

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## Nurturing Your Child

### *The Christian Family Part 5*

#### How to Ruin Your Child

Some years ago the Houston Police Department published a leaflet called, *How to Ruin Your Children*. It was guaranteed to be 99 percent effective. Now, while the Houston Police Department does not have an advanced degree in child psychology, they have had extensive experience with families of juvenile delinquency. And thus, the pamphlet represents their observation as to the environment of the juvenile delinquent. In part, this is what it said:

“Begin in infancy to give the child everything he wants. When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. Never give him any spiritual training. Let him wait until he's 21 and then let him decide for himself. Avoid using the word wrong. It may develop a serious guilt complex. Pick up everything he leaves lying around so he will be experienced in throwing responsibility on everybody else.”<sup>1</sup>

And Dr. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck of Harvard University would add, “Avoid firm, fair, and consistent discipline. Deprive the child of his mother's supervision and love. Deny the child any sort of family cohesiveness- togetherness.”<sup>2</sup>

Some of the rules suggested for destroying your child by the Houston Police Department and Dr. Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck are presently included as recommendations in some of the more popular manuals on child training today! Is it any wonder why families and youth are in the state they are today?

What is God's plan for parenting? Let us examine the final principle that Paul gives when it comes to God's plan for parenting.

#### Christian Maturity

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. John MacArthur, *The Christian Family*, Page 95

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Page 100

Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: **but bring<sup>3</sup> them<sup>4</sup> up in the nurture<sup>5</sup> and admonition<sup>6</sup> of the Lord”**

The phrase *bring them up* carries two important nuances. First it conveys the idea of tender care. It is the opposite of Paul’s words in the first part of the verse, “provoke not your children to wrath.” And thus it refers to a tender, gentle raising that results NOT in anger and rebellion on the part of the child BUT in love and submission. Rather than inciting the evil in the child's heart, it is encouraging Christlikeness through grace and mercy.

Secondly this phrase conveys the idea of maturation. Paul uses this same term in connection with the husband’s call to nourish his wife.<sup>7</sup> Recall that this was nothing less than the activity of shepherding and discipling the wife UNTO HER MATURITY IN CHRIST!

Accordingly, the call of the parent is to rear their child gently unto their maturation in Christ! And yet we can be more specific when it comes to the maturity we are after for our children.

## **The Maturation of Jesus**

Christ as God is eternally free from sin, nevertheless as a child Jesus had to grow up. He had to mature. Notice Luke’s commentary on the maturation of Christ:

Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in **wisdom** and **stature**, and in **favour with God and man.**”

Notice the areas in which Christ matured. Jesus kept increasing in wisdom: This references intellectual development. When Christ came into the world, He entered it as a human with no intellectual knowledge or judgment.

Jesus kept increasing in stature. This references physical growth. When Christ was born, although He was God, he nevertheless was extremely weak and physically undeveloped; as a man, He needed to be provided for.

Jesus kept increasing in favor with God. Children do not know God naturally; they must be taught about God. They must learn of His nature, care, love and will. And though Christ was God, as a man He nevertheless grew spiritually in His relationship with God such that we read this:

Hebrews 5:8, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Jesus kept increasing in favor with man. When Jesus was born, He needed to grow socially. Like every child, He needed to learn. He needed to learn what culturally appropriate behavior was. He needed to learn how to communicate with others. He needed to learn societal norms.

See, the maturation that Christ underwent as a child included intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social development. Such is the obligation when it comes to the parenting of a child. Scripture would have

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<sup>3</sup> εκτρέφω *ektrepho*

<sup>4</sup> αυτος *autos*

<sup>5</sup> παιδεια *paideia*

<sup>6</sup> νουθεσια *nouthesia*

<sup>7</sup> Compare Ephesians 5:29

parents place an emphasis on the spiritual. This is done by virtue of the tools that Paul gives to cultivate the maturity of a child.

## The Tools for Maturation: Discipline

Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: **but bring them up in the nurture**<sup>8</sup> and admonition of the Lord.

The word *nurture* comes from the word *child*. It refers to the systematic training of children, and includes the idea of punishment or the rod of correction for wrongdoing.

