

8 Benchmarks for Making Parental Discipline Decisions

I frequently have parents ask me what type of discipline they should use with their children. I'm glad parents are asking the question, but I seldom can give a standard answer for every situation.

I prefer to use a paradigm through which parents can make their own decisions. That's the purpose of this post.

Perhaps these steps will help you make wiser decisions regarding discipline.

Here are 8 paradigm shapers for making discipline decisions as a parent:

1. Have a vision. If you don't know where you want to take children you'll be less likely to take them there. This should be decided before the need for discipline arises and it should ultimately help shape the discipline you use.

2. Have a purpose. The purpose of discipline should not be to cause harm, but to teach. Discipline is to help a child learn how to live. Keep this in mind as you discipline and it will help you make wiser choices. Ask yourself, "What can I do to best teach my child what he (or she) needs to learn from this experience?"

3. Step back and process. Immediately after an offense is not always the best time to administer punishment. It's OK to let children wait for a response. Sometimes this is the best discipline for the child and it almost always makes your decision better. This step becomes more important as they get older and the discipline decisions become more difficult.

4. Never make a decision in anger. You don't want emotions to

make the decision. You want a well thought out response.

5. Consider the bigger picture. This is where having a plan/vision comes in handy. Considering where you want to take the child, how they are progressing in life, and the motivation of their heart, what punishment will most help accomplish your objectives for the child in this specific circumstance?

6. Make the punishment fit the offense. In my opinion, you shouldn't have a standard punishment. Grounding for older children or time-out for younger children may work in some circumstances but not in others.

7. Make the punishment fit the child. All children are different, learn differently and require different methods to teach the principles you want to teach.

8. Reinforce love. Every discipline should be used as an opportunity to show children how much they are loved.

Let's face it—parenting is hard work. I'm hesitant to say anyone is an "expert" in this subject. We all have room for improvement. I'm not assuming you will carry around this list in your pocket, whipping it out at the appropriate time of need, but I do believe having a framework of this sort in your schema will help you better address the issues of discipline you face as a parent.

In the end, having this type of paradigm thought process, before the need for discipline arises, should help us be better parents.

What is the most difficult issue you deal with regarding discipline? What would you add to my list?

Ron Edmondson is the senior pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky. For the original article, visit [this link](#).