

Christian Principles of Parenting

In the past, when discussing a “juvenile delinquent,” what came to mind was a child who smoked, used foul language, and was a thief. Today’s juvenile delinquent is all that and more. Many, sadly, are in jail for rape, robbery, armed assault, and murder. Our world today is swimming in a sea of incorrigible children and dysfunctional families.

A deadly virus has been spreading through our society for the past forty years, and it becomes stronger year after year. This virus is the denigration of traditional values and godly standards. It has tragically brought about the collapse of the nuclear family. The future of a stable and healthy society has been put at risk. There is an increase in the

number of teenage pregnancies, child abuse, gangs, and single-parent families.

This virus has also attacked the importance of the role a father plays in the family.

Research by University of Pennsylvania sociologist Frank Furstenberg shows that three-fourths of all children of divorce have contact with their fathers less than two days a month. According to research, fatherless families have significantly more problems with the law than families with fathers. For instance, a 1988 study published in the *Journal of Research on Crime and Delinquency* found that the best predictor of violent crime and burglary in a community is not race or income, but the proportion of households without fathers. A recent study published in the *American Journal of Sociology* found a direct statistical link between single parenthood and virtually every major type of crime, including mugging, violence against strangers, car

theft, and burglary. Seventy percent of all juveniles in long-term correctional facilities did not live with their father growing up, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Fathers spending time with their children is not an option; it is crucial for the survival of our society. In spite of the feminist hope that fathers are not necessary, these statistics prove otherwise. For the sake of our children, it is imperative that a father be involved. The leadership to train and teach even the most wild of children should come from a loving father.

Parents are a child's first teacher, and, as such, a parent must be one of good character. That means if a parent wants a child to develop good moral character, then the parent must exemplify morals. The attitude and actions of a parent are carefully watched by the child. If Dad explodes verbally or becomes violent when someone

cuts him off in traffic, this behavior then becomes the model for the child. The mom who lies about why she has taken her child out of school, or does not support a teacher who found her child cheating, teaches her child not to take the moral message seriously.

There is no easy method of teaching your children the truth about God. Nor is there a quick fix or miracle drug to get control of the out-of-control child. *The Detroit News* on March 8, 1998, reported that doctors in Michigan prescribed 33 grams of Ritalin for every 1,000 residents, 56 percent more than the national average. It has also been found that the use of Ritalin has more than doubled nationally in the past five years. Critics of the drug say doctors misdiagnose children to help parents and teachers control boisterous children. There are those who believe the use of this drug is out of control. Is this what God had in mind when He commanded

parents to train and teach their children?

If it is the parent's desire to have God-fearing, law-abiding children, then the parent must take the appropriate steps to bring it about. To begin, the message must be sent to a child that spending time reading the Bible and praying is just as important as any other activity. Next, to have a strong family unit, parents need to practice effective child training. God has commanded parents to teach their children about Him. Not only are parents to teach, but they are to train their children as well. This responsibility is an awesome one and it begins with a study of what God says in the Bible about child training.

The Bible is God's written revelation for all of humankind. Within its pages, God has given instructions, a record of His interaction with man, answers to fundamental questions about life, and the truth of who God is and what His plan and

purpose for all humanity is. The Bible is the Word of God, and, as such, is the foundation of all knowledge.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

Whose responsibility is it to teach and train a child? How should the teaching and training be done? There are biblical answers to these and other questions in regard to child training.

Through the pages of the Bible, God instructs all parents about their responsibility to teach and train a child, and He tells how to do it. God is the Creator and He knew, in His infinite wisdom, that just because a man and woman had the physical ability to have children, they did not

automatically inherit the skill to train and teach children. The first formal charge given by God to all parents is found in Deuteronomy 6:4–9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Teaching children about God and His wonders is to be a daily routine. Just look around at His creation. God and His character are seen in the creation. There are daily opportunities to teach children proper behavior and morals. Teaching and training are processes of repetition.

Also, parents are to know God's way. In order to provide moral and spiritual guidance for children, parents need to be guided by the Word of God. The parent must know what God's way is, and must be actively living it. Parents—not the church, school, or community—are the ones held ultimately accountable for the spiritual and moral teaching of their children.

Training a Child

One must apply foundational biblical principles to train children to live a godly life. These principles should be taught at every opportunity. Parents are entrusted by

God to generate and nurture physical, mental, moral, and spiritual growth in the children that God has granted to their care.

