

## The Wise Parent

### Parenting in Reference to God (Part Two)

- Potential warm-up or background questions.
  - Remind us from last week, how are instruction and correction related? And how do they differ? (1. instruction is formative or pro-active discipline... it anticipates certain needs and certain temptations that we all face and it seeks to instill the character and convictions and understanding that are needed. It is intended to promote blessing and to prevent future consequences. Instruction shows the path they should take and remain on... 2. Correction (often associated with the word discipline) is addressing something sinful or wrong that has already happened, and it is seeking to redirect the child. It is making straight that which was crooked, and leading a child back to the path they should have been on. It is not punishment Both instruction and correction are the way parents obey their responsibility to train their children to love in reference to God by loving, honoring, enjoying and obeying Him.
  - Why do children need to be corrected? (this is a very important theological issue... Christian discipline and correction is not anchored primarily in “what works”, as if discipline and correction are the pragmatic go-to... our convictions about correction and discipline are based on what the Bible teaches about the nature of man, that is, the nature of children...)
  - Is this true, even of very young children? Do you know any young children?... absolutely!
  - Would children still need correction if they were properly instructed? Of course... again, this has to do with the nature of human beings... children rejecting instruction from their parents is not based on the fact that they actually know better... it’s based on their desire to know better – to be self-governing and say “not your will, but my will be done” ... This is rooted still in a deeper issue of them not wanting to be subject to God... rebellion against parents is just a symptom of that (even at young ages).
  - Is it right for a parent to exercise authority over a child and insist on obedience? How could that be a good thing for the child?
  - What makes correction and discipline difficult for Christian parents? (kids don’t find it pleasant and we fear it will push them away or make parenting more difficult... we tend to think of this moment like a treaty: “if I acquiesce and the child is happy, surely the child will be loyal and obedient later” ... we’re already getting our lunch eaten at that point and the kid is in charge... or we fear man (pressure from the world to do this differently)... many of our apprehensions are affected by a good tendency toward compassion and mercy and we find ourselves confused.
  - What are some objections to implementing corrective discipline with a child? (some of these come from outside and some from within the church... it won’t “work”... they (the kids) won’t understand... that it is counter-productive... it’s suppressive... It should be noted that all of these objections are promoting some ideas underneath that Christians don’t always recognize (or don’t always recognize the error in them): That the child is inherently good, that they don’t need correction, and that it would be good for them to self-govern. These are antithetical to the Christian worldview.
  - When should a parent discipline? Are there offenses that are serious enough? Are you confused about this? (we tend to create standards for when we discipline based on the behavior that is most appalling or inconvenient for us... what we might miss is the way

there are several “acceptable” behaviors that really should be disciplined that can be easily neglected with man-made metrics for determining when to discipline)

A potential main idea to consider could be: Christian parents are given the solemn command and sacred privilege to correct their children when they are not living in reference to God. The Bible teaches that you can correct them, or you can hate them.

These are the texts I thought I would teach from and some basic ideas:

- Proverbs 19:18... “Discipline... do not be a willing party to his death”
  - This text holds out hope and blessing associated with discipline
  - It also holds out a strong warning for parents to not neglect it
    - “A willing party to his death” means that neglecting discipline is willingly contributing to the death of the child
      - Could be physical death/consequences, could be spiritual, could be both

Why is it a life or death issue? ...

- Exodus 20:5, Deut 5:16, Deut 6:1-3, Deut 28... Blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience, a command with a promise
  - I would not spend a lot of time here, but wanted to establish a connection between the authority of parents and the authority of God
    - Children are obeying God by proxy through their parents (and disobeying Him as well)
      - This elevated the importance of parental authority as the visible structure of God’s authority in the life of a child – for their good
      - Since God disciplines and corrects His children, parents, who represent God to their children, are required to do the same
        - This means that not correcting children is failing to teach them how to relate to God
        - This is voluntarily participating in a rebellion with them and is headed toward the “curses” promised by a faithful God
- Hebrews 12:4-11 “for what son is there whom his father does not discipline”
  - Discipline and correction are evidence of a father’s love for his children
  - It models God’s love for us
  - Discipline and correction seem unpleasant
    - It is painful... if it is not painful, it is not correction\*\*\* This is an important note that ties into the next texts on “the rod”... we are not correcting and disciplining if it is not “unpleasant” to the one receiving correction.
    - But, it is for their good... it “produces the peaceful fruit of righteousness”
      - This is a reminder to parents that you are giving your child something precious, even when they don’t think so
        - Address the temptation to drive by feel and pull back when children don’t respond well to discipline or resent it.
      - \*\*\*Everybody agrees with this at some level. Every parent would correct their child and use whatever means necessary if they were doing something dangerous. If you had to tackle them to keep them from getting hit by a car or smack poison out of their hand to keep them from doing it you wouldn’t blink... the difficulty in this comes when we don’t believe that everyday rebellion and rejecting authority and throwing a fit about supper and tantrums and attitudes and so on are deadly for them... we don’t believe that... if

we agreed with God – that those are dangerous for their soul – that they are actually attempting to overthrow the loving rule of God in their life when they argue about supper and throw a fit and so on, then we would be much more inclined to see how disciplining for those issues is for their good.

- Proverbs 13:24... “He who withholds his rod, hates his son... He who loves his son is careful to discipline him”
  - It is unloving, even hateful not to discipline
  - The rod is a branch, club, switch, shaft, etc... it is clearly physical
    - for correction and it is intended to be unpleasant
  - “careful to discipline” means diligent in this task, “looking early” or anticipating the need and doing it promptly
    - Not provoking to wrath, but faithful, consistent, embracing the responsibility and being on top of it

Why is physical or painful discipline commanded by God?

- Proverbs 22:15... “folly in the heart, rod drives it away”
  - The nature of the child requires it
  - We are born with a heart condition
  - The “rod” is the painful consequence that mercifully warns of the more painful consequences that follow rejecting the Lord
    - It is not punishment or retribution... it is corrective
    - Aimed at restoration
    - An act of mercy
- Proverbs 23:13-14... “strike him with the rod, he will not die... strike him with the rod and save his soul from death”
  - Not “punish” as in some translations but “strike” for the purpose of saving
  - This is not outdated advice that modern psychology has surpassed
  - Are we willing to be obedient to this?
  - Discuss method and age-appropriateness?
  - Discuss what “the rod” might be for older children who are more affected by other consequences than a spanking
- Ephesians 6:1-4
  - This text reminds us not to “provoke children to wrath”
    - One way to do this is to “punish them” instead of correct them
    - To do this in an uncalculated, unmeasured way
    - To do this out of anger, impatience, irritation, or selfishness
    - If you want to, you are disqualified
    - Never out of control or unmeasured...
    - Always accompanied by a loving presence and affection and assurance

There are several other texts in Proverbs that could be referenced but these are what I had in mind.