As parents, we are to take that dependency and teach our children how to depend on God. It is best to teach our children when they are children, because by the time they reach adolescence, they are naturally going to reach an age where they will try to make decisions apart from their parents.

When children are younger, we make a lot of their decisions for them. As they become teenagers, we should let them know that we are always there to give them advice, but they also need room to make some of their own decisions. They also need to experience the results of their behavior. Parents that hold on too tightly will restrict the growth of their children or cause them to resent your involvement. Parents that rescue their children out of trouble before there is repentance are not doing their child any service. Children need to learn.

When our children were younger we would say, “Learn it now.” We told them as they got older and their responsibilities grew, the consequences for sin would become more painful. If we love our children, we will teach them that.

We would also quote a minister that used this phrase, “Be quick to obey and quick to repent.” We need to teach our children to make choices and if they realize their choice was wrong, to be quick to turn the right direction.

God gives punishment for the purpose of returning to Him. When we get outside of what God wants for us, we get away from life and begin to experience the pain of sin. When we feel conviction, that is the Holy Spirit calling us to come back home to God. God is merciful, only desiring to see our hearts turn back to Him. The sooner we return, the more mercy we are shown.

B. We are to teach our children to be led by their heart.

When our children were young, we taught them that they were spirit beings made in the image of God. We told them that unlike a pet or an animal, we were made to be God’s children, and God is a spirit. We taught them that the way to make right choices was to look on the inside of them, in their heart.

Children are able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. They have a conscious in their heart, just as we adults do. We told them that when they knew they shouldn’t do something, like watch something scary on television, it was their spirit giving them a red light, meaning to stop. We taught them that when they knew they were doing the right thing, like sharing with one another, that knowing something was good was a green light. As parents we would teach them to recognize the voice of their spirit. We would look for opportunities to ask them, do you have a red light or a green light in your heart? As they got to be teenagers they knew how to look inside their heart. They know what we mean when we ask them what their heart was telling them.

We are to aim our children, to help guide them in the right direction. Children are not just for our enjoyment. Our children belong to God and we are responsible to guide them to Him and the plan He has for their life.

Psalm 127:4 “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth.”

We are to show children their value and treat them the way God wants them to be treated. We are to raise them up, not just in natural areas of development (their education, health, social life, etc); but also in their spiritual development. Teach them the right thing to do as a Christian – to forgive, to help others, to go the extra mile, etc.

C. We are to teach our children to be led by the Holy Spirit.

When our children learned to look on the inside of their hearts, the next natural step was to learn about the Holy Spirit. We taught our children about salvation and how God changed their spirit nature, causing them to be new or born again. Then we taught them that God would live on the inside of them through the Holy Spirit, in their heart.

We taught our children that in the same place where they knew what was right and what was wrong, that is where the Holy Spirit would lead them. The spirit, or the conscious, is where the Holy Spirit lives. He is always there; ready to help you make the right decisions, even when mom and dad aren't around. When we ask God what we should do, we are to look inside and ask God to lead us by His Spirit.

We teach our children that they are to take a step in the direction that they believe they are supposed to go. We told them that God wants to work together with them, which means they sometimes have to take a step and obey before they are going to know the next step. This is a life of faith, a journey that we take with God, step by step. If the next step is right, the Holy Spirit gives us peace. If the next step is wrong, the Holy Spirit will warn us to stop, like traveling on a highway and following the road signs.

The more they experience walking with God, the clearer they understand His leading. Spiritual things are better caught than taught.

D. We are to teach our children how to hear the voice of God.

After children understand how to follow their heart and know the leading of the Holy Spirit, they can also understand how to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. In the same way that they "know" what is right or wrong, they "know" words that God is speaking to them. Suddenly, you "know" a word or a phrase that God is speaking to you. We teach them the difference between thinking a thought in their head and hearing something in their heart. When God speaks to us it is in the heart.

We guided them to experience the anointing of the Holy Spirit. They have been in services where there is an outpouring of the Spirit or when hands have been laid on them and the Holy Spirit would come upon them. We taught them about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the importance of praying in the spirit.

