

Parenting (Part 4): Discipline

Factors in Correction

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A Protestant writer named Ruth Vaughn penned these words back in 1976. "Parenthood is a partnership with God. You are not molding iron or chiseling marble. You are working with the Creator of the universe in shaping human character and determining destiny."

I think she got it right. This is the starting point in any discussion of parenting. We must begin with this foundation of understanding where the process leads. We have to remember that in any type of parenting that we do, the fundamental purpose is to mold and create godly character in the child. Goals like that often determine the methods used to reach them. In this case it is certainly true.

We have such a high goal—the Kingdom of God—and the creation of godly moral character not only in us, but in our children as well, must be produced, because do we not want them there with us in the Kingdom? Obviously we do. Thus the methods we use in our parenting must dovetail with God's will and God's Word. There is no other way to make it to the Kingdom of God except through God's will and through the instruction of God's Word. And so the only true authority then for godly childrearing is found in the pages of the Bible. It just follows A B C.

Mr. Armstrong used to say quite often that the Bible is God's instruction manual to us, and it has the basis for all other knowledge. We always have to start at God's Word. Remember I quoted the motto of Ambassador College last time. "The Word of God is the foundation of all knowledge." We have got to start there when we are talking about childrearing.

As I reiterated throughout this series, parenting factors as a major part of God's judgment of us. Our family life is the laboratory where we learn and perfect God's way of life, so we have very compelling reasons, that being the judgment of God, to make sure that our parenting practices have God's

housekeeping seal of approval, not the Good Housekeeping seal of approval, but *God's* housekeeping seal of approval.

As we begin this sermon on the parents' responsibility to discipline their children, we need to remind ourselves why parenting is so important, just to get that fixed in our minds once again. We must establish the biblical principles of child discipline, and then we can start extrapolating practical methods. This sermon is going to be just on the establishing of principles of biblical child discipline for the most part. There will be a few times when I will go from the principle to the practical so that we can understand the application a little bit better, but basically this sermon is the foundational principles behind the method that we choose to use.

In the first and second sermons I gave on this, I established what I believe are two incontrovertible facts about parenting. 1) God the Father is our standard and pattern in parenting. If we have just this much, it puts us so far beyond the normal parenting practices of this world, because if we acknowledge that, then we try to mimic God and our parenting practices have a much greater chance of being successful.

2) God intends the family unit to be a patriarchy like His own divine Family. Patriarchy is a hierarchy, with the father having the chief authority and responsibility. Those two always go together. It is not just that he has the authority, but he also has the responsibilities that go with that. He is then helped and given the cooperation of the mother, his wife, who is by his side as a help-meet, as it says there in Genesis 2.

We are often reminded that in the book of Genesis are the beginnings of everything. In the Garden of Eden it shows the beginning of family life—first with marriage, and then by the end of chapter 2 it tells us that we are starting to get into the idea of the rest of the family coming in. Moses says that they will cleave to one another, and we will find out just a little bit later that the reason they cleave to one another and cling to one another is to produce godly seed. It is one of the main reasons for that.

Last on the totem pole are the children in the family. They are the caboose in the family train. Dad is the engine. Mom is the coal car, I guess, or maybe she is the diner. The children are the caboose. The way it works out is, father is in authority, the wife is by his side, and the children come in at the rear.

In that second sermon I also stressed the virtue of submission, and that is the key to harmonious family life—submission one to another. It is not enough for just the wife and the children to submit to the father, but that the father himself must submit to them as well, and also to God the Father and Jesus Christ. If he is not submitting to God the Father and Jesus Christ, then his loving concern for the family is not going to be proper. It will probably turn out to be authoritarianism. Things may go the way he wants them to go, but they may not be godly.

The father has a responsibility to submit to Christ as his Head, and then to God the Father as well as we go up the chain. He also has a responsibility of, as it says in Ephesians 5:21, "submitting to one another in the fear of God." If the wife is right, he has to submit to that, and that is submission in love. That idea—submitting to one another in the fear of God—is what opens Paul's instructions on family behavior: first in marriage. He goes through that for several verses, and then with family life with the children. Beyond that he goes into slave/master or employer/employee relationships. That too rests on submitting one to another in the fear of God.

