

Parenting (Part 5): Methods

Training Children

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I guess this is the sermon that just about everybody who has kids has been looking forward to. The kids have been looking forward to it in another way—hoping it would not come. But, truthfully, I do not think it is the most important sermon on this subject that I am going to give. I actually think that the first one, on parenting principles, was the most important one in this entire series. I really feel that the first one was the one that laid all the groundwork for all the rest of it and set out the most vital elements in effective childrearing.

Those vital elements—two of them—are (1) understanding how important parenting—or, childrearing—is to God's purpose and (2) that aim, or goal, of parenting is to produce godly seed for His Kingdom. Thinking this way—that is, that it is *this important* that we parent our children properly and in a godly way—will make our efforts that much more urgent and meaningful. The method that we use, then, becomes somewhat secondary to that. If our goal is right, then the method does not have as great a position or high a priority. Now it is still important to use proper methods; but if we are trying to produce godly seed, the methods will fall into line—that is, they will be godly methods.

The second sermon, if you will recall, focused on family as a patriarchy. And then, both the second and the third one were on the father's and the mother's role in the family. Father, taking an active leadership role, is just as important as a mother is in her nurturing and supportive role in the family. The Bible clearly says that God has made a man and his wife "one". They are, in a sense, two sides of the same coin. They have the same job. They are working toward the same goal, but they bring different skills, a little bit different perspective, to the process. But they are both necessary to produce godly seed.

The fourth sermon of the series dealt with discipline. If you will remember, I broke it down into three basic areas—at least, the three that we got to last time. (1) Honoring the parents, or, as I called it, establishing parental authority. (2) Disciplining in love. And (3) Setting down and consistently following the rules and limits of the family—or the children.

So today I would like to pick up where we left off the last time. We are actually going to go into the fourth area of discipline. We will go over a few ideas and principles about

punishment, or, chastening. We will also talk a little bit about the concept of training. Then, I hope to get to one particular situation and how we can deal with it, or how we should handle it.

Let us go into chastening. What method of discipline does the Bible endorse? You might have a lot of child psychologists out there that would claim that the Bible's method of chastening is cruel. That it is abusive. That it is hurtful; and that it will permanently scar children till they die. But what biblical method of chastening does God endorse? Do you know that—other than rebuke (meaning, *correction with the mouth*)—the only one, the only method that is used in the Bible, is *spanking*.

There is no mention in the Bible of sending a child to his room. There is no mention of periods of "time out." (That is a very popular one in the world today.) There is no mention of sitting them in the corner—on a stool, with their thumb in their mouth, or however people do it. There is no mention of giving them restrictions. There is no mention of fining them a certain amount (the children, I mean). There is no mention of adding chores. There is no mention of taking away privileges. There is no mention of any other type of child chastening practiced [in the Bible] except spanking—because spanking is the one that God says **works**.

However, now that I have said that, the Bible does not exclude these other methods. They all seem to have their place—at certain times, for certain children, for certain crimes and sins and misdemeanors that they might have done. But spanking is generally the best and the most productive method for punishing young children.

These other methods can be used to "spice up" the punishment, the discipline, that a parent can give; but spanking should be the one we turn to first and most often. It does something that the other ones do not do; and that is, it gets their attention! Kids today love to go to their rooms. That is where their TV is, their Nintendo is, their computer is. All their toys are there. Their telephone is there. That is not a punishment. That is a reward! ("Man, I get a whole hour of playing my Nintendo baseball.") They do not think of that as a punishment.

But spanking *is* a punishment, all of the time. Notice that I did not say beating, or abusing, or even whipping. Some people do not like the idea of whipping their children, because it sounds like we should have a cat-o'-nine-tails and flay their backside. Spanking (if you look it up in *Webster's*) is a slap. Especially and normally and primarily, it is a slap on the buttocks. Often, it is with a bare hand. That is the technical definition of a spanking—a slap, normally to the buttocks, and often with the bare hand.

The butt of a child is a wonderful place to absorb a spanking. The reason for that is that a slap on the bottom "smarts" (like most of you would believe, because you have had it done to yourself at one time or another) but it does not bruise. It may make a red spot. Sometimes there is a hand impression there for a few minutes. But it does not bruise them. It is a slap.

Have you ever noticed that, when you clap your hands, you do not bruise your hands? At least, not unless you are doing it for hours upon hours on end. But that is the same effect that it has on the rear end of a child. Have you ever clapped your hands so hard that the slapping sensation hurts? Well, that is what it does to a child's rear end. It smarts; but it does not bruise.

The job is not to hurt the child. The job is to cause a little bit of pain to get his attention. No bones, no vital organs, no visible parts are underneath a spanking [on the child's buttocks] so that they would get injured in any way.

A sturdy paddle is sometimes very effective—like a ping pong paddle. (Take off the little nubby thing. That might produce an interesting pattern on the rear end.) Did you ever see a fly-back paddle, with a ball attached to a rubber band and stapled to the back of the paddle? Those make wonderful paddles, because they are heavier than a ping pong paddle. A ping pong paddle across some kid's bony butt is going to shatter; but a fly-back paddle is a little bit thicker. It is normally about a quarter inch thick and it can withstand years and years of parental discipline. It makes the point and it is the right size. It fits just about on one "cheek." That is all you need.