Proverbs 13:24, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”

1 Timothy 1:20, “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

Here Paul is speaking of some who had wandered away from the faith. And discipline is brought about by excommunication.

Hebrew 12:5, “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, **My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.**”

The focus of this word primarily refers to WHAT IS DONE TO THE CHILD. Thus, parenting is an activity in which a mother or father uses punishment (usually in the form of a rod) to cultivate a character that is submissive to the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

Now brothers and sisters, with the giving of the tool of discipline and correction, we must be careful NOT to misuse it! We do NOT discipline because the child deserves it. Neither do we discipline because it is the right and proper thing to do. Neither do we discipline because it is the only way to change a habit or characteristic that we do not like. RATHER we discipline for the same reason that God disciplines us, to reap the character of Christlikeness in our children. We need to discipline to raise our children to maturity.

Hebrews 12:11, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Accordingly we translate our passage as this:

Ephesians 6:4, “And fathers, do not cultivate the sin in your child's heart, but gently raise them to maturity using the discipline of the Lord.”

From this I hope you see that the discipline we use in the raising of our children is for the goal of Christlikeness in our children. That family of God is what we are after!

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<sup>8</sup> παιδεία paideia

<sup>9</sup> Compare Ephesians 6:1-3, and 2 Timothy 3:16

## **The Crime**

How do we apply the rod? Let me give you a suggestion as to the sevenfold process of discipline. It begins with the crime.

Genesis 3:1-7, “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

“6 ¶ And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. 7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

This passage shows us that only an act or attitude of rebellion is the proper grounds for discipline.

## **The Call**

Genesis 3:8, “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.”

Here the parent approaches the child in a gentle, calm, and loving manner. He is in control at all times, thus reflecting the face and affections of Christ.

## **The Declaration**

Genesis 3:9-10, “And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

Here the parent lovingly discusses why the child is going to be disciplined. The goal is to establish clearly the reason why the child is going to be spanked, “Because you disobeyed... because you did not obey with a good attitude.”

## **The Cross**

Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

The cross is the actual punishment. To be as practical as possible, personally in my home we always give three spanks for any act or attitude of rebellion. They are not as a machine gun, “ratt-at-at-tat,” but slow, deliberate, aimed, and purposed. The only deviation from the above is in the case of lying. For deceit we administer ten spanks (the first couple being firmer with the next seven being rather soft, and then ending

with a final firm spank). The reason I do this is that not only is deceit the primary mark of Satan, but it also will ruin the relationship that you have with your child.

## Reconciliation

Genesis 3:21, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”

Following the cross, with young children I gesture toward them for a hug. If they respond and come to me and hug me, I know that they have repented and desirous of restoration. If they refuse, I know that they still are in rebellion and in need of a second discipline. It is important at this point that the child truly repent before restoration takes place. In our relationship with God, there is no restoration without repentance.

## The Counsel

My text for this is the rest of Scripture. After all the punishment and restoration takes place the parent and child discuss the reason for the discipline. Once again, the emphasis here is on clarifying that the child did not undergo the rod on account of running in the house, jumping off the couch, or breaking a window. Rather, he was disciplined because either disobedience or not obeying with a good attitude.

## The Prayer

James 3:14-16, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”

Here the parent and child pray together. The child confesses his sin to God followed by the parent praying. I close this prayer with these words, “Lord, please use this discipline to mold and shape their character into a man/woman of God.” If in the child's prayer he/she expresses sorrow for running in the house, jumping off the furniture, etc. as opposed to disobeying or disrespecting the parent, the wise parent following the prayer will once again clarify why the child got disciplined, “I would never spank you for jumping off the couch. Rather, I spanked you because why? You disobeyed, right.”

## The Tools for Maturation: Counsel

Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: **but bring them up in the nurture and admonition<sup>10</sup> of the Lord.**”

The word *admonition* is a special word in Scripture. It conveys the idea of teaching or instructing. Yet it goes beyond the dissemination of knowledge. This instruction denotes a confrontation in which change in beliefs, attitudes, and/or behavior is brought about by the use of Scripture. It always is motivated by the honor God and the desire to bless the one confronted.