However, within this atmosphere of mutual submission, we must never lose sight of parental authority, because the parental authority is the divinely ordained chain of command. We live in a culture that really does not like command structures. It does not like hierarchy. It does not like levels of authority. It does not like any appearance of rank, or inequality, as some would think of it.

Our society cherishes individualism and absolute individual freedom and equality. They want this regardless of natural talent, or acquired skill, or experience, or even merit. None of those things matter. All they want is freedom and equality and their individual rights, and their selfishness basically to do what they want. These things are not biblical concepts.

We find the *true* biblical concept in Deuteronomy 5. This contains the repetition of the Ten Commandments. I wanted to go to this one because there is something added in Deuteronomy 5 that is not in the original commandment in Exodus 20. Verse 16 is the fifth commandment. This is the basis for parental authority.

Deuteronomy 5:16 Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you

Parental authority is so important to God that He places it in His ten basic commands. And not only that, He places parental authority directly after the four commands that pertain to Him: "No other god before Me." "No idols or graven images." "Don't take God's name in vain." "Keep God's Sabbath." "Honor your father and your mother." That in itself is a hierarchy of importance.

First you give all the honor and the glory to God. You meet with Him when He says to meet, and then you show respect and honor to your parents, because there are promises attached to that. What was added in Deuteronomy 5 is one of the promises. The one in Exodus 20 says "that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord is giving you." This one in Deuteronomy also adds, "that it may be well with you." You might have long life, or the nation may live a long time there, but if it is not in an atmosphere of well-being, what is the use? What good is long life if you are not also having a quality of life that makes it special?

Proper respect for their parents also conditions children to respect other authority figures in general. First they come upon authority figures in their mother and their father. If they respect their mother and their father, they will then, when they get older, respect the teacher. They will respect the firemen. They will respect the policemen. They will respect the mayor. They will respect the president. They will respect the congressmen. They will respect whoever happens to be in authority. They will respect the minister.

The foundation is laid when we teach our children proper parental authority, and respect for parental authority. Beyond that, when the foundation of

parental authority is laid, it gives that kid a great leg-up when it comes to submitting to the Father, because that is the ultimate in parental authority. They have learned it already. They can transfer that respect and that honor—that reverence that they give their parents—directly to God the Father, and the relationship starts off on the right foot. I should say they will be leagues ahead of where other people start.

Some people have had terrible relationships with their parents and do not know the foggiest about true parental authority, respect, and honor. If we teach that to our children through our own example, we give them a great advantage.

Notice the long-term blessings or benefits that God appends to this commandment: long life and well-being. Do we not want that for our children? None of us wants to outlive our children, to put it bluntly. We want them to live and have productive long lives of joy and peace, having all those things that we can give them and set them up for, both materially and spiritually. What God is saying here, reading between the lines, is that it is up to the parent to instill the respect so that the child will have these things—the long life and the quality of life. It all starts with laying the foundation of proper parental authority—having them understand how to respect and honor the parent.

The idea of parental authority is a lot more than just showing the kids who is boss. That is down the list quite a bit. It is the necessary basis for God eventually showering that child with blessing. If we do not set the stage for that, it is possible that God will be somewhat inhibited in how much blessing He can shower upon that child because of the baggage that the child carries with him. It is our job as parents to set things out straight from the beginning so that child does not have any baggage to carry around, and he can smoothly blend the relationship from you to God, and the spiritual blessings and physical blessings that God promises will come.

This commandment is repeated by Paul in Ephesians 6 as part of his instruction to the church about proper family life.

Ephesians 6:1-3 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."

Paul not only gives New Testament validation to this commandment, but he adds another thought here: "Obey your parents in the Lord." There are actually two separate thoughts there. Just in case anyone thinks *honor* does not include *obey*, well here is the definitive answer. Paul says here that "honor" for the child includes "obey."