And this is especially good on older adolescents who have become used to the slap of the hand. Also (this is the truth) often, when they get to be a certain age, it hurts the parent's hand more to spank the child than it does the child's rear end. So you need something to protect yourself.

Now, I do not recommend skinny belts. Some people have used wide leather belts. That might be okay; but I usually would not recommend a belt at all. I also would not recommend switches, sticks, leather thongs, or any narrow implement. I know that people down South love switches. "Go out there and pick you some of that willow branch, and bring it back inside; and I'll whip your hide." I do not recommend that, if you are going to do it on the bare bottom, because it will often cause injury. It will bruise, or cut, the skin. That is what I have against narrow implements for spanking. That can easily lead to, almost, an abusive type of thing—where you are starting to actually cut or bruise the child.

That is *not* the idea of a spanking. It is not to produce that sort of injury. It is to get their attention—to produce a little bit of pain, so that they wake up to what they have just done. And they begin to feel sorry for it and the process of repentance can begin. Ideally, like I said, a spanking should cause pain without any injury (either to the skin, or to the muscle).

Also, a spanking should be calmly given. Not in a fit of anger; but given in a manner [somewhat] like an executioner in a movie, or whatever. His face is placid. That is his job. He is going to get through it.

A spanking should be given in a controlled manner. Not one where you are going around and around and around with this kid—chasing him around the room with your paddle (or, your hand). That is not controlled. Remember, "parental authority." The child should stay where you put him. He should lean over the bed or over your knee, or whatever. And you give the kid his swats in a very calm and controlled manner.

Also, it should be given with just a few strokes. Now, Paul was beaten by the civil authorities forty times, minus one. That is excessive. That can nearly kill a person, and often times, I am sure it did—depending on their health when they went through it. I recommend not more than about three or four swats for most infractions. Of course, they get more if they do not behave while they are getting it. But, normally, two, three, or four is enough to get their attention and make them listen. Some children are a little bit more stubborn and it might take something to wear down their defiance. But, normally, just a few. And it should get less, as time goes on—because they understand what is coming.

Like I said, it is not abusive. You are not trying to cream the kid! You are trying to get his attention so that he can learn something. You are there to punish the child, of course. That is where the pain comes in. But the main goal is to re-establish your authority over that child and to get him to behave.

Let us look at a few proverbs about punishment. This should give us the right perspective on this.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and rebuke [reproof] give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Notice that God here says, "the rod and the reproof." He puts *spanking and verbal instruction* (correction) in the same process. Both of those together will point the child in

the right direction, to correct behavior. This also says here that 'good' and 'bad' children are made—not born. Just because your little lad has a stubborn streak a mile wide does not mean that he is doomed to be stubborn. It may be something that he has a hard time overcoming, and that you have a hard time overcoming it in him; but if you apply the rod and the reproof properly, that child can get over his stubbornness. Notice, it says they give "wisdom." But, if you do not use these things, he is going to end up bringing shame to his parents—because you have not given him the right instructions: the rod and the reproof together.

So we parents are to give them "wisdom." This is knowledge and understanding to do what is right. We do this through punishment and verbal teaching. If we fail to do this (if we are absentee parents, as it were), we are going to create a monster. That stubborn streak, or that rebellious streak, or whatever it happens to be in that kid—is going to just get bigger, and bigger, and bigger; and it is going to start effecting more and more people.

And who knows where it will lead? God says that it will lead to bringing shame to his parents—specifically to his mother. Whether that is in doing something like killing someone else and ending up in jail, ending up on the executioner's block, ending up in poverty, ending up however. But if we apply the proper amount of correction—both in punishment and in reproof—we have a good chance of leading him away from bringing shame to his family.

I would like to read a column that was in the paper recently. It is by Walter Williams. Some of you may have seen this. He is a syndicated columnist. He is actually an economist at George Mason University. Many of you may have heard him on the Rush Limbaugh show. He subs for Rush every once in a while. This was in *The Orange County Register*, just a few days ago. These are his comments on today's children.

Okay, I'll say it. One of the best things we can do for today's youth is for adults in positions of authority to develop a willingness to give the hind parts of misbehaving youth appropriate attention. You say, "Williams, are you suggesting that we return to the old-fashioned, uncivilized practice of whipping children?" Yes, that's precisely what I'm suggesting. First, let's address the issues of "old-fashioned" and "uncivilized." During my youth (the old-fashioned and uncivilized forties and fifties), parents and sometimes teachers whipped misbehaving young people. Whipping has always been one of the tools of discipline, until we allowed experts into our lives. Dr. Spock and other experts told us we shouldn't whip our children. They advised that having to whip a child was a sign of parental failure. Regardless

of what the experts preached, the undeniable fact is the uncivilized practice of whipping children produced more civilized young people. Youngsters didn't use foul language to, or in the presence of, teachers and other adults. In that uncivilized era, assaulting a teacher or adult would never have crossed our mind. Today, foul language and teacher assaults are routine at many schools. For some kinds of criminal behavior, I think we'd benefit from having punishment along the lines of Singapore's caning as part of our judicial system. You say, "Williams, how cruel can you be?" Let's think about cruelty. Today it's not uncommon for young criminals to be arrested, counseled, and released to the custody of a parent twenty or thirty times before they spend one night in jail. Such a person is a very good candidate for later serving a long prison sentence or worse, facing a death penalty. [I might make an aside here: Proverbs 29:15]

