

[Shepherding a Child's Heart, by T Tripp, is an outstanding resource. Note in particular, Ch. 11, "Embracing Biblical Methods: The Rod" and Ch. 15, "Infancy to Childhood: Training Procedures".]

I. **GOD THE FATHER DISCIPLINES HIS CHILDREN**

God, the Ultimate Father, from the very beginning, introduced the threat of punishment, should his children defy his will.

Gen. 2:15-17 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ 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."

From the beginning, not only the love and grace but also the AUTHORITY of the heavenly Father stood out conspicuously. The Father has the *right to rule, and he exercises that right*. He takes his authority very seriously, and he expects us to do the same.

Our rebellion against our Maker's authority has brought huge and painful consequences. Death and separation mar God's good creation. Sadly, rebellion against the Lord's authority is now native to our fallen hearts.

Redemption involves a grand work of restoration. The Savior renews the heart, taking away the heart of rebellion and creating a disposition of submission. The willingness to obey, however, is not perfect in this present age. "*The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*"

One of the key instruments of the sanctification of God's children is **chastening** or discipline. The heavenly Father uses the paddle upon his sons and daughters. It is painful, but it is fruitful.

Heb. 12:3-13 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly **the discipline of the Lord,**

nor be weary when reproved by him.

⁶ For **the Lord disciplines the one he loves,**

and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷ **It is for discipline** that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. **For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?** ⁸ If you are left **without discipline**, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers **who disciplined us** and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For **they disciplined us** for a short time as it seemed best to them, but **he disciplines us for our good**, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment **all discipline** seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

Christian parents, like their heavenly Father, employ discipline because they love their children. They discipline for the good of their children. In the moment, it is painful, not pleasant. Yet, they discipline as those committed to “the long game”. “*Later it yields the*

peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Like God himself, parents discipline to inculcate the virtue of submission in hearts that natively tend to rebellion.

II. THE APOSTOLIC WORD FOR PARENTS

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

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (NIV)

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

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (NKJV)

Comments from BibleRef.com- *Christians are expected to be highly involved in raising their own children. Two areas are mentioned. First, Paul includes discipline. Discipline involved learning self-control and the ability to restrain from personal desires in order to do what is right. Second, Paul adds the "instruction of the Lord." We should be involved in teaching our children about God's ways through both education and example.*

Our foremost parental duty, according to the apostolic word, is to “bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, not provoking them (unnecessarily)”. All of our instruction ultimately points them to Jesus Christ. He stands at the gate, along the path, and at the end of the narrow way that leads to life.

Christ warns, however, of another way, the broad one leading to destruction. To turn from the latter to the former, our children will have to die to themselves. They will have to turn from their personal agenda. They will have to submit to the will of King Jesus.

Both the Bible and experience, however, teach that humble submission to divine authority does not come simply through instruction. There must also be “discipline”. “Training” is necessary. The book of Proverbs leaves no doubt that such discipline or training necessarily involves the use of corporal punishment.

A Definition of Corporal Punishment- *A corporal punishment or a physical punishment is a punishment which is intended to cause physical pain to a person. When it is inflicted on minors, especially in home and school settings, its methods may include spanking or paddling.*

III. THE TEACHING OF PROVERBS- Six Key Texts re Corporal Punishment

(First Text) Prov. 3:11-12 *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, ¹²for the LORD reproofs him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.*

Use the paddle on your young children, because both parent and child should appreciate, not despise “the Lord’s discipline”.

- The Lord disciplines all of his children. Not one escapes this aspect of God’s parental care.
- He does so because he loves them. He understands its benefits. Pain is a necessary means of producing good fruit. **Illustration:** When Israel refused to trust and obey when first coming to the Land of Promise, the Lord graciously punished them by making them

trek through a wilderness for 40 years. The wilderness experience was painful. But the Lord was teaching them, “*Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). **Illustration:** Moses could not set foot in the Land of Promise. It was due to his failure to treat the Lord as holy at the waters of Meribah (Num. 20:2-13). **Illustration:** Even Jesus learned through suffering (Heb. 5:8, *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*).

- We are susceptible (and so are our children) to “despising the Lord’s discipline”. We can view it as unimportant. We can view it with contempt, as if punishment is useless or a bad thing. It can anger us. We can wallow in self-pity over it.
- Like God the Father, our delight in our children moves us to want the best for them. We reprove and discipline in order to serve their best interests. They are precious to us.
- When Christian parents discipline, they do so as God’s agents, carrying out his policy and perspective.

(Text #2) Prov. 22:15 *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.*

Use the paddle on your child, because sin runs deep in their souls, and the Lord uses corporal punishment to drive that evil out.

- Be convinced of the native depravity that is present not just in occasional behavior but in THE HEART of your children. “*Folly is BOUND UP in the heart of a child.*”

Gen. 6:5 *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Jer. 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*

Rom. 3:10-12 ... as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

Question: How have you seen depravity manifested in your children?

