

1. Introduction

- God's kind of parenting is the need of the hour for the world. For the most part, a community, a church, a city, a culture, or a country are commentaries on the parenting therein, for better or worse.
- Charles Spurgeon: "He who thinks it easy to bring up a family never had one of his own. A mother who trains her children aright had need be wiser than Solomon, for his son turned out a fool."
- John MacArthur: "Parenting is not difficult because it is expensive. It's not difficult because it's time consuming. It's not difficult because it's distracting from your personal agenda. It's not difficult because it gets so complex to meet all the demands. It is really difficult because there are such heavy pressures from the society around us and heavier pressures from the nature of children within them. And until we understand that, we're not going to understand what parenting is really all about."
- Joel Beeke: "The zealous parent gives serious consideration to the gravity, need, and promises of his calling. The gravity of a parent's calling is inescapable, for God will hold us accountable for our children's souls. As stewards of the Lord's children, we are given the charge to bring them up according to His instruction for Him."
- H. Clay Trumbull: "Every child is in a sense partially developed; an imperfectly formed child. There are no absolutely perfect children in this world. All of them need restraining in some things and stimulating in others. And every imperfect child can be helped towards a symmetrical character by wise Christian training. Every home should be an institution for the treatment of imperfectly developed children. Every father and every mother should be a skilled physician in charge of such an institution. There are glorious possibilities in this, direction; and there are weighty responsibilities also."

- Charles Spurgeon: “Brethren, if you wish to give your children a blessing when you die, be a blessing to them while you live. If you would make your last words worth the hearing, let your whole life be worth the seeing.”

2. The Source of Authority for Parenting:

- God’s inerrant word; the 66 books of the Bible.
- The study assumes the truth of the inerrancy, and therefore, authority, and therefore, sufficiency of Scripture.
- 2 Peter 1:3 “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence”
- We assume that God, being the Creator of parents and children, has given us all things we need for life and godliness in his word, which includes parenting.
- We assume that he loves us so much, that he has not left us guessing when it comes to the essential elements of parenting.
- Sound theology is a parent’s greatest tool.

3. The Goals for Parenting:

Primary Goal: To parent in a manner pleasing to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

2 Corinthians 5:9-10 “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Secondary Goal: The salvation of our children; that they would repent, surrender in faith to Christ, live in a manner pleasing to God, and spend eternity with him.

3 John 4 "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

Romans 12:1 "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Charles Spurgeon: "What our boys need in starting in life is God: if we have nothing else to give them, they have enough if they have God. What our girls want in quitting the nurture of home, is God's love in their hearts, and whether they have fortunes or not, is a small matter."

"If we do not try our best to bring our children to Christ, there is another who will do his worst to drag them down to hell."

- To have broken their depraved will and restrained their depravity as much as possible.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

- The parents' sanctification (Rom. 8:28-30)

Remembering that one of God's goal in parenting is the parents' progressive transformation into Christlikeness will help keep us steady in the battles.

4. What Are Children?

a. Reminder of what they are not:

1. Angels
2. Incapable of wrong
3. Morally neutral
4. Christians by birth
5. Slightly more valuable than animals
6. An inconvenience
7. An accident
8. The property of the government

b. They are human beings created by God.

1. Therefore, they ultimately belong to God.
2. Therefore, they are accountable to God.
3. Therefore, they must get to know their God from his word.
4. Therefore, they must be raised up as God commands.

c. They are human beings created in God's image.

1. Therefore, they are infinitely valuable.
2. Therefore, it is sin to murder them, whether inside or outside of the womb.
3. Therefore, they have the dignity and beauty of God's stamp on them.
4. Therefore, they must be taught to love and honor God.

d. They are a gift from God.

Psalm 127:3-5 "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. ⁵ How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate."

e. They are creatures born "in Adam."

1. They inherit Adam's guilt/condemnation.

Romans 5:18 "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men..."