If you interviewed such a person and asked, "Thinking back to when you started your life of crime, would you have preferred a punishment such as caning that might have set you straight or being where you are today?" I'd bet my retirement money that he'd say he wished somebody had caned some sense into him. That being the case, which is more cruel: caning or allowing such a person to become a criminal? It's difficult for parents to raise children all by themselves. Part of raising children is the environment. That environment includes other adults. During my youth, I might be doing something mischievous—such as throwing stones. An adult would come over to me and ask, "Does your mother know you are out here throwing stones?" I'd reply, "No, Sir." or, "No, ma'am." And hope that the matter ended there. Today it's quite different. An adult correcting a youngster risks cursing and possibly assault. That's a sad commentary. Adults are justifiably afraid of children. Do we Americans—as parents, teachers, principals and others in positions of authority—have the guts and willpower to control our youngsters? Or, are we going to play costly games—such as having metal detectors at school entrances, video monitors, locked classrooms, hallway guards, teacher panic alarms, and in general a jail-like atmosphere at our schools? Youngsters could be stopped very easily from bringing weapons to school. You say, "How, Williams? What makes you smarter than the experts who haven't figured it out?" Here's my prediction: If the punishment for the first offense of bringing a weapon to school was five lashes on the butt with a cane, and the punishment was carried live on the six o'clock news; there'd be an end of weapons being brought to schools. Children, especially boys, are born barbarians. We, as parents and teachers, have a mere eighteen years to civilize them before foisting them off on the rest of society; and we

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are not doing the best job that we can.

I thought that was very apropos and timely for me for this sermon.

Proverbs 29:17 Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul.

This is the flipside of what we just read in verse 15, and what Walter Williams said. If we train them properly, what *joy* children bring to us! The parent has rest, or peace, because he does not have to be hounding his children all the time to behave themselves. He can feel content and he does not have to worry that his children are out there doing something they should not do. What peace of mind that brings to a parent to know he can trust his child—wherever they are, whatever they are doing, whatever their age. Correct your son, and he will give you rest.

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

We saw in chapter 29 that the rod and reproof give wisdom. Well, this is the flipside of that. Here, Solomon says that the rod drives the foolishness out. You have to get the foolishness out before the wisdom can go in.

Spanking, like I have been saying, gets the child's attention and causes him pain so that he understands what is acceptable versus what is unacceptable. The words alone will probably not do it. I do not know how many times I have chastised my children for something—whatever it happened to be—and not followed it up with a spanking. And they go right back to doing it. By the end of how many times I have told them not to do that, I ended up saying, "Okay, now you're getting a spanking." When I should have given the spanking the first time that they did it; and after that, probably, my word (saying, "Stop that.") would have stopped it in its tracks, because they were afraid of getting another spanking. So, words alone are not often enough. It takes the spanking to put an exclamation point on your words.

And you know what? There is another article that I will not read. I did not bring it with me; but it appeared just recently in the newspaper. It was by John Rosemond. For the most part, I would recommend the advice of John Rosemond, if you get him in your local paper or if you see any of his books. He basically has the philosophy that, if the

parents are in control, they do not have to spank. Now, he believes that spanking has to be done early and often to set the tone; but once the child understands who is in control and knows that the threat of the spanking is there, then they probably will not be getting into trouble very often.

They know just where the limits are; and they know that if they go over their limits, the wrath of their parents is going to come down upon them. So they learn. They know what their limits are and they stay within them. Just the threat of having the spanking over them will often keep them from doing it.

Now they are going to test the limits. All children do—at different times, for different reasons. And so the idea (the threat) of the spanking always has to be reinforced. But, if it is applied consistently and with fairness and immediately, then normally just one spanking every once in a while will keep that child on an even keel.

So, it is not like I am saying you should be behind them all the time with a paddle and swat them for whatever they do, every time. But you have to set the tone, and the child has to know that you are the one in charge and your word goes; and, if he crosses that line, he is in danger of getting that paddle on his rear end.

Let us go back a few more chapters, to Proverbs 20. This gets into the more hardened children, the ones who have started to make a habit of disobedience.

Proverbs 20:30 Blows that hurt cleanse away evil, as do stripes the inner depths of the heart.

Harsher punishment is reserved for actions that are truly evil—those which break God's commands, specifically those that show an attitude of rebellion. Parents should *always* make the punishment fit the infraction. If it is something that is just slightly wrong, do not give them ten or twelve swats for it. That is way overboard. Often times, all they need is a slap on the wrist (not figuratively, but literally), or one swat across the rear end, or a very harsh word. But if it is something that is really bad—something that breaks God's law—then you need to teach them that is the sort of thing that is going to get them a red backside. They have got to learn that God's law is inviolate on their part.

Spanking will help them clean up their act. And if you are consistent with it, persistent, it will clean it up quickly. Turn back a few pages to Proverbs 15, to a very similar thought.

Proverbs 15:10 Harsh discipline [correction] is for him who forsakes the

way, and he who hates correction [reproof] will die.