Scriptural instruction is characterized by these acts:

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<sup>10</sup> νοουθεσια nouthesia

1. Restoring the soul, Psalm 23:3.
2. Strengthening and healing, Ezekiel 34:4, 16.
3. Exhorting, 1 Thessalonians 2:3.
4. Encouraging, 1 Thessalonians 2:11.
5. Imploring, 1 Thessalonians 2:11.
6. Having mercy, Jude 22.
7. Snatching people from their sin, Jude 23.

Indeed, “instructing” is an action in which we say, “This is your sin; for God's glory and your well-being, let me help you overcome it God's way!” From this perspective, therefore, we learn that the second tool that the parent has in rearing their children to maturity is counsel. The emphasis of this word is on **WHAT IS SAID TO THE CHILD**.

Obviously this will require wisdom. So parents, let us learn James 1.

James 1:15, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

Notice the qualification that Paul attaches to these tools. “Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” As we rear our children using the tools that Christ gives (Correction and Counsel) we must be ever mindful that they are not our tools, but God's!

In other words, as we counsel and correct our children, we must make sure that the counsel we give and the correction we administer is **GOD'S COUNSEL** and **GOD'S CORRECTION** not our counsel and our correction. Stott wrote these words:

“Behind the parents who teach and discipline their children there stands the Lord Himself.”<sup>11</sup>

We always must keep this in mind such that every time we counsel or correct our children we should say, “This I believe to be what Christ Himself would have said or done to my child.” To be unable to say this, is to sin a great sin!

The parent has two tools when it comes to raising their children unto their maturity: Discipline and Discipleship, Correction and Counsel. Physical Punishment and Verbal Exhortation! Using these tools God's way, for the sake of our children's maturation, is what Biblical parenting is all about.

## **The Problem of Church Kids**

And yet, this is where many parents in the church fall down. As a child, I wasn't raised in the church (I became a Christian in my senior year of high school.) When I began going to church and meeting the kids my age — kids who had been raised in the church all their lives — I discovered something that shocked me. Having just become a Christian, I knew what sin was. I was well acquainted with my spiritual state of bankruptcy. And thus, I was one who hungered and thirsted for God — as any Christian should. Yet, when I looked at ones who had been blessed to have been raised in the church all their lives what I saw was not maturity in Christ. Theses kids did not have a hunger to serve the Lord. They did not have a burden for the Savior. They did not desire to serve, honor and obey Christ. They were lazy,

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<sup>11</sup> Stott, Commentary on Ephesians, Page 249

bored, religious people going through the motions.

I saw people who were without the “discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

They have received instruction from their parents — they got it physically and verbally from their parents. However their PARENT'S DISCIPLINE AND CORRECTION HAD FAILED TO REAP A CHARACTER!

These parents had missed the heart of parenting which is, “bringing the heart of the child to the heart of Christ”!

This is very important lesson for all of us to learn. As parents, it is not enough that we have family devotions. It is not enough to teach our children the word of God. It is not enough to discipline our children for wrong-doing. It is not enough to rear our children to be socially aware, intellectually capable. Mormons do this!

Our goal when it comes to our children is that we raise them to have a relationship with God! We need to rear them to be faithful citizens of His kingdom! Dr. John MacArthur put it this way:

“If a parent's conscious and ever-present goal is not to produce, through the power of the Spirit and the wisdom of the Word, a godlier person than he is, then his sights for parenting are set too low.”<sup>12</sup>

## **A Child's Greatest Enemy**

Indeed, where we fail to do this — where we stress religion and not a relationship we raise hypocrites and not genuine children of God. We contribute to the apostasy or dead orthodoxy of our children. We labor toward the undoing of our children!

From this perspective, the greatest danger to the maturation of a child is NOT wine, women, song, dancing, smoking, incompatible philosophies and world-views, or the movies. The greatest enemy a child can face when it comes to their maturation in Christ is... THEIR PARENTS! Parents who fail to rear them properly. Parents that set a poor example. Parents that have ungodly talk. Parents that lead sinful lives. Parents that are hypocrites.