God requires children to obey their parents *in the Lord*. What does this "in the Lord" mean? I know what I thought it meant, but I checked commentaries out, and they had a whole bunch of different answers to this. I think I have narrowed it down to three that cover all the bases here. They are all right. There is none that is wrong. It is just that they have a different nuance to it.

First thing that this means is what probably most of you think it means. "Obey your parents in so far as they command you to do what is right," meaning "Obey your parents as long as what they're telling you to do is something biblical." A child is not required by God to obey a command that will lead him to sin. God never requires anybody to do anything like that. A child, if he knows what is right, should disobey his parent if the parent tells him to do something that is going to lead him into sin.

There are ways to do this where you do not dishonor them totally. There is a bit of tact that a child must be able to try to figure out. It is not easy, but if it is a matter of the parent saying, "I want you to go pick up that gun and shoot your brother," well, there is a way to politely decline, and get out of there. Even in the disobedience, it is not to be with disrespect. There is a way to disobey politely, and in love, without making a mess of things and botching the relationship. It may not be easy though.

There may be times when the child is penalized for such disobedience. It is the same thing that would happen to a church member who refuses to do something that the world asks him to do. Sometimes when a church member would do that, he must take his lumps. Many of the people in God's Word were killed for disobeying something that a magistrate, king, or what have you, told them to do.

For a child, it is probably not going to be that in this day and age, but he may face some severe penalty. Even though the child respectfully disobeys, the parent is probably still going to be angry for being disobeyed and will probably put some sort of penalty on that child, whether it is a spanking, whether it is something taken away, or what have you. Often this sort of thing is not done without some sort of boomerang effect. Paul says here, "Obey your parents insofar as they command you to do what is right."

The second thing that this might mean is, "Obey your parents as if you were obeying Christ." There are several times in this whole section about family life that Paul uses the term "as to the Lord." In Ephesians 5:22 he tells the wives: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." In Ephesians 6:5 he says, "Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters, . . . as to Christ." In verse 7 he says, "With goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." Some think that this "in the Lord" is just a variation of that "Obey your parents just as though you were obeying Christ's own orders."

The third way of looking at this is: "Obey your parents because it is the will of the Lord that you do so." See the different nuance there. Jesus obeyed and honored both His earthly parents and His heavenly Father in all things. He set us an example then in the proper keeping of the fifth commandment. As children of His disciples, our kids need to learn early how to follow in His steps. So we teach them to obey, because it is the will of the Lord to do so.

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

This goes with that third point that Paul iterates to the Colossians, that the children should obey because it pleases God that they do so.

Let us see for a moment how the Bible looks on child disobedience. Go to Exodus 21. This is in the Old Covenant. You will notice Exodus 21 is only one chapter removed from the Ten Commandments. This is in the giving of the law, and this comes in a section on violence.

Exodus 21:15 He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

This is pretty stiff. Now how many of us have hit our parents? I hope none of us have, but I know there are some children who do it regularly. We can let them slide a bit because they do not know probably, but think about it. If you are allowing your children to hit you in any way, babies or toddlers or young adolescents, you are teaching them improper parental respect, and it is something that can build until they get to the point when they are teenagers and stronger than you, and they can reel off and whap you good. At that point, under the law of God, they would be stoned most likely. So make sure you nip that in the bud.

Exodus 21:17 And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

This is the same thing. Do you allow your children to back-talk you? That is not necessarily cursing, but as the child get older and you allow him to talk back to you and give you some lip, it could very easily slide into cursing. Nip it in the bud. Catch it while they are young. Children should not be able to say, "I don't want to." That is talking back. God does not take disobedience to cursing or striking a parent lightly. He gives it the death penalty. That is pretty severe.

But remember, honoring your father and your mother comes right after "Honor and respect God the Father and His Son." So this modern idea of children being equal to their parents and having a say in the family needs to be looked at again, because God clearly sets out that the parents have authority, and it should be unquestioned. It should not be harsh. It should not be authoritarian. It should be known and respected.

