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The Drama of Parenting— Parenting 501

Ephesians 6:1-4

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I. Introduction.

- A. We come today to the part of parenting that is usually the most controversial in our present day's bigger culture.
 - 1. For many who are older this will message will be very easy to hear but the younger you are it is very possible that it will be harder or more grating on your mind.
 - 2. The call to train up your children in the way they should go and the call to raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord requires us to consider the nature, purpose and process of discipline.
- B. This call to discipline is not done in a vacuum. For some they are too slow to act and for others they are too quick.
- C. The need to discipline comes after sound communication occurs with your child.
 - 1. You make rules and you establish sound standards within your home.
 - 2. You communicate these to your children in a manner that is clear and understood.
 - 3. And then several other things ought to be present prior and in the midst of discipline:
 - a. Encouragement — you don't merely make rules. You encourage your children as they learn to obey. You praise them and love them. You establish a clear foundation of love for them simply because they are yours.
 - b. Appeal/Exhortation — as you see them struggling to obey you don't threaten. You exhort them to obey. You appeal to them, not from a position of weakness or fear but from love. You remind them of the praise that comes from obedience.
 - c. Instruction — you reiterate the "why's" of obedience and the "why's" of discipline. You make sure they understand the

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standards and you make sure you equip them to be able to obey. Part of this is seeking ways to show them the reasons and value of obeying.

- d. Warning — here you are pointing out the dangers of disobedience. Where it leads and what are the consequences. This can often be sufficient to the child of tender conscience or when there has been a pattern of obedience.
- e. Rebuke — this occurs when you are beginning to see a pattern of disobedience. It is simply a rejection of the attitude and actions of the child. It usually comes along with warnings and instruction but not always.

D. All of these, however, will not replace the need to properly discipline your child. Today I want to help you think through what wise discipline looks like and on the flip side, what repentance will look like.

II. Correction and Discipline.

A. The need:

- 1. Simply put, your child is born a sinner and will sin. Many passages can be used but Romans 3:23 says it fully, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- 2. Because of sin they are filled with folly, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.” (Proverbs 22:15)
- 3. For the parent who is reluctant to discipline his child or thinks it is unloving he should first consider: Proverbs 13:24, “He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.”
- 4. It is important that we always keep in our mind as parents that our children are born as sinners and that we are as well. Dismiss either of those points and trouble is sure to follow.

B. By using physical discipline the child is taught two basic ideas.

- 1. There are *consequences* to sinful behavior.
- 2. They are *accountable* for their behavior.

C. In addition, they are taught that just as the parents discipline them for their wrong behavior and attitudes, so too, God disciplines His children (Hebrews 12:4-11).

- 1. Chastisement will not take away sin, only Jesus does this.

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- a. It's purpose is to bring the child's attention to the parent so that they might then instruct him in the way he should go. The pain of the chastisement helps reinforce that the wrong way brings pain.
 - b. Later, as the child grows, he will become aware of passages throughout the Bible that speaks of the painful consequences of sinful living and he will be able to have immediate empathy with them.
2. Chastisement helps control and direct the child, especially the unruly one. Proverbs 26:3, "A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, And a rod for the back of fools."
- D. Some basic points regarding the parent and discipline:
1. **It is done in faith.** You usually do not receive immediate change with your child. And it can be discouraging or emotional for you. But as you do it properly you are actually exercising a lively faith, trusting God's ways and wisdom.
 2. **It is your responsibility.** You must not shift this over to others. The temptation is to give this over to others but it is yours. To resist this or be unfaithful or inconsistent carries sorrowful consequences: "A foolish son is a grief to his father, And bitterness to her who bore him" (Proverbs 17:25).
 3. **It is obedience to God.** It is a contradiction for you to call your children to obey you or God and yet wilfully refuse to obey God in this matter. The passages listed and that shall be listed make it abundantly clear of God's expectations of you as a parent.
 4. **It is physical in nature.** The bible knows nothing of time outs, sitting in the corner or writing 100 times that Jr. won't do such and such. When discipline is needed the normal and proper response is physical discipline by way of spanking.

"On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found, But a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding" (Proverbs 10:13). Note that the place for the use of the rod is on the back (the rear end). The time for the rod is when the child is showing a rebellion toward wise living.
 5. **It has a salvific sense to it.** Spanking does not save a child *per se* but it is part of the plan of God to bring children to Christ. More will be said on this throughout the message but consider this: "Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not

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die. You shall strike him with the rod And rescue his soul from *Sheol* [the grave/death/hell]” (Proverbs 23:13).