That is how far it goes. We would not kill a kid for it; but if he forsakes **the way** and does not get harsh correction, it may end up killing him—because his own actions will lead to his own destruction. So make sure that the punishment fits the infraction. That means that you have to think about what has gone on and what your reaction is going to be. I think sometimes it is a good idea that you do not set down how many swats are going to be for such-and-such an infraction. I think parents should learn to be creative about those sorts of things.

Always punish, but do not always have the same punishment. The reason I say this is because the kid will often accept the punishment to break the rule. He says, "Okay. Dad's going to give me three swats if I go down to Junior's house. And, let's see, is it worth it? Junior's got that new game and I really want to play it; so I'll go anyway. I'll take the three swats." That is a kid who has learned how to work the law. And he will turn into a lawyer who finds loopholes for big corporations; and he will make lots of money. No, you have got to drive that sort of thinking out of a child. If you find that your child begins to think that way, you had better come up with a better punishment that he is not willing to take.

Here are a few hints that I have garnered from experience and various sources. Hopefully they will be helpful to you. Here is the first one. *Punish immediately after the infraction, as soon as you find out about it.* Do not wait, because the kid's attention span is about that of a gnat. He forgets how, why, this punishment goes with whatever he did. He loses the connection between the two of them. So as soon as you find out about something that has been done, make sure you punish—so that the kid knows that he is being punished for such-and-such a thing. (It is not for you. It is for the kid.)

Second one: *Be consistent.* I have said this a couple times already. Do not let the child get away with something today that you punished him for yesterday. If jumping on the bed is against your house rules on Tuesday, make sure it is against your house rules on Thursday. Do not let something slip.

Now, you might not (like I said) want to give them the same punishment each time. But make sure that you punish for these infractions so that they do not get away with anything. Be consistent about it. Make sure those lines that you have drawn (and your rules and limits) are clear. And, if they cross them, well that is their mistake. Give them the punishment.

Point number three is that *both parents need to give out the punishment*. Make sure that both parents are on the same page. One parent should not be the cruel taskmaster, slave driver, whip wielder, and the other one be the old softy. Do not let your children play one parent off against the other. Do not play "good cop, bad cop" with your children. Make sure that you both are on the same page. If you have to, sit down and decide (between yourselves) what it is that you are going to punish for, what your rules are, where your limits are. And make sure you both stick to them. That is part of being consistent.

"Oh, Dad's got me today, and he never punishes me. Maybe I'll go over to Junior's house and play that game now. If Mom were here, she'd give me my three swats. But Dad's here and he'll just let it slide, because he is too interested in the football game." That should not happen. Dad should have the same rules as the mom and be just as willing to enforce them (and visa versa).

The fourth point is continued disobedience of the same rule should be countered with escalating the punishment, or changing the method to one that gets the child's attention and successfully corrects the problem. That reminds me: My neighbor once said, "Did you know that all children are born with their brains in their butts?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Yeah, the parent's supposed to spank it up into their heads."

You have got to come up with a method that gets the child thinking and gets him to stop the behavior. So, if you tell your child not to run into the street; and he does it over and over again, and every time that he does, you give him a little slap on the wrist and say, "No, Billy. Don't do that."—if he keeps on doing it, then obviously the one little slap on the wrist is not working. So escalate the punishment. Maybe, two slaps on the wrist. Maybe, pulling down his pants and giving him a very major slap on the rear end will work. Maybe, he needs the ball that he keeps chasing taken away. But whatever you decide to make the punishment, make sure it fits the crime and make sure it works. And, if it is not working, find something that does.

The fifth point is something I have already mentioned. *Be creative*. Use the method that works best for the particular child and the particular circumstance. Some children are stoic when it comes to punishment, and they will take their swats. Maybe they will whimper, or maybe one tear will drop down his cheek. Well, he is willing to endure it; but more than likely it is not getting through. So you, as the parents, have to be creative. Find something that the child values and take it away. Do something to grab that child's attention, so that he listens to you and is not willing to cross the line again.

Courtney—we will use her for an example—loves to read. Particularly right now, she is

reading lots of Laura Ingalls Wilder books. If spanking her did not help, I know the first thing I would reach for would be her set of Laura Ingalls Wilder books. And I would say, "Courtney, you are not allowed to read these for a week."—or two weeks, or three weeks.

Now, for an older child, maybe they have got this idea that sometime in June (just after they get out of school) they want to go to an amusement park. They have planned this with their friends for months and months. But, come May, they do something stupid—a direct rebellion against you. This kid (13 or 14) can take it like a man (five, six, seven, eight swats). So you decide, "Hmm, you've been wanting to go to this amusement park. If you don't straighten up and fly right in the next four weeks, you're not going. One more infraction, and your ticket is going to someone else."

Be creative. Think about what they want. Maybe they have been saving for a new bike. You could dock them for an infraction. "Okay, you've been using very foul language. Every time that you say something foul and I hear of it, that's five bucks that's coming out of your bike savings." Be creative. Think of ways that will get the child's attention (That is the point!) to where they will take you seriously, and what you have to say.