1 Corinthians 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

2. They inherit Adam's sin nature.

- A correct understanding of human depravity is one essential starting point for parenting.

Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned"

Romans 3:11-12 "THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE,

TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

J.C. Ryle: "Children are born with a decided bias towards evil, and therefore if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong. The mother cannot tell what her tender infant will grow up to be...But one thing the mother can say with certainty: he will have a corrupt and sinful heart. It is natural to us to do wrong."

Proverbs 22:15 "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him."

- Children never have to be taught how to sin, and yet, they are skilled in doing so (like their parents). Parents need not teach their children to say, "No," in response to their instructions. However, children will excel in disobedience. Why? They are naturals; it is their nature.
- Bound up in the heart of every child is the capacity to commit every sin ever committed on the planet. After all, the worst atrocities committed by man were committed by individuals who were once children.

f. They souls in desperate need of salvation through faith in the Person and finished work of Jesus Christ.

1. They need reconciliation to God through Christ (otherwise, they remain condemned and enemies of God).
2. They need regeneration by God through Christ (otherwise, they remain spiritually dead and hostile towards God).

g. They are entrusted to parents (biologically, or, adoption, or other means).

1. What Are Parents?
 - a. Humans created by God in God's image.
 - b. Humans culpable to God.
 - c. Humans born "in Adam."
 - d. Humans entrusted by God with a human.

- e. God's delegated authority commanded to serve as instruments of formation of children God's way.

5. What Parents Can and Cannot Do for Their Children

a. Parents Cannot Save Their Children

- i. Salvation is a gift granted from God

Jonah 2:9 "Salvation is from the Lord."

- ii. Salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit

John 3:3, 8 "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God...⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'"

John Calvin: "Although fathers ought diligently to form their children under a system of holy discipline, yet let them remember that they will never succeed in attaining the object aimed at, save by the pure and special grace of God."

Charles Spurgeon: "The most careful and prayerful father cannot be held accountable for having wicked sons, if he has done his best to instruct them. The most anxious and tearful mother cannot be blamed if her daughter dishonours the family, provided her mother has done her best to train her up in the right way."

b. Parents Can (Must) Guide, Love, and Teach Their Children in a Manner Pleasing to God

- i. **Parents must diligently teach Scripture to their children:**

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

ii. Parents must not leave their kids to fend for themselves in life and godliness:

Proverbs 29:15 “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.”

iii. Parents must lovingly train and discipline their children biblically:

Ephesians 6:4 “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

6. God’s Provided Tools for Parenting

- a. God’s Word (to tell us what to do).
- b. The Holy Spirit (to empower us to do it).
- c. The Local Church (to strengthen, shape, equip, and keep us accountable to do it).
- d. Others with Experience (to fill in the gaps as we do it).
- e. The Cross of Jesus Christ (to grant forgiveness, hope, rest, and calibration as we do it).

7. The Need for the Parents’ Humility

- a. Like anything in the Christian life, we are not born experts. We have not arrived in perfecting the knowledge and practice of God’s word.
- b. Like marriage, parenting is a second “school of character.”
- c. Parenting will be used for the parents’ sanctification and remind them of their need for the saving work of Jesus Christ.
- d. Parents must be teachable when it comes to their parenting.
- e. At times, parenting is a subject which people assume is “off-limits” when it comes to outside correction and input.
- f. Common, sinful attitudes of parents:

Self-defensive pride in receiving advice: “These are my kids and no one can tell me how to parent them.”

Proud favoring of my kids: “My kids are generally superior to others, behaviorally, spiritually, etc.”

“When there is a conflict between kids, it’s probably the other kid who was at fault, not mine.”

Pride in not seeking counsel from God’s resources: “I will not seek/receive counsel. I will go outside of God’s resources for advice. I do not want parents around me to think that my kids are struggling/inferior, nor that I am.”