It is a God-given gift to be blessed with children and to have the opportunity to train those children. Psalm 127:3 says, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.” God has a plan and purpose for all of mankind, and this includes children. The gift of children requires parents to prepare thoroughly and be committed. Children are in the care of their parents for a third of their life. To train and teach the heart, mind, and soul of a child, a lot of teaching and training during this time must take place. A parent needs to recognize and appreciate the privilege that God has given to train and teach a child. God is the giver of all good gifts, and children are a gift from God. In Psalm 127:3-5 the psalmist wrote:

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Not only are properly trained children a gift to their parents, they are a crown of glory to grandparents, too. "Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father" (Proverbs 17:6). Children are not only a gift from God, they are just as important as adults.

During Jesus' day, children had no rights within the law. The disciples thought it was a waste of time for Jesus to spend time blessing children. Jesus rebuked the disciples for having such a self-serving attitude and short memory. In Matthew

18:1–14 Jesus told the disciples that great works and words would not make them great in the kingdom, but humility of spirit would. In Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” If Jesus has time for *all* children, shouldn’t parents take the time daily to train, teach, love, and discipline their children? In order to train a child, the meaning of child training must be explored.

Child training is “guiding and directing the mental and moral growth of a child to become learned in the use of God’s principles.” Proper child training is the process that involves applying certain stimuli to our children and having them practice the proper response.

If positive results are not seen in a child, then the child has not received proper training. Liken this to the Jasmine plant climbing up a trellis. To train the plant to

wind in and out of a trellis, the gardener needs to lead the growth by caring for it. If the gardener ignores the plant and allows it to grow freely, it will not grow properly. Likewise, if a parent allows a child to do whatever he or she wants, the child will be out of control.

It is a mistake to think that just telling your child to do what is right is sufficient. Parents that say, “I always told my child what was right; why did he make such wrong choices?” have not properly trained their child. A child that has not conformed to what the parent is teaching has not truly been taught.

Another common error parents make is thinking that, since they have provided a moral atmosphere, their children will automatically have moral standards. Certainly all of us know of ministers or good friends who have lived godly lives, but whose children are not moral individuals.

Morality must be internalized. Simply seeing and hearing morality does not train a child to live a life of morality.

Parents may even believe that they fulfill their responsibility to spiritually guide their children when they send their children to Bible school. This could not be further from the truth. Even though enrolling children in a Christian school and worshiping weekly in church are positive steps, these should not and cannot be replacements for parents training their own children. It is the job of the parent to teach obedience and respect, and then what the school and church community teach will be truly effective.

Training a child is not merely “raising” a child. In today’s society there are those that spend far more time raising well-behaved animals than they do training well-mannered children. It is true that a father and a mother must clothe, feed, and provide shelter for their children, and if a parent ignores these

basic responsibilities, the parent is, in God's sight, "worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). But the principles of proper child training are far more inclusive than the basic necessities of life.

The Responsibility of a Father and Mother

Within the family unit, a father and mother have certain roles to perform. Both are absolutely essential in nurturing, instructing, and caring for their children. While the mother does contribute completely to any decision made in the family, it is the father who has the final responsibility for his family. He must shoulder the task of seeing to their needs. The father is a leader, not a taskmaster; a father and husband, not a boss; one who looks out for the welfare of his entire family and puts them before himself. He is respected because he has earned respect. Respect is earned when the father

takes into account the suggestions from his wife and the desires of his children. A husband is to love his wife just as Jesus loves the church (Ephesians 5:25), and he is not to provoke or discourage his children.

A mother's responsibility is to care for, protect, nurture, instruct, discipline, and shape acceptable behaviors and attitudes in her children. The Bible says that a fundamental responsibility of a wife is to sustain the home environment (Titus 2:5). She must spend as much time as possible doing this important job. Many mothers are forced to work full time outside the home—and Proverbs 31 describes a woman's responsibility and opportunity as being far broader than scrubbing floors and cleaning bathrooms—but the important thing to remember is that the care of their children is top priority. Opportunities to teach and train come at various times throughout the day. If the mother is not there to seize the moment,

the opportunity is lost.

God does not want fathers or mothers to verbally abuse or irritate their children. Parents that belittle their child or tease to the point of provoking anger are not teaching. Ephesians 6:4 says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Colossians 3:21 reinforces: “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Parents should not use cruel words to instruct. Parents who say such things (“you are a fool,” “you are an idiot,” “you don’t do anything right,” “you are lazy,” and so on) are parents who are weak, insecure, and frustrated. Cruel words such as these will only frustrate a child. Other things that provoke, anger, or frustrate children are: not knowing what a parent expects of them, being punished in anger, not keeping promises, and parents changing the rules as they go. If parents are

frustrated with their child's behavior, they should discern where the frustration is coming from and make the appropriate changes. Proper child training eliminates frustration.

