

AUGUST 5, 2007 (SS)

**BEARING THE DIVINE IMAGE IN THE HOME:  
FRUITFUL MULTIPLICATION::  
THE “WHEN” OF CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE  
PROVERBS 15:10**

Chastisement: *the infliction of pain, proper rebuke and the giving of instruction in order to make right wrong attitudes and actions so that a child’s life may be pleasing to the Lord* (cf. Col 3:20).

**1. CHILDISHNESS OR FOOLISHNESS?**

*Childishness* is that *proper or innocent immaturity that is characteristic of children*. E.g., silliness, high levels of energy, not thinking through things, playful, etc.

The broad principle is this: childishness is proper in children. They are going to act like children because they are children. And many times there is nothing wrong with that.

*Foolishness* is *rebellion, or the failure to honor authority*. In short, foolishness, in biblical terms, is sin.

Childish ways may be involved in foolishness (that is, there may be some overlap), but there are some discernable differences. Foolishness involves the child acting against his authority. He is doing what he wants to do even when dad and/or mom has told him he may not do this or that.

You don’t chastise for proper childishness. You teach them and lead them to maturity. That is the proper response to childishness. You chastise for foolishness. The first is innocent immaturity. The latter is culpable rebellion. And it is the latter that we are to drive out with the rod of correction (cf. Prov 22:15).

**2. OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE?**

**A. FIRST-TIME OBEDIENCE**

Eph 6:1: Children *obey your parents*. Sometimes obedience will come through a process. But one thing at which you are aiming is *first-time obedience*. You, the parent, say things one time and your child does it without intervening bucking of authority.

- *The parent must never give a command that you are not willing and ready to enforce.*  
If you tell your child to do something, you had better be willing to follow through. If you consistently don’t follow through, your child will begin to think that you are not serious about what you are saying. If you give commands at one point that you enforce and then at another point that you do not enforce, your child will never know what to expect from you. He has no point of reference. No boundaries.
- *The parent must be patient as first-time obedience is being developed.*  
First-time obedience does not happen overnight. It is a learning process. For some children the lessons are learned faster than other children. But they will consistently test the boundaries to see if you are going to be consistent and what they can get away with. Remember folly is bound up in their hearts. They want to get away with as much as possible.
- *The child is expected to hear and heed the first time.*  
This is the demand of the child. He shouldn’t have to be told two times. You mean what you say as the parent, and he should respect authority enough to do what he has been told to do ... even if he doesn’t understand all the why’s.

Why should we work toward and demand first time obedience from our children? Because God demands first time obedience from us as his people, which, as I have covered, includes our children.

Though that is the ultimate reason, there are definitely some pragmatic consequences concerning first-time obedience. There may be times when first-time obedience is the difference between health and hurt; maybe even life and death.

**B. THE CHARACTER OF OBEDIENCE**

Obedience involves many aspects. It is not just going through the motions. Our goal in parenting is not *merely* behavior modification. Our goal is changing the heart, something God promises will happen through proper discipline (cf. Prov 22:15).

- *Obedience needs to be “happy.”*  
Obedience needs to be devoid of discontentment that reveals itself in grumbling and griping. Cf. Phil 2:14

- *Obedience needs to be complete.*

A half-way done job is not obedience. That is disobedience, and you must not settle for that. God doesn't. Cf. 1Sam 15

- *Obedience needs to be zealous.*

Our children need to be diligent about doing what they have been told to do. They are not to be slothful or lethargic about it. They are, in a good colloquial phrase, "to get with it." Cf. Rom 12:11

This is difficult. And because of this, some people believe that it is an impossible standard. Well, it is true that we will never do this perfectly. But we are to be aiming at it all the time in our obedience. Therefore, we are to teach our children to aim at it all the time.

### C. CHALLENGES TO AUTHORITY

- *Temper tantrums* - A temper tantrum (at whatever age) says at least two things: (1) I want something that I cannot have; and (2) I am going to show my anger in order to get what I want.
- *Whining* - This is a more "passive" way to challenge authority. It doesn't look as ugly as the tantrum, but it can be just as dangerous. Still seeks manipulation of authority.
- *Sassing/Disrespectful tones* - Sassing, speaking back in disrespectful tones or even making faces is a challenge to authority ... even if they are going off to do what you told them.

### D. APPEALS

The right of appeal within the human ranks of authority is a principle in Scripture that is consistent. And it applies to the parent-child relationship as well. An appeal is not a challenge of authority in a bad way. That is, a subordinate is not simply trying to buck authority for the sake of bucking authority. He has a legitimate question about what is going on. So he appeals.

A child, especially as he grows older (you don't reason with a two-year old about these things), may respectfully challenge a command. That is, he may challenge the *legitimacy* of the command or *the need for immediate response*.

### E. GOD'S RULES V. HOUSE RULES

Cf. Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, pp. 155ff.; this is a basic distinction of the principle and how we apply the principles. Don't put your rules on par with God's rules.

### 3. CORRECTION OR CAPITULATION?

*Reinforcement training*. That is, what are you reinforcing by your actions with your child. You reinforce particular behavior by how you respond to the child.

#### A. THE THREATENING/REPEATING PARENT

This is the parent you hear say five times, "If you do that again Johnny, then I am going to spank you. I mean it." If you have said this five times, you don't mean it. What's worse, your child knows that you don't mean it. Cf. Eccl 8:11 Delays in carrying out the punishment only resolves the disobedient in their disobedience. They are encouraged to sin all the more. Again, don't tell your children to do something that you are not ready and willing to enforce.

#### B. THE BEGGING/PLEADING PARENT

This is the parent that you hear saying, "Please just be quiet while we are in the store. I'll get you the toy. Just be quiet." Or "Would you please just listen to me." The begging/pleading parent teaches the child that he doesn't have to respect authority. If he cries loud enough, whines irritatingly enough or does some other kind of behavior which the parent dislikes, then he can get his way. He can bring his authority to his knees.

#### C. BARGAINING/BRIBING PARENT

This is the parent that responds to the disobedience of the child, "If you obey me I'll give you some candy." This is not the way to handle the situation. This is giving in and allowing the child to take control. Nothing wrong with rewards, but they need to be on the front end of the command, not the response to disobedience.

*Consistency*. When the proper boundaries are set, you need to consistently maintain them. Inconsistency breeds frustration. You will turn your house into a war zone eventually with inconsistent boundaries. There will be discontent and instability because your house, to borrow a metaphor, is built on shifting sands and not on a rock.