- J.C. Ryle: “As a minister, I cannot help remarking that there is hardly any subject about which people seem so tenacious as they are about their children. I have sometimes been perfectly astonished at the slowness of sensible Christian parents to allow that their own children are in fault, or deserve blame. There are not a few persons to whom I would far rather speak about their own sins, than tell them their children had done anything wrong.”

8. The Child’s Need for God’s Kind of Parenting

a. Descriptive [history is full of examples of challenging children]

1. Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:8-9 “Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

2. Eli’s sons

1 Samuel 2:12, 29 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD...[The LORD said,] ‘Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded *in My dwelling*, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?’

1 Samuel 3:13-14 “For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew,

because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. ¹⁴ Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

3. Adonijah and his father David

1 Kings 1:5-6 Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him. ⁶ His father had never crossed him at any time by asking, "Why have you done so?" And he was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom.

4. King Solomon's son, Rehoboam

1 Kings 12:7-11 Then they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." ⁸ But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him. ⁹ So he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?'" ¹⁰ The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!' But you shall speak to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins! ¹¹ 'Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.' "

5. The world.

False religion, murders, violence, injustice, rape, contentiousness, abuse, oppression are all visuals, in part, of the immense need for biblical parenting

b. Prescriptive

Proverbs 19:18 Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.

Proverbs 29:15 ...a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

c. Other

1. J.C. Ryle: "Our hearts are like the earth on which we tread; let it alone, and it is sure to bear weeds."
2. Charles Spurgeon: "Most men are what their mothers made them. The father is away from home all day, and has not half the influence over the children that the mother has."

"Little children give their mother the headache, but if she lets them have their own way, when they grow up to be great children they will give her the heartache."

3. John Flavel: "If you neglect to instruct them in the way of holiness, will the devil neglect to instruct them in the way of wickedness? No; if you will not teach them to pray, he will to curse, swear, and lie; if ground be uncultivated, weeds will spring."
4. Kids cannot raise themselves. They were not meant to. This applies not only to feeding and paying the bills, but also to wisdom and guidance for life.

d. Despite their sin nature, children generally enter the world with some desire to be instructed and trained.

1. God makes them eager and willing to be taught, notwithstanding their sinfulness. This demeanor in children is a wonderful, God-given gift, which parents must take full advantage of while they can, by instructing in the word of God.
2. Thomas Watson: "The time of childhood is the fittest time to be sowing seed of religion [Christianity] in our children.

‘Whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts’ (Isa. 28:9). The wax, while it is soft and tender, will take any impression. Children, while they are young, will fear a reproof; when they are old, they will hate it.”

3. J.C. Ryle: “[God] gives your children a mind that will receive impressions like moist clay. He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger’s. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity of doing them good. See that the opportunity be not neglected, and thrown away. Once let slip, it is gone forever. Beware of that miserable delusion into which some have fallen, – that parents can do nothing for their children, that you must leave them alone, wait for grace, and sit still. These persons have wishes for their children in Balaam’s fashion, – they would like them to die the death of the righteous man, but they do nothing to make them live his life.”

9. The Great Need to Care for a Child’s Soul

- J.C. Ryle: “If you love them, think often of their souls. No interest should weigh with you so much as their eternal interests. No part of them should be so dear to you as that part which will never die. The world, with all its glory, shall pass away; the hills shall melt; the heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll; the sun shall cease to shine. But the spirit which dwells in those little creatures, whom you love so well, shall outlive them all...This is the thought that should be uppermost on your mind in all you do for your children.”
- In every parenting step; in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, “How will this affect their souls?”
- J.C. Ryle: “To pet and pamper and indulge your child, as if this world was all he had to look to, and this life the only season for happiness – to do this is not true love, but cruelty. It is treating him like some beast of the earth, which has but one world to look to, and nothing after death. It is hiding from him that grand truth, which he ought to be made to learn from his very infancy, – that the chief end of this life is the salvation of his soul.”