Leviticus 20:9 For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.

Deuteronomy 27:16 Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt. And all the people shall say, Amen!

Proverbs 20:20 Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness.

Go now to Matthew 15, because Jesus, when He was here, validated this point as well. Jesus is talking here about transgressing the commandment in order to keep your own tradition, and He uses the fifth commandment as His example.

Matthew 15:4 For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death."

That is our Savior repeating the command. It is not something that has been done away. It is something that is still out there mostly as a prod on us to make sure that we produce children that will not do this. It is very important to know that our Savior, the One with whom we have the New Covenant with the Father, mediated by the Son, also validates this, and He shows the spirit then, talking about the way the Pharisees treat their parents. They do not take care of them when they get old. They give their money to the Temple instead. He says that this is a way of cursing your father and your mother.

As parents, we have to establish to our children that we are in authority. Our word is law in our house. Our rules must be kept. If we say "Jump!" they ask, "How high?" They must learn to ask our permission to do certain things, and you have to lay those things out. They must learn to keep us informed of where they are, and what they are up to. I know that when my kids are quiet, and I do not know exactly where they are, the first thing that I think of is that they are getting into trouble.

The parent has been placed *in control* of the child. So we should *be* in control, not just have the place. We should actually fulfill that responsibility. If we are not in control, it is likely we will not produce the character in them that God desires. As the child grows, our control of them should diminish as we place more trust in them, give them more responsibility, and give them the chance to prove to you to do what is right. But from babies until at least the adolescent years, they should be under our authority at all times.

Let us go to Deuteronomy 21. This is the kind of control God says parents should have over their children. Now in this particular instance the parents did not have control, and look what happens.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, [Obviously this is an older child.] then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city, and they shall say to the elders of his city, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil person from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

Ooh! That is tough. Parents have the authority to condemn their children to death under this law if they are rebellious and stubborn to the point where they will not listen to their parents. Obviously something like that could not happen in this culture. We have laws against this sort of thing. But the principle is there, that we should establish parental authority over our children so that it does not come to this, so that we do not produce an *evil* person that such a thing might be necessary.

God says, "Look at this. Listen to what happens here, and fear that anything like this should occur in Israel." Just keep that in mind. God often shows us the rewards and blessings for doing well, but this is the cursing of what happens when we do not do well. We produce evil.

Now the other side of this. Coupled with parental authority must be godly love. They have to go together. Without it, parental authority quickly becomes authoritarian and abusive. I know that in earlier times where the parents had a great deal of authority, their children rebelled against that because it was not coupled with love. The Victorian father is known to have been somewhat like this. He was very stern, very strict, and it produced a generation that became the generation of the 1920s. It produced the flapper

types, the alcohol-swilling, Charleston-dancing type of individual, and all they wanted to do was party, party, party, because that was rebellion against the standard of the times.

A similar sort of thing happened with the "baby-boomer" generation that started rebelling in the 60s. They are both products of generations that were very tough on their children. We should use our authority in outgoing concern for the welfare of the child. It is not parental authority just for parental authority's sake. It is coupled with loving, godly outgoing concern. Mr. Armstrong always talked about that. There is the way of get, and there is the way of give. The way of give is one of outgoing concern for the other person.

Godly love always has the long-term *eternal* good of the other in mind, not necessarily the present momentary comfort or pleasure of the other person. There is a difference. You can do good to somebody even when you are hurting them. I am talking about spanking specifically. Spanking hurts the little rear end of the child. He cries. He may even get a red spot on his derriere. That is not something that at the time he is perfectly comfortable with and enjoys, but in the long-term that present pain leads to joy and peace and righteousness—right doing; proper godly behavior.

Let us look at Hebrews 12. I was here a lot in the last sermon. I just want to go over this again.

Hebrews 12:5-6 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.