- E. The illustration of Hebrews 12:5-11.
1. In verse 6 what is the one who is disciplined by the Lord?
 2. If you are not disciplined by the Lord, then you are what kind of child (verse 8)?
 3. This, then, helps give us a sense of our responsibility as parents to our children. We must see that we are treating our children as illegitimate ones.
 4. Verse 9 shows that proper discipline brings respect from the children later when they are grown. They appreciate what you did for them. Note that I said “proper.” Few appreciate beatings and inconsistent, baseless spankings.
 5. Verse 10 shows that you will make mistakes but the assumption behind your disciplines is the good of the child.
 6. Verse 11 shows that it needs to be unpleasant for you child for you to have properly chastened him. But remember the promise later in that verse, that it will bring the fruit of righteousness.
- F. The “art” of discipline.
1. It is not to get back at the child. It is reactionary but a controlled, planned reaction. Waiting until you are angry is foolishness on your part.
 2. It is to be done when the child is not obeying the principles explained to them or standards you have set in your home.
 3. Normally it should be done immediately though wisdom dictates that.
 4. It is on your terms and not the child’s. There is not room for negotiations with the child.
 5. Relenting when actual disobedience has occurred is very unwise.
 6. Normally don’t use your hand it seldom is enough and there is something to be said about your hands being a tool to draw your child near to you.
 7. Private is usually better than public. Also, if the child finds that they can get away with rebellion in public, make certain that the moment you can discipline them, that it is memorable.
 8. Do not tolerate dodging and squirming.

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9. Discipline separately for each problem.
 10. Do not allow in-laws or parents to control your disciplining.
 11. Keep several “rods” around the house and one in the car.
 12. This is for young children not your teens. If you are faithful in this task you will find that the bulk of your physical disciplines will be over by 5-8 years of age.
- G. What do you do after chastening your child?
1. There are various opinions related to this subject.
 - a. Immediately pick up the child, talk to him about what happened, remind him of your love and pray with him.
 - b. Have the child sit alone for a short while and consider his actions or attitudes, which precipitated the discipline. Then have him come and talk to you about the event.
 - c. Warn the child to not repeat the action or attitude and go on with your day.
 - d. Say nothing, simply consider the issue done with.
 - e. Have the child go to his room and not come out until you have decided he has spent enough time there.
 - f. Any of these options are appropriate and all probably will be used throughout the child’s life.
 - (1) Regardless, parents can easily make this process much harder than it needs to be. Don’t make each event a huge event. Don’t spend massive amounts of time discussing each event.
 - (2) I have found that most of my disciplines take less than a couple of minutes from start to finish. The longer ones are due to devious attitudes or serious sinful actions.
 2. Use this as a time to speak again of the hope in the gospel.
- H. What happens if you’re spanking your child but it doesn’t seem to be working?
1. Many times I have heard parents speak of children who they spanked a lot, but that it did no good. I can say without exception, that when I was there to observe the parents in action, they were not following biblical guidelines. The most common errors was using it as punishment, and

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being erratic with it (meaning they were real strict with it for about two weeks, then less so for a couple more, and so on).

2. Other reasons might be:
 - a. You did not use the proper tool. Either it is too light, to short.
 - b. The clothing/diaper gives too much padding. There is a lot of noise, but little pain.
 - c. Too much talking before and after. It seems to create resentment in the child.
 - d. You quit too soon. It is amazing how tough your child is. The discipline must outweigh the sin, or it is of no use. Don't be fooled by quick crying, I have seen our children immediately cry and stop crying within seconds after the spanking. In fact I have seen them have an almost bored expression on their face as they fixed their pants and prepared to go out of the room.
 - e. You are inconsistent. Decide you will do it, then do it and do it every time. If you fail to understand this point, you will fail to be effective with your discipline.
 - f. The husband and wife are not one-minded on the issue. A child will learn that you are not of one mind and he will learn to exploit it.

III. Repentance.

- A. Repentance is the hand-maiden of chastisement. You are trying reach the heart of the child so that you can witness them repent.
- B. Distinctions of terms.
 1. The Bible primarily speaks of repentance as an aspect of salvation. This is the ultimate goal of the parent, but not necessarily the type of repentance that you will be trying to see in your children.
 2. Obviously, if your child is not saved, repentance unto salvation is the goal. But along the way, there is still the need to develop in the child a proper sense of "everyday repentance" which will carry into their lives even as a Christian.
 - a. This type of repentance is the idea of turning away from wrong, sinful actions and attitudes and turning toward those that are proper and right.