Being creative is very helpful in the public—when you are out in the public and the child is misbehaving. These days, and in this age, spanking in public is not very well received. Be creative. Think of something that will stop that child doing what he was doing when you cannot get to a private place to spank him. This takes thought! Parents cannot be lazy in their job. They have to know their children. They need to know how their children tick. What pushes their buttons? So, really keep an eye on them and know what they are up to, what they want, what they are striving to get, where they want to be—and take appropriate action in your punishment.

Point six I have also mentioned before. *Make sure the punishment fits the crime.* Like I said, rebellion requires harsher discipline than forgetfulness or laziness. Forgetfulness and laziness should be punished; but rebellion is worse than those two. There are whole sections of Proverbs about laziness; but rebellion is even worse than that.

Think about this: You do not swat a fly with a hammer. That is a little much. Nor do you try to lasso a bull with a piece of dental floss. That is definitely not enough. You have got to find a proper punishment to fit the infraction.

Number seven: *If possible, punish the offending member.* Now I am not saying that, if you have three kids and the one did the crime, then you punish him. What I mean is, if the hand touches (and you said, "No."), then smack the hand. If the lips speak (and you

said, "Be quiet."), then smack the lips. It gets their attention it then directs the punishment directly against the offending body part. Did not Jesus say something about *if one member offends you, cut it off*? Well, apply that principle. If one member sins, smack it. If one member offends (instead of cutting it off), at least direct the punishment towards that so that they know.

This works best on little children, because sometimes they do not get the connection. Jarod loves our CDs at home. Now, we are dumb parents because we have them all directly at his level, where he can get them. But we figure if we can get thorough this, he will never touch these CDs again. Anyway, we smack his hand a lot. He is at that time in his life when everything is interesting. And he just wants to get in there. He does not care what kind of music it is. He goes for those CDs. Well, we always slap his hands on that, because that is the thing we want to stop. Now he is getting a lot better on it. A lot of times he just looks at them with these big eyes. You can just see his thoughts right on his face, "Oh, I'd really like to grab one of those CDs. I think Tchaikovsky would be good right now—to eat, not to hear." But he is mostly actually going for the glass right in front of our CD player now. That is better than the CDs, I think. It has just got lots of smears and drool all over it. But that is what we do.

When our children are in church and they are making a noise (and they should not be), you can just bop them right on their lips. It does not have to hurt. Just a little smack right on the lips. We do not want to necessarily make them cry during church—because then you are defeating the purpose of wanting them to be quiet. But a little smack does not hurt, and it is directed at the offending member (the mouth, the lips). And they usually come up short, because they are not expecting it. And maybe, just maybe, those synapses in the brain will click, "Oh, maybe I should be quiet." So, if you can, punish the offending member. If you need to, this should be followed with a slap on the rear—which John Rosemond calls "the swat absorber." Often times, that may not be enough after awhile; but you need to establish that authority again.

number 8 is the one that we saw there in Proverbs 29. *Follow the physical punishment with verbal correction and instruction.* Do not miss the opportunity to teach that child something. Remember I said that the swat on the butt is to get his attention. Now, what are we getting his attention for? To instruct him and correct him about what he needs to do.

So, little Johnny goes to the store and he pockets a piece of bubble gum. I find out about it and I say, "Johnny, you just broke one of God's Ten Commandments. Which one?" And he knows which one. He would say, "Number eight—don't steal." Then I would say, "Well, I've got to give you a spanking because you broke God's law." So he

would get his two or three swats. Then I would say, "Now, what did we learn about this?" And we would go through why he should not break the eighth commandment **and** my rule that he should not shoplift, **and** why this was wrong. So follow the physical punishment (of the spanking) with verbal correction (instruction).

Pull out the Bible if you have to. "Look, this is the one you broke. Do you think God's angry with you now? Do you think He cares about little boys breaking the eighth commandment? Why do you think He put this law in there? For just Daddy and Mommy, or for little boys too?"

(Now, our Johnny did not do that. I am just making this up. So do not accuse him of shoplifting. He is so skinny that, if he put anything in his pocket, it would bulge out.)

Now for the last point, number 9. This may be one of the most important ones to do. Make sure to follow the punishment with loving words, kindness, and a hug or some other tactile touching, expression of love and care. Do not go away from that session of punishment with bad feelings, if you possibly can. Now, the kid is probably not going to want to feel all lovey-dovey, at least at first—and especially as they grow a little bit older, because they are becoming more sophisticated. But it is something that needs to be done. Every chance that you get, after you have punished the child give him some love. Here in the South, they say, "Give him some sugar."

Let him know that the punishment was something that had to be done, because he broke the law, the rules. But also let him know that you still love him; and the reason why you punished him is because you love him and you do not want him to mess up again. You do not want him to have these problems. Would he rather not spend his time out playing than inside here getting a spanking?

And then, if you can, praise him for the things that he does well. Give him something to grab hold of to get his self-respect back a little bit. I do not know if there is anything more humiliating than getting a spanking. And that is good. They need to be humbled. But give them a boost up. Give them something to think about that they do well and build upon that. Say, "Look, you do so many good things around here that I can give you an allowance. Look, we do give you an allowance. There's no reason for you to go to the store and pocket a piece of gum. You can pay for that, because you do lots of work around here. And I'm very proud of you." Something—a little bit of praise—to go along with the punishment, and all done *in an attitude of love*.