That is pretty tough. When Jesus was scourged, His skin was ripped off Him. But God says that when *He* scourges, He does it in love. He does this to every son whom He loves. That is hard to get our human minds around sometimes, but present pain may cause future joy. And it should cause future joy if the present pain is done in the proper way for the proper reasons. God

does not quail at the tears of His children. He gives the discipline when it is needed. It says in Revelation 3:19, to the Laodicean church, that He chastens every son that He loves. "So repent," He says.

Hebrews 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

To those that get the discipline in a process of training in the proper way, it will yield these spiritual fruits—peace and righteousness—and as I mentioned before, joy comes out of that. Discipline yields righteous fruit and peace.

I keep finding confirmation of these principles in one Testament or the other. It should tell you something about the Testaments. They are similar. They are both valid. There are things back here that work, and we should not shun them just because they are back here.

Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

This is kind of strange to think about in our day and age. They say if you spare the rod, then you are loving your son. God says, "Uh-uh. If you spare the rod, you hate your son, because you're not preparing him for life. You're not giving him any discipline." God says if you really love your child, you will discipline him promptly, diligently, because he needs it.

The long-term effects of not disciplining children will be negative. They will be destructive.

Proverbs 23:13 Do not withhold correction for a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

The difference in "beat" and "spank" is huge in our mind. The *New King James* translators kept the word that was in the *King James*, but it is not necessarily what we think it is. We think of "beat" as in pummel—really smash. It does not mean that. It is more on the idea of our "spank."

Proverbs 23:14 You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell [from the grave, sheol].

You will keep him from death. I think this has both physical and spiritual implications here. Proper discipline may keep a child from chronic delinquency, self-destructive tendencies, death, and ultimately the Lake of Fire. We can just extrapolate on out to where this could lead with a child, especially one of ours. A child of one of "*the* called" we have always said has a free calling from the Father. Their minds are open to His Word. Now it does not mean that they will necessarily accept that, but eventually that training will do some good if we do it properly.

Proverbs 13:24 tells us that if we love our child we should discipline him promptly. Literally this word is not "promptly." It is the word "early." Discipline him early. That means primarily that it is best to lay the foundation of our discipline as young as possible, as early in the child's life as we can. That is when it does the most good, because it nips a lot of that future rebellion in the bud.

If you love your child, you begin your childrearing when he is still a babe-in-arms. Get him in the mode of obedience before Satan gets him in the mode of rebellion. Mr. Armstrong often said that the parents are the child's shield against Satan. They are the ones that God has placed to guard that child from Satan's depredations, Satan's influence. We do it by how we discipline our children, by how we train them and teach them to grow up and live.

We have to counter the attitudes that Satan broadcasts by proper instruction. We do this by letting them know what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, by guiding them, by narrowing them in to the limits that God has placed us under, and thus them as well. If it is done right, that child will not be as susceptible to Satan's deceptions all through his life, because in his mind is the foundation of right living. That is why

God can say in Proverbs 22:6, that if you train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. It has been ingrained since day one. Get them early.

I just thought of this. When the Third Reich was beginning to rise, Hitler started with the children. He wanted to get them believing in his ideals, and so he had a big propaganda campaign to get the children while they were young. Now ours is with a more beneficial purpose, and we too should try to get the child when he is young, to give him that shield that he needs to grow up properly.

This word "promptly" can also have the other nuance of "diligence." Discipline him diligently. What this means is that we have to be on the ball when it comes to parenting. It is not something that we can slack off every once in a while. It is a full- time job. Diligence entails being aware of our children's actions, studying them so that we know how they think, what they like, what they dislike, how they will react, what punishments work on them, what punishments do not work on them, how severe we can be, and how much mercy we can show. That is a lot of studying to do, and I have just scratched the surface of things we need to know about our children.

We need to know what peeves them. How do we get under their skin? Why do we get under their skin? And on and on. Learning these things about our children helps us raise them better. We know then when to discipline them and when to layoff, when they have gotten the point, and when they still need a little bit more goading to do what is right. Being diligent in this, as well as giving them correction or praise or help as soon as they need it, and not waiting for hours or days, reinforcing good behavior and discouraging bad behavior. All these things have little bits of this diligence in them.