When our children were younger, we would pray over them and guard them from the enemy. As they began to take steps on their own as teenagers, becoming more independent of mom and dad, we knew they would have to understand that they had to exercise power over the devil and needed to walk in their authority in the earth. They never feared the devil, because they always saw him as

defeated. They knew that greater was He that was in them than he that was in the world (I John 4:4).

E. We are to teach our children to control their emotions

When we give children what they want, we are rewarding their behavior. If they whine or fuss and get what they want, they learn to whine and fuss to get what they want. One thing that we would not allow our children to do was to whine. If they wanted something and they were whining, we would say, “I can’t hear you, all I can hear is whining.” It was amazing how quickly they could change their tone. They can control their emotions.

If they got into an argument with one another, we would separate them and tell them to go get their emotions under control. Once they had their emotions in check they could come out of their room. They learned that they could control their emotions.

We taught our children that they were spirit beings; strong on the inside, and that their soul (mind, will and emotions) and their body are subject to their spirit. Children can learn to live from their heart.

Children can also learn to distinguish between what is their mind and what is the Holy Spirit. Many adults try to follow God through their reasoning and discontentment rather than through their hearts. They make mistakes. We want to teach our children how to obey God. Sometimes the path of obedience can seem difficult, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t the right path. It doesn’t mean that blessing isn’t just right around the corner. It is good to teach our children that sometimes obedience isn’t the easiest choice to make, but that rewards will follow obedience in the long run.

BREAK OUT GROUPS

Discuss a time that you were led by the Spirit.

Part 4:

Our Father Gives Rewards and Consequences

REAFFIRMING OUR CHILDREN

Young children look to their parents for their self-image. We convey either positive or negative reflections of our children through our words and through our actions. If we say positive things over our children, they will mostly likely view themselves positively and act accordingly. If we say negative things about our children, they will most likely view themselves negatively and their behavior will be negative. We also convey either positive or negative reflections through our actions and our attitudes. Children are observers. They are watching their caregivers and their self-image is shaped by what they perceive their authorities think about them.

“As he thinks in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs 23:7

ADMINISTERING REWARDS

Administering rewards is vital in encouraging children to have good behavior.

The first commandment that came with a promise is to honor your father and mother. It’s important that our children know that honoring us as their parents is for their benefit. It’s also important for them to know what the Word of God says. When our children were young and we knew they were about to make a decision to obey or disobey us, we would ask them, “What’s the first commandment with a promise?” They would answer, “Honor your father and mother.” We would then ask, “and what’s the promise if you honor your parents?” They would answer, “That it would be well with us and we would live long on the earth.”

Ephesians 6:2-3 says, “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: 3) that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

It will be well with us and we will live long on the earth when we honor our parents. Part of the reason I believe in this is a promise is because blessing comes with honoring authority. Another reason why I think this promise is true is because when we are honor our parents, we are living our life the way they taught us to- according to the Word of God. When we are obedient, it brings blessing.

A. Give children goals and incentives

God gives incentives and we should too. It is a good idea to give children attainable goals for their stage of development and then to reward them when goals are met. Everyone needs to feel like they have accomplished something good in order to encourage him or her to want to continue to make right choices.

We need to see that we are doing something well. With young children, putting stickers on a chart to recognize that they are doing their chores displays their efforts and encourages them to do what they are told.

B. Give children resources to accomplish their goals

Provide resources to help them develop in their gifting. Do whatever you can to show them that they have value and assure them that you want them to succeed. Provide training, education and other resources so they see that you believe in them and are supporting them.

C. Celebrate their wins

Make a big deal of their accomplishments, whatever they are. Whether a child is good at sports or math or the creative arts, celebrate their achievements. If they fail, be there to encourage them and help them to try again.

ADMINISTERING PUNISHMENT

In order to use discipline properly, we have to understand its purpose. The root for the word discipline is the same root for the word disciple. The meaning of the root is to teach or train. The purpose for discipline is to teach, to equip, to raise up. If administered with a selfish purpose, discipline can abuse, destroy, and tear down.

The root of discipline is the same as the root for disciple. The meaning of the root word is to train or to teach. The purpose for discipline is to teach.

- When we discipline, we are teaching our children what is right and what is wrong.
- When we discipline, we are teaching our children to follow their hearts.
- When we discipline, we are teaching our children self-control.