Does this mean it is wrong to shame your child or make them feel guilty? Marvin Berkowitz, a professor of character development at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, says, "Guilt and shame are part of conscience." In other words, if a child has a sense of disappointing someone they love, such as his or her parent, then he or she is on the way to knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong. It is a sign as well that they are developing and internalizing a moral compass. It is their mind telling them that they are guilty of wrongdoing. Cruel words on the part of the parent are not necessary. For many parents, the only time they give their child attention is through a negative comment. If you give

attention only when something wrong is done, your child will become discouraged. Once again, Colossians 3:21 says, “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” A parent needs to remember to express praise and appreciation for good behavior.

A Promise

In Proverbs 22:6, God gives parents a conditional promise: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” There is no question that proper parenting produces proper results. Training children is a God-ordained privilege and it requires preparation and commitment. The word *train* in Hebrew is *chanak*, which means “to dedicate.” Read Deuteronomy 20:5, 1 Kings 8:63, and 2 Chronicles 7:5. While it is understood that the primary meaning of Proverbs 22:6 is not about dedication, this idea cannot be

overlooked. The parent who is not dedicated to the training of his or her child will suffer the consequences. When adults become parents, they must make the sacrificial commitment to train their children in the way of the Lord. Today, society is about self-fulfillment and reaching individual human potentials; and, in turn, the proper training of children is abandoned.

Understanding basic biblical principles is a must if the attainable goal is to build God-fearing children. There are a couple of important concepts to learn from Proverbs 22:6. First, training a child is a necessity. Second, parents must train a child the way God wants the child to go, not necessarily in the way the parent thinks the child should go. It is the parents' responsibility to find out what God's standards are (the Ten Commandments) and to teach them to their children. When the godly standards are taught, the adult child will not depart from

them.

A standard is a rule used to judge the rightness of something. Parents must learn how to set proper rules that are parallel with God's standards. Then these rules or laws need to be consistently enforced. The rules must be thought out in advance and clearly communicated to the child. The child does not have to agree with the rules set forth; he or she just has to understand and follow the rules. With this in mind, ask a child to repeat the rule(s) to ensure that the child heard and understood what is expected. Do not joke around when giving rules because this will only confuse the child and lead to breaking the laws given. When a standard is set, the penalty for breaking the standard should be stated at the same time.

Below is a basic list of standards that parents should teach and which certainly can be expanded upon.

- 1) Teach obedience. When the

parent says “no,” “stop,” or “come here,” the child should respond immediately. Obedience is the foundation to teaching all the other standards.

2) Teach respect. When a child respects the parent, then it will come naturally to respect God, those in authority, and property. Fair and firm parenting brings a child to naturally honor the parents’ position of authority. If honor is taught at a young age, control in the teen years will be easier because the child has learned to respect and honor the parents’ authority.

3) Teach trustworthiness. Telling the truth at all times and never lying is of utmost importance. Children should not lie about others or spread rumors. Children should

be taught that their word is their bond. If they say they will do something, they must have a commitment to their word and do it.

4) Teach honesty in actions.

Children should be taught not to cheat or steal. A child that knows what is expected will automatically obey without outside influence. It is crucial that children learn to take responsibility for their actions and be held accountable. The test of good character is seeing what an individual will do when he or she thinks know no one is watching. A parent that can trust and depend on a child to have good behavior in word and deed is a parent who has instilled integrity in a child.

5) Teach self-control. Teach

children to control their personal urges, temptations, and desires. Manners fall under this standard. Manners teach children to have consideration for others, and they remove the attitude of self-importance. There are basic manners to teach: never interrupt conversations; have proper table manners; address adults appropriately; respect the property of others; don't fight with others; keep voices down; don't covet what others have; say "please" and "thank you" and show respect for others, including parents, adults, those in authority, friends, siblings, and oneself.

6) Teach self-discipline. Self-discipline is the result of self-control. The parent who instructs the child in self-control will

automatically see the child develop self-discipline.

7) Teach to follow parental instructions. Instructions in each family will differ. These instructions would include: when to go to bed, when and what to eat, what may or may not be watched on television and at the movies, and appropriate dress. Rules may also be set on outside influences such as friends, school, and entertainment. An important point to remember is that the parent rules. The word of the parent is law. Do not allow a child to intimidate or rule.