This is the same kind of diligence that God has for us. He is always on the ball with us. We are the apple of His eye. Do you know what that means? In Hebrew it is "the little man of the eye," because when you go up close to somebody, you can see your own reflection in that person's eyeball, his iris, or pupil, and that is how close God is watching us. *We* are the "little man" in His eye, and our children should be the "little man" of our eye. That is the type of diligence we need, so you should not put off discipline, especially in a younger child.

You must make sure that the child relates the discipline to the infraction. If too much time elapses between the infraction and discipline, the child will not get the point. That is why you have to be diligent so that you catch him when he is doing wrong, and then apply the discipline so that he understands that he has done wrong, and then you teach him what he should have done right. And then you encourage him to do better next time.

The attention span of a child is ephemeral. If you do not catch him right away he is off on something else, and if you swat him, he will probably say, "What's that for? I was crawling across the carpet. That's all I was doing." He did not remember that ten seconds before he had just knocked a piece of china off the coffee table. What it was doing there I do not know, but he will not remember it when he is a little toddler, so it has to be immediate. That is why you have to be diligent.

Mothers, when the child gets older, your saying, "Wait until your father gets home" may not cut it. Obviously a father has got his swinging arm nice and limbered up by that time, but the child has forgotten the infraction. Ten swats is going to be cruel and unusual punishment. They do not make the connection. I think most mothers do that because they do not want to appear to be the bad guy. They are always at home with the child and they end up probably doing most of the discipline anyway, so they are trying to push it off on dad so that the children do not think of her as Attila the Hun's wife. But it needs to be done *soon* so there is a connection there that the child picks up. The child needs discipline then so that he can connect the infraction with the correction.

All of this discipline that we do cannot be haphazard either. You need to have a clear set of rules, regulations, limits that the child is to adhere to. This is what God does with us. He clearly delineates what is good behavior and what is bad behavior. Have you ever noticed that in the Book? "This is My commandment for you: (insert command here) and if you don't do that, this is what happens." "This you shall not do: (insert warning). If you do them, this is what will happen to you." Of course He also gives us rewards and promises for doing well.

But what did He do right away with His people, His children? He got them to Mount Sinai, and He gave to them His Ten Commandments. This should be the basis for all of our rules, regulations, and limits as well. After that we can expand off into more specific areas, more detailed areas, but the basic law should be the Ten Commandments.

Let us go to Galatians 3. I do not want to get into the theology of this section, but I want you to get the general principle that Paul is talking about here.

Galatians 3:19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

Galatians 3:23-24 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

God gave the law to train us as a tutor would, while we are learning to make it a part of our character until we can get it totally written on our hearts, until we don't need the written law to be always before our face. See, a tutor in the Roman world would be assigned to teach the children. My margin here says, "In a household [the tutor was] the guardian responsible for the care and discipline of the children." He was with them all the time. He had his little stick, and I am sure he smacked them on the rear when they had infractions.

Paul compares the law to that. Like I said, I do not want to get into all the theological issues here with this, but I want you to see the principle here. We also should have a law for our children so that they have this tutor to guide their actions as well, their growing up. The law is a guardian that cares for and chastens as needed until the child is mature enough to understand and live by the principles of it. You never get away from the law. It is always there. It is just that the written ones are only supposed to be completely effective until we can have them right here [in our hearts] where we live them, no matter what. They are a reminder, a guide, a guardian, a tutor, and once we have God's character, then the laws are there and we do not need

them before our face anymore because we are automatically going to live them.

That is the same sort of thing that we do with our rules and regulations with our children. We set them out so that they know what's expected, and what not is expected of them, what is good, what is bad, so that those can become part of their character. And as they learn them, then the rules themselves somewhat recede into the background, because they then know how they should act.