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- b. The Bible speaks of this in Ephesians and Colossians as “putting off and putting on” (cf. Ephesians 4, Colossians 3). Simply put, it is the process of turning away from wrong things and replacing them with right things.

C. False Repentance.

1. Crying is not repentance. Often children will show tremendous sorrow for their actions. They will burst out crying as they are being taken to the room for discipline. At times parents will be tempted to view this crying as a sign that the child has “learned his lesson” and not spank them. As a rule, this is unwise.
2. Saying things like, “I am so sorry Mommy, I won’t do that again” is often sufficient for parents to withhold discipline. The problem is that the child quickly learns that this is an easy way to manipulate the parent. Remember, words can be very cheap, but the result of living by cheap words is very expensive.
3. One way to see if a child is repentant is by the consistent use of discipline.
 - a. If a child says he is sorry for a sin, but then becomes angry when you still discipline him, he fails to understand true repentance. Repenting does not remove consequences. This applies just as easily to older children and teens.
 - b. A biblical example would be King David. He sinned against God by committing adultery. He did repent of his sin, but God did not withhold the discipline, the consequences were still carried out.

D. True Repentance.

1. The ultimate goal is to see the child turn away from the wrong action. We need to have the same message to our children that John the Baptist had to the Pharisees, “Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8).
2. Sometimes this is a process. An example would be in the area of self-control. Perhaps the child has a hard time showing self-control in talking. They easily interrupt and share their opinions without permission. If this has been a long term problem, the child may need a while to change the behavior. The ultimate fruit may be several months in the making. However, there will still be clear, observable indications along the way that the child is repentant of that problem.

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3. Most times, however, you can see the fruit of repentance quickly. The child is disciplined and immediately begins to do the right thing. This may be cleaning his room, seeking another's forgiveness, or making restitution to the wronged person.
 4. As a rule, you need to discipline your child for wrong behavior until you begin to see true fruit of repentance. At that time you want to switch from the rebuke and correction to that of exhortation and encouragement.
 5. Sinful actions create a breakdown in relationships. When you have sinned against God, you lose the joy of your salvation. You also lose out in blessing. Repentance, as already stated, is not merely the turning away from something; rather it is the turning to Someone.
 - a. Within parenting this needs to be practiced. The child who disobeys is breaking a relationship bond between you and himself. The value spanking of the child is often lost because the parent then quickly picks up the child and reaffirms his love for him.
 - b. It is wise to have the child come to you. They need to understand that they have violated a relationship with you and that they need to repair it.
 - (1) Perhaps sending the child to their room for a few minutes after the discipline is all that is needed. Sometimes just pausing right after the discipline is enough.
 - (2) I have found that most children want to reassert their relationship with their parents very quickly. The common way that they do this is through hugs and kisses. Others want to spend some time cuddling.
 - (3) With older children it is more common to have them want to help you do some chore, or to simply talk with you.
- E. Some final suggestions.
1. Make yourself available for them to repent. Nothing is worse than to discipline the child and then immediately drive off for the evening.
 2. Make certain that you are clear about the right way that they are to be living. Don't discipline them, "just because." Make it clear what they did wrong, but make it even more clear about what they are to be doing right. In other words, point them in the way of repentance.
 3. If the child is saved, then help them in their confession to the Lord. At times you may wonder if the child has only made a profession of faith. If

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you see that they are holding onto sinful patterns, especially heart attitudes, then challenge them in the reality of their faith. That doesn't mean to proclaim that they "can't be saved." It means to call them to examine the truthfulness of their profession, to test themselves to see if they are in the faith (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5).

4. If the child is not saved, then remember to point them to the Lord. They need to see that they are merely living out the results of a sinful heart. They need to see that though you are trying to control behavior in them, you cannot (nor can they) change their heart.

IV. Conclusion.

A. Final exhortations:

1. Be sober-minded when considering your children.
2. Reject the many definitions being pushed by the age we live in.
3. Physical discipline without caring, wise instruction achieves little.
4. Don't make it a huge deal.
5. Pray for you and your children.
6. Keep things simple in your standards — obey and respect.
7. If you make an exception make sure it really is an exception.

B. Model to your children what it looks like to trust and hope in God through Jesus Christ.

1. Humility.
2. Obedience.
3. Word-centered.
4. Gospel-oriented.

C.