Instructions for Children

Just as God gave specific instructions to parents about training their children, God has given instructions to children as well. He said, “Honor your father and your mother

that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12). It is essential that parents know God’s instructions for children so that they may teach their children to obey them.

Paul made several observations about this Fifth Commandment. He wrote, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’” (Ephesians 6:1–3).

Children are told to obey both of their parents and then to honor them. If they obey and honor their parents, God promises them that their days will be long on the earth.

Teach your children this very easy concept.

How did Jesus obey the Fifth Commandment? Read Luke 2:41–51. There are a couple of lessons to be learned from this passage. The first lesson to learn is how

Jesus set the example by obeying the Fifth Commandment. This is the first time that Jesus mentions He is the Son of God. Even though Jesus knew God was His real Father, He did not reject His parents, Mary and Joseph. Jesus returned with them to Nazareth, living under their authority for another eighteen years. Jesus set the example of obedience and honor. Upon finding Jesus in the Temple, Mary and Joseph were astonished by what Jesus understood and how He answered. Imagine how this was for Mary to see her twelve-year-old son behaving as an adult in the Temple. Jesus apparently had not talked to His physical parents the way He was conversing in the Temple. Letting go of a child when he or she reaches adulthood can be difficult because so much effort has been put into the child's development. It is bittersweet to see a child grown and ready to leave the nest as a God-fearing, obedient,

and trustworthy adult. In spite of the hurt Mary may have felt seeing her Son behaving like an adult, she had to learn to let go.

When the time comes, as parents, we must let the children we have nurtured to adulthood go and spread their wings and reach their God-given potential.

In reading Mark 7:9-13, we observe an important view of not only the Fifth Commandment Jesus quoted, but two other important lessons:

He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If a man says his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban” —’ (that is, a gift to

God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

The Pharisees believed it was more important to put money in the Temple treasury than to take care of their needy parents. This was accomplished and religiously acceptable through a man-made tradition called the Corban vow. They put the traditions of men and nonbiblical standards above the Word of God, which brings us to our first lesson: Misapplying the Word of God to walk away from personal responsibilities should never be done. The second lesson to learn is: When setting the standard for children to follow, be sure the standard is biblical.

In Colossians 3:20, Paul gives a reason for

children to obey their parents: “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” In the Old Testament, disobedience to parents was considered rebellion against God, and the punishment was severe: “For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 9:20). Should a child decide not to obey his parents, then his life, according to Paul, may not be well or long upon the earth (Ephesians 6:1–3). “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge” (Proverbs 14:26).

God has dealt with obedient and disobedient sons. First, how did God deal with Eli’s disobedient sons? Read 1 Samuel 3:11–14 and 4:14–17. Eli’s sons were vile and wicked because Eli did not do his duty as their father. He did not train his sons in the way of God. Consequently, they lost their lives in battle and the ark of God was

captured by the enemy. Upon hearing this news, Eli fell back in his chair, broke his neck, and died. Eli's daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, died in childbirth. Before her death she gave an appropriate name to her offspring, Ichabod, meaning "there is no glory." There was no glory because the ark of God was in the hands of the enemy, meaning God was not with Israel. This all happened because Eli did not restrain his sons and his sons did not obey and honor their father.

A good example of sons obeying their father is seen in Jeremiah 35:1–10, 18, 19. Johadab's sons obeyed his command not to drink wine, build houses, plant vineyards, or sow seeds. The Recabites had consistently obeyed their forefather Jonadab and were rewarded by God for their obedience. God promised them that they would "never lack a man to stand before Me forever." The actions of an individual can have an affect

on a family, society, and nation. Is there any doubt that child training is an awesome responsibility?

Parent-Child Relationship

It is hard work to maintain a positive attitude. Success requires consistency and frequent evaluation. Hebrews 5:1,2 speaks of how the high priest had compassion on sinners. When children stray from doing what is right, it is imperative that the discipline be done out of love. The only way a parent will know how he or she is doing is to take the time to evaluate their style of leadership. In disciplining your child, what is your leadership style? To help you evaluate yourself, ask yourself the following questions. Evaluate yourself for each of your children. Keep in mind that children are not assembly-line products, but are individuals. In a family, perhaps all the children have come from the same parents, but each child

has a different personality and different needs.