In following God's pattern we need a basic law as the basis for our childrearing as well. We need to guard and to guide the child until he is mature enough to live responsibly without our constant vigilance. Like I said, I recommend, that like God, we make our basic law the Ten Commandments. Teach them early to the children—as soon as they can begin to even understand them. They might have trouble with number 7 and number 10. They might have trouble with the difference between number 1 and number 2, but make sure they know them. They do not have to know the long form. Nobody is saying that a 3, 4, or 5 year old kid needs to have them memorized by heart, but they have to know that number 1 says that:

- (1) You shall have no other gods before the One God.
- (2) that they should not have idols, or bow down to them.
- (3) that they should not take God's name in vain.
- (4) that they should keep the Sabbath day.
- (5) that they should honor their parents.
- (6) You should not kill.
- (7) You should not commit adultery.
- (8) You should not steal.
- (9) You should not lie.

(10) You should not want other people's things.

That is simple. A little child can understand those. They may not understand them deeply, but at least they have that basic law, and then all our other laws branch off from this, because in effect every law can be traced back to one of those Ten Commandments. We do not necessarily have to tell them, "Well this one goes back to number 6, because you shouldn't hit your brother. But you shouldn't hit your brother," and they should know that. You do not have to tell them. We should know it ourselves, that we are upholding God's Ten Commandments by that.

Of course you will have to add other rules and limits. You will want to curb self-destructive behavior, like running out in the middle of the street without looking, or playing in that cabinet under the sink where all the poisons are. Those are rules to protect them from themselves. Kids just do not know a lot of these things. Their minds are *tabula rasa*, as the Latins would say. There is nothing on them, and we have to make sure that we write on them the rules that they need to live by. They do not know that that skull and crossbones means "DON'T DRINK." You have to teach it. So you set up a rule: "Don't go in this cabinet." And if they go in that cabinet, they get disciplined until they learn that "Don't go in that cabinet" means "*DON'T GO IN THAT CABINET!*"

You also need to establish rules under the "tend and keep" principle found in Genesis 2. God told Adam and Eve to tend and keep the Garden. Rules of this kind are, "Don't write on the walls with your crayons." "Put your toys away after you're finished with them." "Put your clothes in the hamper after you've taken them off." "Brush your teeth before bed." "Don't jump on the bed or the couch." "Don't climb on the kitchen table." "Don't spill your milk." These rules teach neatness, organization, respect for property, and the care of their own and other people's possessions. They need to be taught these things. Remember, their minds are blank. They do not know these things innately. We have to put it there.

Another set of rules that we need to have are etiquette and personal courtesy type of rules. They should learn to speak respectfully to adults, especially to the hoary head. That is a definite command from God in Leviticus 19:32.

"You shall respect the hoary head." They should say, "Yes sir" and "No sir," and "Yes ma'am" and "No ma'am" to their elders, especially to their parents. They should say "Please" when they want something, "Thank you," when it has been given to them, and "You're welcome" when they do something for others, and they are thanked.

They should have decent table manners, and they should know how to behave responsibly in a restaurant. They should not be the curse of "Chez Louis," running up and down the tables. They should have decent table manners wherever they go, and they should eat what they are served. If you know that the child does not like it, you do not have to give it to them, but if you put it on his plate, he had better eat every last morsel there unless he is about to burst. Curb their dislikes.

Teach them to eat a variety of things. It may take a lot of work. For some who have these ingrained habits that they do not like peas, or they do not like carrots, or they do not like string beans, or they think that Brussels sprouts are slimy, or whatever it happens to be, it may take a long time, but they need to eat. They need to have a balanced diet, and it is your responsibility as a parent to make sure that they get it. I know some kids will not eat vegetables, but they need it for their health. You teach them to like it, and more than likely when they get older, they will end up enjoying those things.

Another thing in that same section is that they should learn to let others go before them. They should let others have the drinking fountain first. They should hold the door for their friends and for their elders. This teaches them to put other people first. They need to serve others at the table. "Pass the salt, please." "Yes, why don't you." "Here, take the salt. I'll have it after you." If they are old enough to begin serving, they should serve the other members of the family before they serve themselves, dishing out the mashed potatoes or whatever it happens to be.