And that is the chemistry of government. Do you remember that sermon my dad gave a couple years back, on *The Chemistry of Government*? Punishments, rewards, and love

(charisma)—those are the three elements that you need to use in correcting your children and in bringing them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. You might want to go back and listen to that sermon.

Another word for parenting or childrearing is child *training*. This brings out the nuance that escapes some. The journey that we have undertaken to prepare our children for adulthood is a long process. Normally when you talk about "training" you are not talking about one time and you are done—you know everything now. Training is something that athletes do for years before they are able to spend their ten seconds in the hundred-meter dash at the Olympics.

Think about it. You spend lots of time training and often times the performance is so small. But we are actually training so that the performance will be proper and godly for years and years on end—and on into eternity in God's Kingdom. So the eighteen years we put into our children's education and training is nothing compared to the fruit that it is going to produce in them.

But still, we are very finite beings. Eighteen years is a long time. That is a long process of training. So a week of proper childrearing will probably make some improvements show up, but that is just the beginning. There are years to go in the whole process. You have got to keep it up.

Now, this may seem discouraging to contemplate—that we are in it for the long haul. But it does have a silver lining; and that is, because it is so long, we have time to correct the mistakes that we make (at least, for the most part). One day does not a bad habit form, nor a good habit form. So there is time to cut things off at the pass (if we get them wrong), or reinforce certain desirable qualities that we want.

But everything in parenting takes time and diligence and consistency. It is not one day, not one week, not one month, or one year. It is an entire childhood that we have to be doing this childrearing within. If we do not use these qualities (of time and diligence and consistency), all our practices are going to fall flat. And they will fail. Then where will they be?

Let us go to Proverbs 22:6. I am sure you were wondering when I was going to get there. This is the famous scripture that a lot of people come to first, when they talk about childrearing. I have waited until the end.

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

The general understanding of this verse is indeed the main meaning—the main teaching that Solomon was trying to get across. If we instill proper training (proper instruction) while the child is young, it has a great chance of sticking with him throughout the rest of his life—and on into eternity.

The interesting thing about this is the word "train up." It does not mean just what we think it means. "**Train up**" is an interpretation. It is not a translation. (I do not know if you knew that.) If it were an actual translation, it would have been a different word. But Solomon used a very interesting word here. Literally, the Hebrew word means "initiate, or dedicate." I think there is one Bible that even uses the word "start." *Start a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he won't depart from it.*

I think it is the English word "*dedicate*" that gives us the best understanding of this. You know, when we dedicate something, we devote it to a certain purpose. Or, when somebody dedicates himself to some endeavor, it becomes his sole concern in life, does it not? Someone will dedicate themselves to, let us say, a charity. I just saw that thing about Elizabeth Taylor the other night. And in the waning years of her life, she has dedicated herself to being a pitchman to AIDS and AIDS research. She has dedicated this part of her life to doing that, because she has lots of friends who have the disease. So, she really goes out there and crusades for more funding, etc., etc.

Solomon says that *we are to dedicate our children*. To what? To **the way** they should go. Now what is the way that they should go? Well, it is obviously the same way that we should go.

We often talk about the path to the Kingdom of God. That is the way that they should go. So Solomon is saying here, "Start your kid off early learning God's ways; and, when he is old, those things will be stuck with him."

They will either help him or convict him. And it is more likely that it will help him, because that is the way of "the way." If he listens to them and does them, he is going to have those things behind him in his life; and his life will be successful. If we instill them while they are young, then we have beaten Satan to the punch. And we have made the child's life that much more probable to have success, and to be called of God, and to eventually come into His Kingdom.

So what we need to do is to make this path to the Kingdom of God—the way of God—the child's primary pursuit. Dedicate him to that. Start him off early. We can pretty much guarantee that, if we do that properly, they are set for life.

The Hebrew verb also has the nuance of "catechize"—like the Catholic has a catechism. That is, it means, "to instruct systematically, and usually by repetition." What it means is that we should have a plan—a course of instruction that we follow—that we take our children through step by step. Train a child. Normally, you have "a training regimen." An athlete, in training, has a plan. He gets up at a certain time. He does certain exercises. He does certain things. And he goes through that (day by day, by day, by day) until he reaches the point where he can do the thing that he wants to do well. And that is the same sort of thing that we need to do with our children. Have a course of instruction that we take them through.

From this idea comes the idea that the word implies narrowing in, or hedging them in. You see this is **one path** that we are trying to get them to go on. And the way we do it is by instructing them so that their "movement" is only along that path. Like we are putting hedges beside the road so they cannot get off the road and go one way or the other. We are hedging them in. We are narrowing their way. And that is the job of a parent.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall 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."

This is very similar to the last verse that we just read there in Proverbs 22. They emphasize the repetitive nature of child training. This phrase here in verse 7, "You shall teach them diligently" is one word in Hebrew. And this one word literally means "sharpen, or to whet, or to hone" like you would a knife.