As parents, WE MUST get as excited and heated about God's glory and our Christlikeness as we do about our children's friends, education, the evil influences upon our society and our children's obedience. For to fail when it comes to our own Christlikeness OUR EXAMPLE is more dangerous to our children than anything Satan can throw at them!

Now, this raises the question of, “How do we labor toward the maturation of our children?” Let me give you three suggestions:

## **A Relationship with Christ**

We as parents must have a relationship with the Lord.<sup>13</sup> There is a very important Biblical principle

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<sup>12</sup> Dr. John MacArthur, The Christian Family, Page 103

<sup>13</sup> Compare Jeremiah 5:30-31

when it comes to leadership, “As the leaders go, so go the people.” In fact, if you did a study of the history of Israel, you would discover that the people's apostasy ALWAYS corresponded with the apostasy of the leaders of Israel!

.And that is the case when it comes to parenting! If we are going to raise children who love Christ we must be saved — and thus living by grace. We too must have a relationship with Christ. If our walk with God is cold, our children's walks will be cold. Where we struggle, our children will struggle. If we are good at religion, our children will learn religion. The iniquity of a parent can extend to the third and fourth generation.<sup>14</sup>

And thus, if we are going to raise children in the admonition of the Lord, WE MUST OURSELVES DAILY SUBMIT TO THE LORD'S ADMONITION!

## **Love and Respect for our Spouse**

Now, we must love and respect our spouse.<sup>15</sup> It is no accident that in this context Paul deals first with the husband wife relationship AND THEN the parent child relationship — the one presupposes the other. How can a parent rear their children to maturity in the Lord, call their children to honor and obey when they themselves in their marriage are in rebellion to these very commands? Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones asked this:

“What right have you to say to your child that he needs discipline when you obviously need it yourself?”<sup>16</sup>

One can discipline a child and be in rebellion, but you will teach your child to be a hypocrite!

Show me a household in which dwell children that are out of control, in rebellion to the Lord, and are angry and resentful and I will show you a marriage in which the husband and wife probably are not fulfilling their God-given role! In a family where the husband loves his wife and the wife submits to her husband they have taken a big step in Biblical parenting.

## **Consequences for Actions**

As parents we must also allow our children to reap the consequences for their actions.<sup>17</sup> This is such an important principle when it comes to raising our children unto maturity. We live in a world in which sin has consequences — though it is forgivable.

Galatians 6:7, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Indeed, what a man sows, he will reap!

Adultery is a sin that is able to be forgiven in Christ. Yet the consequences are often that it destroys the marriage. It ruins the lives of those involved. It also affects the children.

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<sup>14</sup> Compare Exodus 34:7

<sup>15</sup> Compare Ephesians 5:22-23

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Stott's Commentary on Ephesians, page 249

<sup>17</sup> Compare Galatians 6:7-8

Stealing is a sin that God forgives in Christ. However the Bible calls for restitution to be made.<sup>18</sup> And our children need to learn this.

So when a three year old spills his milk. Rather than disciplining them (unless what they did was out of rebellion) have the child clean up their mess. When a twelve year old breaks the window, rather than disciplining the child (unless it was an act of rebellion) have them replace the window. Don't compensate for their error by fixing the window without making them face their responsibility. Our desire is to rear our children to take responsibility for what they do before God!

“The heart of parenting is bringing the heart of our children to the heart of our Savior.”

This is God's plan for parenting.

### **Is it too late?**

Yet you say I have blown it as a parent. I have done everything wrong, and my children are a mess.

It is never too late to do what is right. Confess your sin to the Lord, and He will forgive you! That's the basis upon which this whole passage rests.<sup>19</sup> But then having confessed, learn from the past, and in the grace of God, seek the Lord.

Let us all begin today praying that God would make our homes the dwelling place of God!

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### **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on December 21, 2003. Greg is the preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.

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<sup>18</sup> Compare Ephesians 4:28

<sup>19</sup> Compare Ephesians 5:14-15