They should also learn to take care of those who may be struggling in whatever way. Let us say they are on a hiking trip, they should learn to go back and help those who cannot make the grade. This teaches them to take care of the weak, and to help those who do not have the skills to do what

they can do. If they have got some extra strength, they should lend it. This teaches them very important biblical principles for later. This is all part of our training.

And beyond this, parents should teach their children to work—*W-O-R-K*. Give them chores as soon as they are able to handle them. Now do not make the chore too difficult for a little kid. We started out kids out on separating the clothes that need to be washed. "Put the whites in this pile. Put the different colors in these piles." This teaches them colors, and it teaches them to work together. It also teaches them the value of work.

We then went onto another thing. Courtney now has to sweep the kitchen floor, and John helps. They have already graduated to mopping now, but those are things they can handle. John collects all the recyclables from the house wherever they happen to be, and takes them out to the garbage. They have other jobs that they have to do besides cleaning their room.

Children should be taught to work. They are never too young to work it seems like. There are things they can do. Obviously a toddler cannot do much. He does not understand, but as soon as they are able they should be put to work. They should not learn to play, play, play, play, play, play all day, and never have any responsibilities. They need to learn to help out around the house. It does not have to be big, but children should not be left to play all the time and left to themselves.

When children do not have anything to do, they find something to do, and it is usually mischief of one sort or another. So keep them busy. Keep their hands and their minds engaged on something. This does not mean that you go out and tell them to clean up the trash barrel once a week. That is pretty cruel, but you find something for them to do that is going to teach them a work ethic, and this will help them tremendously throughout their lives.

Make sure when you tell them what to do that you lay it out very clearly what you expect of them. Do not just say, "Clean the bathroom," especially for a small child. This is kind of ridiculous, because you would not want a small child to clean the bathroom, but I will just say it this way. If you were going to do that, make sure that they know they are supposed to clean out the sink, and that they are supposed to wipe off the mirror, and they are

supposed to sweep the floor, and they are supposed to clean the tub, and they are supposed to do this, and they are supposed to do that, and clean the toilet as well.

If you just say, "Clean the bathroom," their idea of cleaning the bathroom is far different from your idea of cleaning the bathroom, and you are going to go in there and it is not going to look like anything you expect. See, you have to lay the jobs out specifically. Kids do not think like we adults do. They are very literal. When you want your child to clean up his bedroom you should say, "Johnny, go into your bedroom. Clean up all your toys and put them away." If you just say, "Clean up your toys," he will just put them under something. "Put your toys away. Put your clothes away. Make sure your bed is made."

Go through and list the chores out specifically. If you do not, they will interpret, and they will be satisfied with what they have done, and you probably will not, and it will cause friction, and that is what you do not want.

I think Leviticus 18 is an appropriate place for us to end this sermon. This will wind up this section.

Leviticus 18:4-5 You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the LORD your God. [Apply this to yourself.] You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

Keep this in mind. A child needs rules and limits so he can *live* by them. The children of Israel were just that to God. They were children, and the way He approaches Israel in their training is very instructive to us. He gave them lots of laws, lots of rules, lots of regulations, and He gave them so they could *live* by them. He did not give them so that they would be burdened. He did not give them so that they would feel like they could not do anything. He gave them so they could *live*, and live the way He expected them to live.

The implication here is if there are no rules, if there are no limits, then death and destruction await. They are ready to pounce. That is what happened in the book of Judges, remember. There was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. Do you know what the book of Judges

has been called? The bloodiest book of the Bible. It is full of death and destruction because there was no law that the people would obey—not for long stretches of time, and only when God brought a judge did they come back for a time. He had to reintroduce that law then.

Know what the family rules are. If you have to, even write them down. And parents, stick to them. Praise and reward your children for keeping them. Punish or penalize them for their infraction, and you will find peace and righteousness begin to settle over your house. And oh, what a feeling!