

Should Children Be Spanked?

Decades ago I authored a book now titled, *The Little Handbook of Loving Correction*. It was formerly called, *God, the Rod, and Your Child's Bod*. I changed it out of cultural sensitivity.

This subject is very personal to me because I actually had a family member bring totally false accusations against me regarding this issue! A church I cofounded over 37 years ago was embroiled in a lawsuit dealing with “abuse” and even though I departed the church 23 years ago, my name was “thrown in the hopper.”

Have you ever disciplined a child by confining them to their room until they changed their attitude (“imprisonment”)? Did you ever instruct a child there would be no lunch until they completed all their chores (“food deprivation”)? How about spankings to correct ongoing, defiant behavior (“beatings and abuse”)?

Thankfully the judge dismissed the charges. They were blatantly false accusations. But episodes like this and current news reporting causes confusion among parents who are trying to be faithful in raising their children according to biblical standards.

Here's the deal: Scripture tells us “the corrections of discipline are the way to life” (Prov.6:23, NIV). What we need is a clear biblical worldview on the subject of corporal punishment so both parent and child enjoy that result.

Realism Versus Idealism in Raising Kids

Raising children requires a realistic perspective on our inherited sinful nature and a rejection of the “inherent goodness of man.” Adam rebelled and all of us have ratified that rebellion because of our inherited sin nature.

We don't have to teach children to be selfish, lie, hit their siblings, steal or pout when they don't get their way. We do have to train them to learn to control themselves and do what is right in the sight of God and man.

Don't you just love it when so-called marriage and parenting "experts" expound their views on TV in their world of Utopia? One gorgeous celebrity has been divorced four times and yet goes on the circuit to promote her new book on romance and happy marriage (No jiving!). Another couple who are living together with no children confidently share their "wisdom" philosophy about raising their future children by simply reasoning with them, calmly affirming them and consistently building up their self-esteem.

Yeah, right. Wait 'till they confront strong-willed little Grayson in all his glorious disobedience and defiance one day! This is why seasoned veterans chuckle at this idealism and understand bumper stickers reading: "Insanity is inherited. You get it from your children."

Better to approach parenting God's way and embrace the truth that appears on a plaque we had in our home: "It is better to build children than to repair men."

If you permit a child to nurture destructive habits which they will one day be forced (with greater difficulty) to break, you are living beneath the revealed will of God concerning your role as a parent.

There is a difference between abusing a child and disciplining a child. Children know the difference between an objective spanking ministered in love and a beating springing from hostility and anger.

- "Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul" (Prov. 29:17, NKJV).

- “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Prov. 22:15).
- “By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not respond” (Prov. 29:19, ESV).
- “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Prov. 29:15, ESV).
- “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death” (Prov. 23:13-14, NIV).
- “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6, NIV).

God’s method for curbing harmful attitudes and nurturing healthy ones is not parents going ballistic, threatening, screaming, hauling off and smacking in anger, tuning out destructive conduct, bribing with candy or banishment to a room to brood and fester in resentment.

Loving correction, which includes spanking at times, is an expression of love! Though not literally, have you ever experienced a “spanking” from the Lord for persistent, ungodly conduct? “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son” (Heb. 12:5-6, NIV).

The 10 Essentials of Loving Correction

Research reveals that in America up to 85% acknowledge they’ve used corporal punishment. Every state in America allows corporal punishment of children. Nineteen states employ it in the schools. 200,000 students annually are paddled in America according to the U.S. Department of Education. Due to disciplinary problems in schools many are reevaluating their policies, such as the Arlington school district outside

Memphis, Tennessee, that just voted recently to reinstate corporal punishment saying, “teachers need all tools possible.”

Prof. Robert Larzelere of Oklahoma State University, who studied this subject for decades, states: “Backup spanking done calmly and in a consistent manner with defiant 2- to 6-year-olds, backing up milder forms of discipline like timeouts, is shown to be effective at changing behavior.”

Marjorie Gunnoe at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, states from her research that “children spanked in a calm, consistent manner have better outcomes than children who have never been spanked.”

Former NBA superstar, Charles Barkley, joked recently, “If corporal punishment is a crime, then every black parent in the South is going to be put in jail!”

Recently Dennis Miller, radio host and *Saturday Night Live* alumni, suggested on nationwide TV spanking as a solution for out-of-control youth. Referring to two Colorado teenage girls caught trying to defect to ISIS, he stated, “We need to spank again! In my day rebelling was going from the Beatles to the Stones. Now this. I’d put them over my knee and spank ‘em!”

Here’s some practical guidance to help all of us keep things in perspective regarding loving correction of our children. May the acrostic for CORRECTION serve you well.

C. CLARITY: Loving correction always begins by clearly defining and communicating reasonable boundaries before they are enforced.

O. OBEDIENCE: Spankings can occur if “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph. 6:1, NIV) is violated.

R. RIGHT ATTITUDES: We are to “serve the Lord with gladness”

(, ESV), so persistent whining and complaining has to be addressed.

R. RESTORATION: Embracing and reassuring a child afterward enables us to avoid leaving them feeling guilty, rejected or unwanted.

E. EXPLANATION: Taking time to explain the offense as well as enabling the parent to calm down (if needed) makes this essential.

C. CONSISTENCY: Loving correction requires an investment and persevering commitment ...”he who loves him is diligent to discipline him” (, ESV).

T. THOROUGHNESS: Shaping the will without breaking the spirit requires being authoritative not authoritarian so the child experiences some pain versus simple “love pats.” “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:,18 KJV). “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant...” (Heb. 12:11).

I. IMMEDIATELY: With exceptions, loving correction should be given in the moment not “when daddy comes home” etc. “Because sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11, ESV).

O. OUT-OF-SIGHT: Discipline is administered in private so as not to humiliate or embarrass a child.

N. NEUTRAL OBJECT: Scripture states a “rod (a small, flexible branch) of correction” not a hairbrush, belt or the nearest object. Hands should be instruments expressing affection and tenderness; we don’t want children flinching or retreating when a hand is raised.

A closing question: “Where is the rod administered?”

God in his wisdom prepared a strategic place on the anatomy of

our toddlers and children which has ample cushiony, fatty tissue and sensitive nerve endings to respond to Spirit-led stimulation. This “seat of learning” is located at the base of the back, above the thighs, located directly on the bottom of every child. In 42 years of ministry, I’ve discovered that all children come equipped with one! “On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense” (Prov. 10:13, ESV).