Answer: Selfishness; disobedience; lying; complaining; above all, in the absence of evident love for God, his Son, his word, and his people. This observable behavior manifests what is in their hearts.

- God himself speaks confidently of the effectiveness of corporal punishment in driving evil, not just from the outward behavior, but also from THE HEART of our children.
“The rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”
- Our goal is not simply to modify behavior. Our concern is to see proper heart attitudes of reverence, humility, submission, and love.
- There is a God-designed cable between the child’s bottom and the child’s heart. Corrective pain on the former impacts attitudes in the latter. Physical pain can produce respectful, submissive attitudes.
- Corporal punishment, for Christians, is an act of FAITH. We trust in what God has said. We take his promises to heart. We rely upon the general principles that he has articulated. In prayer, we remind him of what he has said. Likewise, we tell our children repeatedly what he has said.

Question: What if a given attitude or behavior is not going away? Should we stop spanking?

Answer: No, if sin is persistent, that proves that “folly is bound up in the heart of a child”.

The persistence of sin demonstrates even more the need for the consistent, persevering use of the paddle. Our being tested is not the time to withdraw from God’s word; it is the time to lean into God’s word.

(Text #3) Prov. 23:13-14 *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.*

Use the paddle on your child, because your loving infliction of pain will not ultimately hurt your child but likely be instrumental in saving him or her from hell.

- Face the fact that you will be tempted to withhold corporal punishment.

Question: How are we tempted to withhold correction from our children?

Answer: It doesn’t seem to work; they become so upset; it can be terribly inconvenient; it can be very painful and discouraging; various rationalizations for why they did not obey (tired, hungry, sick, off their schedule).

- Discipline needs to be predictable, consistent, and firm in order to be effective. Your children “will not die”. Loving parental correction will not ruin your children.
- Recognize and believe in the connection between paddling and heaven. Again, we see there is a God-wrought cable running from the bottom of your child to his or her heart. “*Striking him with the rod*” is instrumental in “*delivering his soul from Sheol*”. To refrain from the rod is to be guilty of unbelief, the very sin that most threatens our children. Withholding correction invites irreverence, insubordination, absence of self-

control, and an undue focus upon following their feelings and desires. These attitudes will lead them to destruction.

- Be confident in what God himself has said about the effectiveness of the paddle. He speaks as if corporal punishment always accomplishes its purpose.
- Be mindful of your own ongoing need of discipline, and the LOVE that moves the Father to persist in chastening you. For parents too, this is the way to heaven! You paddle, not only as God's representative, but also as a fellow sinner.

(Text #4)

Question: How does corporal punishment impart Prov. 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.*

Use the paddle on your child, because corporal punishment imparts wisdom and prevents unnecessary parental shame.

- According to Proverbs and the Bible, true wisdom “*begins in the fear of the Lord*” (9:10; 1:17; 14:27; 15:33).
- This text insists that “*the rod and reproof*” are necessary tools for our children to learn such wisdom.

wisdom to a child?

Answer:

1. It effectively demonstrates that there are painful consequences to folly (the absence of wisdom). This is true throughout God's world, throughout history, throughout human

life. There are always painful consequences to foolish behavior (laziness, lying, talking too much, uncontrolled anger, lusts, etc.)

2. A young child has two inclinations that tend to stand out: “I want” or, “I don’t want”. Corporal punishment impresses upon the child that they should want the absence of pain more than getting their way.
3. It teaches them to begin the process of learning to govern themselves, their desires and their passions. If we do not govern ourselves, others will.
 - If a child does not learn self-control over his or her desires and passions, inescapably shameful behavior will follow. The one who will feel the pain most keenly will be the child’s mother. Sometimes, such shame and embarrassment comes despite the faithful use of the paddle. Withholding corporal punishment invites shame. **Illustration:** Think of the shame that King David must have felt over the misbehavior of his grown sons.

(Text #5) Prov. 29:17 *Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.*

Use the paddle on your child, because it will prove instrumental in giving you the joy of seeing your children living with integrity.

- Note again the confidence with which the Lord speaks. His ways work! Believe his word!
- Few things will mean more to parents later in life than seeing their children walk in integrity.

3 John 4 *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

Ps 128:3-6 ...*your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.*

⁴ *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.*

⁵ *The LORD bless you from Zion!
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life!*

⁶ *May you see your children's children!
Peace be upon Israel!*

(Text #6) Prov. 13:24 *Whoever spares the rod hates his son,*

but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Use the paddle on your child, because of your determination to love them truly and well.

- Again, face the reality of the strong temptation to “spare the rod”.
- When you are tempted, use this select sword to go after the devil.
- Your being “DILIGENT to discipline” expresses genuine love, God-like love.

CONCLUSION: Corporal punishment is necessary, because our sin runs deep. This is why we so need a Savior. The Good News is that the Savior has come! He came, not with a rod, but with a cross. He came to call SINNERS to repentance. He forgives and accepts those who were rebels. He then lovingly chastens his own.

Those finally impenitent will face the Son’s rod of iron.

Ps. 2:8-9 *Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.*

⁹ *You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”*

