

July 22, 2007 SS

**BEARING THE DIVINE IMAGE IN THE HOME:
FRUITFUL MULTIPLICATION::
THE “WHY” OF CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE
HEBREWS 12:3-11**

Corrective discipline, or “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. e.g., Col 3:20).

Some *wrong* reasons for inflicting chastisement: A. *You are not to employ corporeal correction merely to make your child “pay.”*

The goal of chastisement is *restoration and righteousness* (or holiness). You are not chastising your child simply to make him “pay” for what he did.

“Payment” is part of it in some sense. But you are seeking to promote reconciliation and positive righteousness. Corrective discipline is not some self-righteous act which shows your great moral superiority or tremendous “spirituality.” Remember, you are serving your child with your authority, not lording it over him in a tyrannical fashion. Your goal is his good, ultimately his life (cf. Heb 12:9; Pro 23:13-14).

B. *You are not to employ corrective discipline to relieve personal frustration.*

This is not to say that anger has no place in discipline. I believe God our Father becomes angry with us (after a great deal of patience) and disciplines us in anger. Certainly we do not have sinless anger and we must be careful. But there is a place for it. Consistent disobedience after proper correction does provoke anger. This is not the short-fused, blow-your-stack anger that flies off the handle, losing all control. This is a righteous anger which means that the expression of it is properly focused and controlled.

1. THE SINFULNESS OF THE CHILD

Your child and original sin: cf. Prov 22:15 - “Foolishness” = moral deficiency (esp. in Prov.). It is the opposite of wisdom which finds its foundation in the “fear of YHWH.”

The question of sinfulness is not debated in this text. Children are born sinful. They are corrupt in mind and body. (This does not mean that they are as sinful as they can possibly be, but the potential is there.) As a parent you must realize that your child—even your proper child of the covenant—is a sinner. Folly is bound up in his heart. (Cf. Gen 6:5; 8:21; Mt 7:11)

Your child is not and will not be perfect. And though you are to examine the case carefully, if someone accuses your child of doing something wrong, it should never be “beyond belief” that *your* child would do something like that. Your child may do something like that.

Never become presumptuous about your child’s condition. He is a sinner and will remain one throughout his life. He is capable of committing sin at whatever age. Good, biblical parenting requires humility. Don’t ever come to rest thinking that your child is completely “safe” from sin. You are not. He is not. You are to be ever diligent because sin is ever-present and extremely crafty.

You chastise to correct sinful attitudes and actions: Cannot accept sinfulness as “just being kids.” Your responsibility is to see this folly driven from them. Again, sin is not to be excused. It is to be corrected. The second half of this verse is that the “rod of correction” will drive this folly far from him.

In other words, we are given the “rod”—corrective discipline—in order to correct sinful attitudes and actions. The rod is obviously an instrument of pain designed to make your child strong in the faith. You could even name your rod “the faith-builder.” That’s how the Spirit uses it.

2. THE PATTERN SET BY OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

God is our heavenly *Father*. He is the one from whom, Paul says, every family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph 3:15). He provides the perfect pattern for fatherhood. And it is as a Father that our heavenly Father disciplines us as sons. One way he does this is to correct us when we stray.

What is the instrument?: God uses painful situations in life to discipline his children. This painful discipline is *proof* that they are indeed sons (i.e., children) of God. Those who aren’t disciplined are proven to be illegitimate. The use of painful discipline is then a basic characteristic of loving fatherhood, not something odd or strange.

What is the goal?: God's goal was not pain for pain's sake. The pain that God inflicts through particular instruments (and God does use instruments; e.g., the Jews persecuting Christians; the Babylonians taking the people of God captive), is with a particular goal in mind for the good of his children. Cf. Heb 12:9-10.

3. HOLINESS IS DEVELOPED THROUGH PAIN

Cf. **Hebrews 12:11** - painful discipline "yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

This, of course, picks up on a theme that is prevalent throughout the Scriptures: suffering is the path to glory. This is played out in the life of our Lord himself (though he was without sin; but cf. Heb 5:8). Cf. also 1 Pet 1:6-7; Isa 48:11

Col 3:5 - "Mortify" or "put to death" the works of the flesh Paul says. Killing these things will involve a fight, and a fight will involve a painful process.

The right kind of pain is not an ultimately destructive process. Instead, it is a purifying process.

If you really want your children to be happy, the only way that is going to happen is they are holy (the way God defines that). The path to holiness is pain in one form or another. Those who refuse to inflict any kind of painful boundaries upon their children are more concerned about short-term gratification than a long life of happiness. Your child will grow up to be discontent and angry if he is not corrected, if he doesn't have to suffer the right kind of pain.

4. LOVE IS SHOWN THROUGH CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Cf. Pro 13:24: "Whoever spares the rod *hates* his son, but he who *loves* him is diligent to discipline him."

Many modern "experts" say that pain is always negative. But pain is only *sometimes* negative.

God says that the parent that truly loves his child disciplines him diligently. The parent that hates his son spares the rod. You see it is a false love that says, "I don't want to correct my son through pain because it hurts him. And if it hurts him, that is not loving."

This pain is a "saving" pain: Cf. Pro 23:13 "You are giving him measured, controlled pain in order that he not be hit by a Mack truck. When viewed biblically, it is the only loving thing to do.

God, who is love, is the standard of love. And if you don't love the way he loves and the way he instructs to love, then you are not loving your children. God has the first word and the final word. So, if you love your children you will correct them.

Correcting your child through proper discipline is a matter of *faith*. That is, you believe God's word over the word of any other creature, including your own rationale.

Remember that the rod is not all you need. Refer to lesson on "positive" discipline.

5. YOUR CHILDREN ARE YOUR GLORY

Some say that you should never correct your child because you are embarrassed. They are trying to strike a blow against our vain pride as parents that is only concerned about the way we look in front of others and not the good of the child. There is a sense in which we should not have vain pride attached to our children. That is, we are disciplining our children *only* because it makes us look good. We ought to be serving the child's best interest.

Are these mutually exclusive? That is, if I am serving someone else (e.g., my child), then should I never be concerned about how I look at all or what reward there is for me (e.g., shame or honor)?

Note the "original" Father-Son relationship: The Father glorifies the Son—in brief, he gives him what is good for him—so that the Son may in turn glorify the Father. Cf. John 17:1

God "glorifies" us as sons in Christ—makes us holy, etc.—in order that we may glorify him, which is our chief end. If then, he is the pattern for our parenting, then there is nothing wrong and everything right about being "glorified" by your children's good behavior and shamed by your children's foolish behavior. Cf. Prov 29:15; 10:1; 15:20; 23:15; 27:11.

You serve your children for their good and you should expect to be ultimately rewarded with gladness and honor when your children grow to be wise.