Psalm 34:11 "Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you to revere and worshipfully fear the Lord."

God disciplines us because He wants us to get back on track to life. However, when a person decides to test what they have been taught and wander away from what is right; they will experience the pain of disobedience and remember the truth that can guide them back to God.

There is a right way and a wrong way to discipline. **When discipline is administered correctly, it can build a child’s character, strengthen relationships and encourage right living. If discipline is administered negatively, it can tear down a child’s self-esteem, destroy intimacy in relationships and breed rebellion.**

Read Genesis 3:9-13

A. The goal of punishment is repentance and restoration

Punishment is not a tool for the parent to take out their frustrations and disappointment. Punishment is not a tool for a parent to try to control their child through fear. The goal of punishment is to correct wrong choices and bring them back on track.

If we do not see God’s purpose for punishment correctly, we will have a distorted view of the Father. God does not enjoy seeing his children suffer the consequences of wrong choices.

Ezekiel 33:11 “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?”

B. The motive for correction is love

Romans 2:4 “...the goodness of God leads you to repentance.”

When you love someone, you don’t want to see him or her get hurt. Sin hurts. God will allow us to suffer the consequences of bad behavior so that we will recognize our need for Him in our life. He is righteous. He is the source of all that we need. He wants us to surrender our will to His for our benefit. His ways are what we were created for. We were designed to know God and His glory.

When we discipline our children, it should come from a heart of love. That doesn’t mean that we don’t get angry. God gets angry. Anger is an expression of displeasure. However, when anger is in check, it is not out of control. A spiritually mature person is ruled by love, not by emotion.

C. The first step in repentance is to recognize and admit wrongdoing

Jeremiah 3:12-13 “Return...For I am merciful...I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity...”

If a person does not recognize their wrongdoing, their ignorance keeps them in opposition with God. God gave the law so that the Jews would know their wrongdoing and need for forgiveness. We also need to discern what is right and what is wrong.

Secondly, if a person does not take responsibility for wrongdoing, there is no true repentance. There can be no blame shifting of accountability for wrongdoing. Whatever someone else did or whatever circumstance we were in, we are still responsible for our actions. We stand alone in the presence of God for our own choices. God wants us to admit our failure so that we can receive His forgiveness and restoration.

D. Give children the opportunity to repent.

God gave Adam the opportunity to repent. He asked Adam why he was hiding. God wanted to give Adam the opportunity to return to Him.

As parents, many times we focus on the misbehavior and tell our children what they did wrong. It is good to focus on their heart and let them tell us what they did wrong. Ask them questions like God questioned Adam:

Ask, "What did I tell you?"

Ask, "What did you do wrong?"

Ask, "Why do you think that was wrong?"

Listen to what they have to say, but don't allow children to make excuses or shift blame. They will be more receptive to your teaching if they know that you care about they have to say. If more than one child was involved, hold them each accountable for their participation in the wrong.

Acknowledge their feelings, but don't let feelings to be an excuse for wrong choices. You can say back to them, "I understand that you were frustrated, but you still made a wrong choice." Teach them that they have to learn to control their emotions.

E. Rely on the Holy Spirit to do His part

Repentance is a decision of the heart. Parents can't change a child's heart. However, the Holy Spirit can convict the child, drawing them to repentance. It is still up to the child to make the decision to receive God's love and the love of his or her parents.

Parents also need to be submitted the Holy Spirit and should look to God for help in raising their children. Rely on the Spirit for the words to say, for the anointing to teach and for love to rule them.

We have to remember that our children are not just ours; they also belong to God. It is our responsibility to correct them and teach them the way that God wants them to be treated. We will stand before God for the way we raised God's children. What our children do with our instruction is their own responsibility.

F. Always show love after administering discipline.

Read Genesis 3:21

Don't assume that your children know that you love and forgive them. Be the initiator and reassure them of your love after discipline. Tell them with your words and physically wrap your arms around them. Let them know that your love for them is not based on their performance, but because they are your child.