- 1) Do you allow freedom within your authority?
- 2) Do you allow too much freedom?
- 3) Do you always correct and never encourage?
- 4) Do you give patient guidance?
- 5) Do you allow your child to grow in responsibility?
- 6) Do you encourage personal initiative?
- 7) Do you spend time loving and playing with your child?

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7,10–12, Paul describes his leadership style as both a father and a nursing mother. Paul understood the control and influence he had over the lives of others. Parents should realize the

control they have as well. A nursing mother knows that her baby will die if she does not feed it. There is not a loving father on earth that would allow harm to come to one of his offspring. By using the analogy of a nursing mother and a caring father, Paul looked at the new Christian as though he or she were his own son or daughter. This symbolism alone should emphasize for all parents how important their job to care for their offspring is.

Follow Paul's lead and meditate upon how these verses can be applied to your personal child-training leadership style. Gentleness is showing love. Are you gentle with your child? Do you allow your child to speak and share his or her thoughts? Exhibiting a gentle attitude toward your child will teach gentleness. Children are priceless possessions given by God. How are you managing your child? Is he or she becoming a gentle servant for Jesus Christ?

Celebrations

Be sure your home includes an abundance of laughter, parties, celebration, presents, candles, gifts, surprises, vacations, treats, exciting outings, and games. Celebrations nourish us. They are essential to our human experience. Remember to go out of your way to provide a healthy habit of celebration. Celebrations may take on many forms. One way is to put special value on each child by celebrating his or her birthday. A child should know that he is special to us because he brings added life to our surrounding. Psalm 127:3 says, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD; The fruit of the womb is a reward.” The subsequent verses proclaim the blessing of children and how special they are in adding life to a family. Celebrating our children means to delight in them. Be excited about your children, teaching them to celebrate life

through laughter and play, singing and dancing, and learning the art of contentment.

Our children can learn the goodness of life and celebrate it by understanding a passage in Luke 12:15: “Beware! Don’t always be wishing for what you don’t have” (The Living Bible). Contentment is like simplicity. Children need to learn to dispel discontentment; it leads to covetousness.

One way of establishing a zest for life and a celebration of our existence is to establish family traditions. Every family’s traditions may be different, but every family has them. As your children mature, the level of traditions escalate. They may be intimate, national, religious, or ethnic. Simply put, draw your family circle with the binding ties of tradition.

When our children learn that life is good, they can learn to laugh, cry, adore, and make a mountain of memories. It has been said that joy is like water when you are thirsty:

you can drink and drink, but you always come back for more. Create an attitude of celebration in your children.

An Attitude That Seeks Wisdom

Guidance and instruction will greatly enrich a child's life. The desire to learn the proper attitude and be guided is a sign of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is a goal parents should aspire to teach. It does not matter what the age of the child is. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). God is the source of wisdom (Proverbs 2:1–6). Wisdom is gained by applying the principles found in Proverbs 8:17,34. There is value in having an attitude that desires instruction. Proverbs 19:20 says, "Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days."

The relationship between a parent and a

child will develop beautifully when the parent has a desire to teach and the child has a desire to learn. “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother”(Proverbs 10:1).

Responsibility

God says that when He created man (this includes children), He “saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). This scripture states that man was not created with an evil nature. This is confirmed in Ecclesiastes 7:29: “Truly, this only have I found, that God made man upright.” However, man was not created with the righteous, holy character of God. Godly character is not created instantaneously. Moral character is developed over time through many experiences because God created man with the ability to have free choice.

God desires that every child reach his or

her human potential. However, God does not neglect the present physical life. Happiness, abundance, and success in this human life are an integral part of God's plan. Children must be taught by their parents how to use God's wisdom and grace so they have the ability to make right decisions that lead to happiness.

Paul teaches a lesson in reaping what we sow:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:7–9).

A child will understand that if he plants a bean it will not produce corn on the cob. Likewise, if a life of integrity, purpose, and happiness is desired, then cultivating good relationships with family and close friends is a necessity. Today's society is all about being a "victim," and not taking responsibility for one's actions. Every action has a result. If children are to become responsible adults, parents must teach them that if they plant a crop to please their own desires, they will reap an empty and sorrowful life. Planting seeds of love, care, and a desire to please God will reap happiness and salvation.

In Luke 16:10–12, Jesus taught personal responsibility. From His parable of the unjust steward we should learn the idea of building honesty and integrity. Honesty, even in small matters, is essential. To tell a little "white lie" is not acceptable behavior. In holding a child accountable for the

smallest of details, the child will not waiver or allow his integrity to slip in making crucial decisions.