Have you ever used a whetstone? Some of you are hunters, maybe, and you have a nice hunting knife. And you like to keep it nice and sharp for skinning your deer, or what have you. Many of you maybe have used it on your kitchen knives. But have you ever sharpened a blade with only one stroke? No. That is not how you use a whetstone. It takes many repeated strokes, all in the same direction, to put a fine edge on a blade. If you put a stroke in one direction, and then the next one another way, and then one that way—pretty soon you would have a pretty dull blade. It is that stroking action of the blade across the whetstone *all in the same direction* that produces the fine edge.

The same thing has to be done with your children. Moses says here that you should

teach your children God's way every waking moment. If you are not formally instructing them, you should be teaching by your example in everything that you do. Constantly sharpening that kid in just about everything that he sees, everything that he does, every word that he hears, every thought that he sees expressed on your face. Everything that happens around him, in the home, should be a stroke that leads him toward the Kingdom of God.

God's way should permeate our every thought, word, and deed. I am not talking about the kid. It should be a no-brainer for us to be showing him the example of God's way in our lives. So God's instruction, Moses says here, should never be far from our lips. It should be evident in our work, what we do with our hands. It should be evident in our ideas that we express to the family. It should be evident in our public and private relationships. Everywhere that kid sees you doing something, he should see God reflected in it; and, therefore, instruction for him.

So, what does this mean? It means, parents, that you are never off the clock when it comes to your children's training. Some may think that this is a great burden—that you are never off the clock. But God expects us to be living His way whether we have kids or whether we do not. And I can say for those of you who do not have kids, that right now you are probably surrounded by several of them. I know we are here. And your way is being registered upon their minds as well. So whether you have kids, or whether you do not have kids—you should be expressing God's way in everything that you do, so that those children who do see you will have your example to follow.

Children are observant. They learn more than we ever realize. If they mimic your mannerisms, how much more will they mimic your words and your actions? So, if we follow God's way, they have a greater chance to do so themselves.

Let us go to I Corinthians 14. I do want to get to this one situation, because this is important to us as a church.

I Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

What are we talking about here? Church services. Paul says, "Many of you have assignments. That's fine. Make sure you do your assignment for the edification of the rest of the church."

I Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

So, when we come together for church services it should be peaceful and ordered and calm; and we should all be ready, and participating in edifying each other. That is what we have gotten so far.

I Corinthians 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

These are the general instructions about how we should conduct ourselves at church services. Now, what about your children? This is a common area of complaint: about children's conduct at church services. That they are distracting, that they make too much noise, that they yell and scream, and that the parents do not have control of their children. What we see here, in I Corinthians 14, is that we have to base our childrearing practices on this idea of doing everything decently and in order, without confusion, so that there can be good, solid, edification when you come to church services.

Everybody in the church helps, or hurts, that process. They can either be a help, or they can be a distraction. And our children need to be taught to be helpful, in this regard. I know that many of us are in small congregations. And we are all over the telephone conference call. And in our situation, a child's misbehavior becomes even more distracting and critical. Several times we have heard babies over the telephone conference call, when a certain line has not been muted. And we all hear it—all four hundred of us, or however many of us there are. And it is distracting, because most of us want to hear the sermon. But, occasionally, there is a child screaming. And in a small congregation, the child scream even becomes more amplified because there is not the ambient noise of everyone else to block it out.

With the Feast coming up in about five weeks, it is good to start reinforcing the training of our children as to their conduct at church services. Especially if you have gotten into the habit of being at home and allowing them to run a little bit wild during church services, because there is no one else around to see.

Remember, our goal is to train these children for the Kingdom of God. Even when they are young, we should teach them to treat the Sabbath and church services with respect—because do we not invite God, through prayer, into our services? Those of you who are home, listening on the telephone, it should be just as holy there as it is if you are in a formal congregation meeting somewhere else. Your children should show the

same respect to God in your living room as you are listening to this as they do in a more formal place. And the sooner they begin to understand this, the sooner the Sabbath will be a delight to them, and to you, and to the rest of us.

Let us start with *infants*. Some child psychologists say that infants should not be corrected or taught these sorts of things. But I know (and I will say, based on my experience) that not doing so is sheer indulgence and will lead to a tougher time in correcting them later. They can learn. Little Jarod is only eight months old; but he is learning, because we are trying to teach him how to be in church.

Besides, new mothers and fathers need to listen to the sermon too. That is why we come here—to listen to the messages and to get proper fellowship with the people. And a crying, screaming baby that takes the mother (or the father) out is going at cross-purposes to that. So as soon after birth as possible, try to get that kid into the habit of sleeping during service time. If your church starts at 2:30 (like it does here), see if you cannot try to get your kid to take a nap at about 2:30 every afternoon throughout the week, not just on Sabbath—but Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday as well. So, by the time they get to church on Sabbath, they will have developed the habit of going to sleep at about 2:30.

Play "church" at home, if you have to. Some people that I know have put a sermon tape into the tape recorder and gotten their kids used to listening to a minister drone on; and they fall asleep to it. (Now, hopefully this does not last them all through their lives, so that when a preacher starts they fall asleep.) At least, you put them in the atmosphere. Make your house quiet, like it would be in church. Put them down, let us say, on the carpet with their church things around them; so that they get used to that. And have them listen to a sermon. Maybe it will stick. At least, when you come to church, they will be in the mode to go to sleep. This, like I said, frees Mom and Dad and everybody else to listen to the sermon. This is why they have come.