G. Discipline guidelines

In addition to what we have already mentioned, here are some tips for discipline:

1. Pray together with your child for God's help in making right choices.
2. If you feel that you are angry and not in control, leave the room until you have your emotions in check.
3. Verbally express your love and responsibility for correction in your child's life.
4. Get on eye level with the child when speaking with him or her.
5. Be consistent.
6. Follow through. Keep your word to discipline your children or you will lose credibility and your children will not take you seriously.
7. Discipline immediately, especially for younger children.
8. Listen, but never allow your child to argue with you. Don't allow children to talk back to you or your spouse. You are the authority.
9. Don't yell and scream at your child. If you yell, you can't expect them not to yell. It's disrespectful and a lack of emotional control. We are teaching our children to control themselves, and we have to do so by example. Yelling breeds dishonor and rebellion.
10. Never demean a child. Some parents use words to beat down their children. Never call a child a name or label them with something negative, like a "brat." Do not use words inclusive words that put children in a category, like "you never listen to what I say."
11. Never let them see you sweat. Rebellion wants some type of control. If they can make you upset, they will take pleasure in having a hold on you.
12. Do not provoke your children to wrath. Don't tease your children. Don't talk bad about your children in front of others.¹
13. Don't punish your children publicly. God does not use humiliation to punish us. When giving instruction for restoring a brother, Jesus emphasized going to that person privately. Children pick up on your respect for them. Do not dishonor your children through embarrassment.
14. Teach your child to avoid trouble. Work together with children to set up guidelines to help the house run smoothly. If there is an area that

¹ Ephesians 6:4

- repeatedly causes problems, like fighting over a computer game; then discuss a solution, such as using a timer and taking turns.
15. Teach older children to solve problems rather than to fight with siblings. Help them to recognize problems and look for possible ways to work out their differences. Do not allow children to argue with one another. They should be made to talk with respect to one another.
 16. Present a united front with your spouse. If parents disagree, they should do it in private. Children learn to divide and conquer at a very early age. Furthermore, when parents agree, it gives the child security. When they see their dad as the head of the house, they learn to appreciate his position. When they see dad working together with mom, they learn to honor her role in the home.
 17. Parents should share responsibility. One parent should not have to be the bad guy. Both parents should agree on the discipline before administering it to the children. Both parents should be seen as disciplinarians.
 18. Don't show favoritism. Punish all the children involved. God punished Adam, Eve and the devil.
 19. If you are wrong, apologize to your child. Teach them humility and a yielded heart by example.
 20. Some children require more discipline than others; however, if a disciplinary method is not working, you may need to consider a different approach for that particular child.

SPANKING

Spanking is a controversial subject. When it is done correctly, spanking has proven to be successful for young children. However, in some cases, spanking has been used as a cover-up for physical abuse. God does not advocate beating children. However, spanking is found in the Bible and was culturally acceptable under the old covenant. Remember that we are living in a different culture and in a different time period today. Spanking a child today can sometimes be a case for child abuse.

Why spanking? The purpose for spanking is to teach young children that what they are doing is wrong. Young children do not understand reasoning or logic. They do understand cause and effect. The small pain they feel from spanking shows them what they are doing is wrong. If a child is old enough to know what they are doing is wrong, they are old enough to be disciplined. Once a child reaches an age where they can reason, spanking should not be necessary. There are many other ways to punish older children, such as taking away certain privileges, making them work around the house, or confining them to their room.

Our personal conviction is that there are many other ways to correct children, and these methods should be used before spanking is considered. Remember that your goal is to correct children, not to take out personal frustration. Some children require more discipline than others.

For those who choose to spank their children, here are some guidelines we suggest:

- Only use spanking when absolutely necessary.
- Do not spank older children.
- A spanking should never feel like more than a little sting.
- A spanking should never leave a mark.
- A spanking should only be given on the bottom, where it won’t hurt them.
- You should never use your hand. You don’t want your child to associate your hand with punishment.
- Never pinch, pull or slap a child. This is not spanking.
- Spanking should not be a common occurrence. If spanking isn’t working, your child is trying to control you. Work on the control issues instead.

CONCLUSION

The love that a parent has for a child is immeasurable. It is a bond that goes as far as the depth of our heart. This is the same love that God has for us. If we love our children, we will make every effort to lead them to independence of us and total dependency on their God.

BREAK OUT GROUPS

Tell the group on thing you like about each child in your home.