Many blessings are promised to those who follow the commands and principles of God. As children learn to obey and follow the commands and guidelines of God, they will reap benefits. Proverbs 3:1–12 is an excellent place to begin teaching a child how God blesses those who keep His commands. In order to help a child understand the principle of obeying a command and receiving a blessing, take one principle at a time and plan a lesson from Proverbs 3:1–12. As a child grows older, decisions about every aspect of life become the responsibility of that child. The parents' job is to see to it that the child has the tools to make right choices. The lessons found in these proverbs should be taught repetitively throughout a child's life. When opportunities arise—and they will—apply what has been

taught by referring to the Scriptures.

Teaching children accountability goes hand-in-hand with teaching responsibility.

To be held accountable means to take responsibility for one's own actions.

Blaming others or nature for any of life's situations is a wrong example to set. Since man is made in the image of God, man is morally accountable for his actions. As discussed earlier, children are a gift from God and, as such, parents are held accountable to God for their training. One of the best ways of teaching a child responsibility and accountability is for the parent to act in ways that please God and eliminate the need to become a "victim."

Self-Control

Self-control is having the ability to make choices about how one behaves and acts. It means that one does not rely on impulse. A child who is taught self-control will have the

ability to evaluate a situation and understand the consequences that will result from good or bad behavior. A child who does not have self-control will say and do things without thinking about the consequences. Teaching self-control is important to the safety of a child. A lack of self-control can put a child in danger, especially later in life when confronted with drugs or alcohol. When self-control is practiced, responsibility for one's actions is developed.

Self-control may be practiced in many areas of everyday life. It is the responsibility of the parent to model self-control, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). Consider these scriptures:

Psalm 19:14: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.”

Proverbs 6:6–11: “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise....”

Proverbs 16:32: “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”

Philippians 4:8: “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.”

1 Peter 2:11: “I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”

Proverbs 25:28: “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit” — that is, no self-control — “is like a city broken down, without walls”

To teach self-control takes a parent who has the character to exercise self-control.

What Does the Bible Say About Disciplining Children?

David was used by God to lead the nation

Israel and serve as their king. David was a good king but he was not a good father. David may have been able to lead a nation, but he did not lead his family or have them under control. There was great unrest and unhappiness in his family due to jealousy and envy. David could order others to follow him into battle, but he could not order that his children conduct their lives morally. The lesson: *Do not allow your work or volunteer service for the church and community interrupt your God-given responsibilities to your children.* Do not allow other activities to come before loving, training, and disciplining your child.

Chastising

Many parents are afraid or uncomfortable with the idea of spanking a child. Inflicting pain does not mean a parent has the right to beat a child. In discussing discipline, it is first essential to look at what it means to

chastise. God gave parents the authority to chastise their children and He holds parents accountable for how they use their authority. The English meaning of the word *chastise*, according to *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, is “to inflict punishment on (as by whipping)” or “to censure severely.” Apply *chastise* to child training and it means to correct a rebellious child through the means of proper corporal punishment. Second Samuel 7:14 says:

I will be his Father, and he shall be
My son. If he commits iniquity, I
will chasten him with the rod of men
and with the blows of the sons of
men.

There was a special relationship between God and David. The above verse describes the relationship that a father and a son would have. It is clear that God is stating that a

father would chasten a son who has committed iniquity.

Parents who want to love their child will chasten their child. Whether one is a child or an adult, it is never pleasant to be on the receiving end of correction. If a father does not take the time to teach, train, and chasten his child, his child will never learn what is right. The correction must be done in love. God corrects His children, and He does the correcting because He loves each of us. Hebrews 12:5,6 says:

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

The significance of chastisement becomes even more descriptive in Hebrews 12:8: “But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.” There are privileges that members of a family share. Simply stated, a father who has sinned and has an illegitimate child rejects the child. While the sin is not the fault of the child, the child is still not a recipient of the father’s love. It would be fair to say, then, that a father who does not chasten his child has rejected him. There is no love in rejection. Just as an adult’s soul is cultivated through correcting mistakes and giving instruction that curbs the passions, so, too, is the whole education and training of a child. If a child rebels against a parent, and the parent does not punish the child, the parent is guilty of caring little for the child. “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently” (Proverbs 13:24).