Now, if the baby makes a fuss, take him out immediately and correct the problem. Paddle his little behind, if he needs that. Or, if he needs to be fed, feed him. Or, if he needs to be changed, change him. And then return to your seat as soon as possible. Do not stay in the Mother's Room the whole time. And do not make those trips to the Mother's Room pleasant in the least. Stick him with a pin if you have to. (No, I am just kidding. I do not mean that!) Do not make those trips pleasant, because they need to learn that getting you out of your seat and going back with him to do whatever really puts you out. And it is distracting to everybody else. So, go out there; do your business; and come back.

I do not care how many times it takes. You do not want to be too distracting; but there is a way that it can be done quietly. And after a little while (it will not happen the first time), you will get them into the habit—if you apply it consistently—so that they treat services respectfully. And they will not want you to have to get up out of your chair and take them back. That should be the thing that they fear, because they know that when they go out that back door they are going to get it, for taking Mom and Dad away from God. (Enough said on that.)

Toddlers should continue this habit of sleeping during services. If they do not (or if they will not because they are just wide awake), then bring them some quiet toys to occupy their attention. Do not bring anything with bells, or squeaks, or rattles, or sirens, or talking toys or anything that will cause distraction. Bring them something soft. Bring them crayons and a coloring book, if they are able to do that without marking up the walls and the furniture. But give them something to do.

They should be taught to be quiet and not to talk. Remember that I mentioned smacking them lightly on the lips. Enforce that during church. This does not only mean being noisy with their lips. Children have a great way of crumbling paper, tearing things, making odd and various noises with their body parts—maybe drumming on the chair or whatever it happens to be—out of sheer boredom and frustration. Those are things that are distracting as well; and those should be stopped.

Toddlers can sit there for two hours and listen to the sermon (or whatever) here just as easily as they can sit for two hours in front of the TV and watch a Disney movie. They are just trying to get their way. You have to make them see that they can sit there throughout the sermon, quietly.

Another thing that they should be taught is not to turn around in their chair and stare at the people behind them. A little forceful turning of the head will sometimes work. Sometimes a little slap on the back of the head will work. But they should be sitting forward in their seats, not turning around and eyeing everyone behind them.

Also, take them to the bathroom before church. Get that out of the way, and do not let them go again. They can hold it. They do it for the movies. Now, if it is a real emergency, fine—take them out. But do not let them get into the habit of getting up about the time of the announcements and then halfway through the sermon.

The same goes for drinks. They should be able to go through a two-hour service without getting up for a glass of water or a tug at the water fountain. This is just as distracting to people—when kids are constantly getting up and down.

Also, do not let your kids go by themselves. If they have to get up, you go with them; and make them feel your wrath. You are here to listen to, hopefully, God-inspired messages; and you are still in God's presence. So make sure that you keep that in the back of your mind, about your child's behavior.

Younger adolescents should learn to sit quietly in a chair and play, or read, or even listen (believe it or not). By the time they are eight, or nine, or ten—they should be able to follow along in a Bible; and maybe the prodigies among them could even learn to begin taking notes by that age. Kids are not dumb. They should be learning the way of God and be involved in the service just like older people—just like baptized people—because this is their church too. Get them involved in it! This includes singing and bowing their heads when we pray and, of course, showing respect to those who are speaking.

Older adolescents and teens should by this time be models of propriety in conduct in the church. There should be no whispering, giggling, or note passing during church time. This is definitely the wrong time and place for such things. If it goes on, the parent that is sitting with them should stop it. And there should be a parent sitting with them. I would recommend that you not put more than two adolescents (or teenagers) together in any row. I say that kind of tongue-in-cheek. But normally I do not like it when there are eighty-five teenagers sitting in the same row, because it is going to cause problems. And normally when that happens, there is not a parent to be seen. Many parents, by the time their kids are teenagers, pretty much give up on any instruction or rearing of their children, and that is sad. Your children should be sitting with you. If they want to sit with one another, then they should sit with the other person's family.

This is service time—God's holy time—and it should be treated with respect from infant up to old-and-ready-to-die. (And I do not mean that in a bad way.) This is God's service. He is here among us, and we need to treat Him with respect because this is a **worship** service. Wherever you are, whoever you are, that is the way we should come before Him. Just because He is not here physically does not mean that He is not watching what we are doing.

And, just one more thing, before and after church there should be no running, jumping, or gymnastics, shouting, wandering about in large gangs, or rough-housing at church. Like adults (which we hope that our children will one day become), they should learn to fellowship in a proper manner—that is, talking with one another. They do not need all the physical activities on the Sabbath. This may sound like a real burden, and a real drag, for the kids; but it is the way that we show respect to the Sabbath day and to the Sabbath service. And this should be enforced by the adults.

Let us conclude in Proverbs 19, because I want to end on a high note.

Proverbs 19:18a Chasten your son while there is hope.

I do not need to go any further with that. Look! You have still got time if your children are still with you. As long as there is life, there is hope. It is not too soon to start your childrearing practices. You may have made a real botch of it up till now. I do not know. But you still have the child; and the problems can still be corrected. Let us begin now to give our children the loving discipline, the teaching, the training, the chastening (along with our right and godly example) so that they too will have the same hope that we have—eternal life, in God's Kingdom.