The willful breaking of a standard by a child must be corrected through chastisement from the parent. Let's say, for example, that a child has been instructed to ask permission before crossing the street. The child has repeated the standard and completely understands the rule. On one occasion (emphasis on "*one* occasion") he crossed the street without permission and received a verbal rebuke and warning that if he does it again he will be spanked. If he breaks the rule again and crosses the street without permission, he must be corrected through the form of chastisement. The painful memory of the chastisement will help him obey this rule and other rules in the future.

There are basic circumstances when physical chastisement should be used. A few are when your child: defiantly resists your authority, tells you "no," throws a tantrum, hurts or puts another child in danger, or is

cruel to animals. None of these should be tolerated and they need to be dealt with immediately with loving firmness.

Instrument Used to Chastise

There are many places in the Bible where the word *rod* is used as a figure for punishment, power, authority, and discipline. Examples of punishment are found in Proverbs 13:24 (“He who spares his rod hates his son”) and Proverbs 29:15 (“The rod and rebuke give wisdom”). Example of power and authority is found in Psalm 2:9 (“You shall break them with a rod of iron”). A rod was used by God as a way of disciplining His people (Job 9:34). When a nation rebelled against God, the term *rod* was used to explain the pain given to a rebellious nation. These examples are found in Psalms 89:32; Isaiah 10:5,24; Lamentations 3:1; and Ezekiel 20:37, to name a few.

The definition of a rod is “a branch or stick used to punish people by whipping.” God figuratively described how He would punish the rebellious with a “rod.” Whether a parent chooses to use a switch or a paddle as the instrument with which to spank, it must be used responsibly. The heart and soul of a child will respond to such discipline. The child will have a desire to obey the parent because he does not want to feel the inflicted pain received by the spanking when he disobeys. The switch or paddle then becomes a symbol of authority.

It is never a good idea to use the hand to inflict a punishment. The hand is a symbol of love, protection, and comfort. Using the hand to discipline associates the punishment with the person. The goal is to have the child focus in on the object being used for the punishment, not on the person who is using the instrument.

We do NOT suggest that the “beating” of

our children is sanctioned by God's Word. God does not want a parent to "beat" his children into obedience. But, properly spanking a child will bring a child to a humble and submissive attitude which will then put an end to the rebellion. There are scriptures all parents should study to understand the importance of chastising their child. Take the time to study and pray over the following carefully:

1) The rod is to cause a moderate degree pain. "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men" (2 Samuel 7:14).

2) A child will not die from correction. Proverbs 23:13: "Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he

will not die.”

3) Early in the life of a child, parents are commanded to chasten their child because there will come a time when it is too late. “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently” (Proverbs 13:24); “Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction” (Proverbs 19:18).

4) Parents will suffer the consequences if they do not chasten their children. A parent that does not chasten a child will appear to hate him (Proverbs 13:24) and a child not corrected will bring shame. “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15).

5) Foolishness is the natural state of a child. In order to successfully train a child, the foolishness must be removed. “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

6) God’s chastises us for our good. Therefore, the same principle should hold true of parents with their children. ““For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Hebrews 12:6,7).

Next is a list of important keys to consider prior to chastening a child:

1) *Spanking should be used as a last resort.* Do not use this method as a common disciplinary step. Using it too frequently (for minor infractions) will lessen the significance. Chastisement is used to restore the parents' authority and control over the child. Control is essential in the training of a child.

2) *Before a spanking, give yourself time to think.* You should NEVER spank out of anger. Physical abuse can result when you are angry. A child being corrected should not be concentrating on the parent's anger but rather on changing his or her behavior. Taking time allows things to be put in proper perspective. You can then judge the proper severity of the punishment.

3) *Calmly talk to the child prior to the spanking.* The child must understand the reason for the discipline. It is also a good time to review the rule that has been broken and that the spanking is the consequence. Do not issue a spanking for an unspoken rule. Spanking is for a defiant or willful violation of a major rule that the child already clearly understood.

4) *It does not take many swats to make the point.* The goal of discipline is to apply a humbling sting that will stay continually on the conscience. It is not the objective to merely cause pain, but to reestablish authority. Children are equipped with the appropriate spot for receiving the sting of correction. Our Creator fashioned the buttocks, with all its fleshy

parts, for the spanking.

5) Chastising a child should always be done in privacy. This is important for the dignity of the child and the safety of the parent.

6) After administering a spanking, be sure to hug and reassure your child of your love. This is an excellent time to affirm his good qualities and encourage his desire to do what is right. It is also an appropriate time to pray with your child to instill the attitude of submission to a higher authority.

Child Abuse

Child abuse happens when a parent corrects out of frustration or anger. Through previous scriptures it has been shown that God requires a parent to correct his or her child. Using this form of correction may cause

Christian fathers or mothers to fear what man can do to them for using this method of training. With this in mind, never spank your child in public. If you are at a store, restaurant, or any public place and your child rebels to the point of needing a spanking, take him home. While this may be inconvenient for you at the moment, it is a lesson your child will not forget. Not only will the child remember the sting of the spanking, but also your commitment to deal immediately with a problem. It also shows that you will go to great lengths to follow through with that obligation.

Punishment

Punishment is a consequence for wrong behavior and is not the same as chastisement. Remember, chastisement is used to conquer rebellion and bring a child to submission to the parents' authority. Punishment is the consequence for the

child's wrongdoing or sinful actions.

It is the parents' responsibility to set the penalties for breaking the rules or standards. It is best to set the penalty when making the rule. The penalty must equal the wrong that was done. The penalty may be paid with money, time, or the loss of a privilege. In any case, the parents must feel confident in their ability to judge justly. Restitution is the act of righting a wrong. The act of making good or compensating for caused damage, loss, or injury is a righteous act that children need to learn.

There are many examples in the Bible of administering punishment for sin. Probably the most popular example is the example of David committing adultery with Bathsheba. In addition to committing adultery, David murdered Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. While David confessed his sin (2 Samuel 12:13) and God forgave him, no amount of tearful, fervent prayers or fasting stopped

the punishment (2 Samuel 12:21,22). The penalty for David's sin was the death of his firstborn child with Bathsheba. David realized the painful consequences of his sin for most of his life. He had a household that rebelled against him; there was incest committed among his children; there was the threat of murder; and three of his sons met a violent death. While David confessed his sin and God forgave him, he still had to pay the penalty. This is an important lesson to remember when punishing a child. A child may cleanse his conscience by confessing the wrong, but the penalty will still need to be paid.

The following principles should be considered when administering a punishment.

- 1) Do not allow a child to talk you out of the punishment. A parent must be consistent and fair in

carrying out the appropriate punishment regardless of the child's promise not to do it again.

2) There may be justifiable times to grant mercy to a child who confesses, or when the parent feels the child has paid sufficiently for the wrongdoing. A caution here: Do not allow yourself to habitually grant mercy out of weakness to enforce the punishment.

3) In administering a punishment, do it without anger.

4) Threatening and not following through on a punishment teaches a child that justice does not exist. A child needs a healthy respect for the law and the punishment incurred for breaking the law.

The goal of punishing a child is to teach

him to accept punishment as a fact of life. The child needs to pay the price for what was done wrong, and to do it with a good attitude and then get on with life. Fighting over the penalty or resenting getting caught does not show an attitude of accepting responsibility for wrongdoing or guilt.

Teaching

When parents have a child under control and the child respects their authority, the child is teachable. It should be the goal of the parent to teach what is right from the Word of God. The objective will be reached when the child becomes self-disciplined, conforms to the rules, and follows instructions. The definition of teaching a child is not just spouting out orders that will be either obeyed or disobeyed. Rather, it is a clear description of the house rules or rules of life that the child is held accountable to and then internalizes. The desired result

from proper child training is that, when put to the test, the child will display good behavior.

Brainwashing is not what God had in mind when He gave parents the responsibility to train their children. A child that does not understand the rules will reject them. Proper teaching requires that whatever the parent is teaching, it is supported with truth. Later on in life, when the child is confronted with a problem, he or she will know what the right course of action is because the standard taught was not based on opinion or tradition, but rather on the Word of God. Parents need to know God's standards and the reasons for them so that they in turn may teach the standards to their children.

The Word of God is the only place to go to find a truthful standard to live by. Truth never needs to be updated. Society today is morally corrupt. Why? Because several generations of parents have not taken the

time to teach. People today argue about whose standard is the right one to follow. It is unfortunate that the entire world does not understand that if God's standards are not taught, the moral fiber of our society will fall apart. There is no argument that this is undoubtedly happening today.

Just as a father's presence positively impacts the family, so does a healthy family positively impact society. Scripture and history have shown that when the family and home fall apart, society will follow.

The Word of God has much to say about husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and children. This is certainly because the strength of the family unit is important to God. Obedient children are not produced by accident. Godly children come from devoted parents who seek to obey and follow the Word of God.

May the knowledge gained through this study help parents successfully train

children who grow up to fear and love the
Lord.