a. The Need to Equip Children in God's Word

1. Fathers are commanded by God to lead the family spiritually (cf. Eph. 6:4). They are to study, teach, and live out the truths of Scripture.
2. Some Recommended Reading with Children up to Age 8 +/-:
 - i. The Bible. Read, explain, ask open-ended questions, starting with smaller chunks.
 - ii. *The Big Picture Story Book Bible*, by David Helm
 - iii. *The Story Bible: 130 Stories of God's Love*, by Edward Engelbrecht and Gail Pawlitz
 - iv. *Good News for Little Hearts (Jax's Tail Twitches, Zoe's Hiding Place, Gus Loses His Grip, etc.) (New Growth Press)*
 - v. *Little Lights Biographies*, by Catherine Mackenzie
 - vi. *The Sheep That No One Could Find*, by Anthony DeStefano
 - vii. *The Great Elephant*, by Nik Ranieri
 - viii. *Fool Moon Rising*, by Kristi and T. Lively Fluharty
 - ix. *Dangerous Journey (abbreviated version of Pilgrim's Progress)*, by John Bunyan
 - x. *The Priest With Dirty Clothes*, by R.C. Sproul

3. Memorize Scripture

Recommended approach:

- Verses that give an accurate, high view of God (e.g. Gen 1:1, Ps 147:5, Isa 40:18, 1 Cor 10:31, John 14:6)
- Verses that explain truths surrounding the need for Christ (Rom 3:23, Matt 5:48, the 10 Commandments)
- Verses that explain the love of Christ & salvation (1 Pet 2:24, Rom 6:23, 1 John 4:10, John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Rom 10:9-10)
- Verses that equip with quick wisdom (e.g. Proverbs) (Prov 3:5, 10:19, 12:1, 12:15, 15:1-2, 19:20, Phil 2:14).

- Verses that explain a child's role (Eph 6:1-3)

b. The Need to Equip Children With a Parent's Example

1. Charles Spurgeon: "Rest assured that all our talk about religion, and all our public labours will go for very little if our own families run wild. It is a horrible thing in Israel when the children of godly men are the sons of Belial."

"Children will imitate him in his vices far sooner than his virtues."

2. Tim Challies: "Why are all five of my parents' kids following the Lord, while so many of our friends and their families are not? Obviously I have no ability to peer into God's sovereignty and come to any firm conclusions. But as I think back, I can think of one great difference between my home and my friends' homes – at least the homes of my friends who have since walked away from the Lord and his church. Though it is not universally true, it is generally true. Here's the difference: I saw my parents living out their faith even when I wasn't supposed to be watching."
3. By God's grace, we seek to set a followable example with Bible reading, prayer, love for the church, the way we speak about people, the way we treat our spouse, how we respond to our own sin, etc., etc.
4. However, God's great provision for our inevitable imperfection is the cross of Jesus Christ. We must confess our specific sin to them, ask biblical forgiveness, and remind them of our own need for the death of Christ. In doing so, we set a godly example in our ungodly moments.

CONCLUSION:

J.C. Ryle: "A true Christian must be no slave to fashion, if he would train his child for heaven. He must not be content to do things merely because they are the custom of the world; to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is usual; to allow them to read books of a questionable sort,

merely because everybody else reads them; to let them form habits of a doubtful tendency, merely because they are the habits of the day. He must train with an eye to his children's souls. He must not be ashamed to hear his training called singular and strange. What if it is? The time is short, — the fashion of this world passeth away. He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than for earth, — for God, rather than for man, — he is the parent that will be called wise at last."

Parenting: A Biblical Strategy Lesson 2: The Need for Discipline & Training July
2026

1. Parenting and Reconsidering Proverbs 22:6

Parenting is no easy task.

Thankfully, God has not left parents alone in their exalted task.

However, it seems that one of the more commonly quoted verses is frequently subject to misunderstanding.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). (ESV, NASB)

The verse is predominantly understood in a few ways.

- **The verse is a promise of blessing consequent of godly parenting.**

In other words, if a parent raises a child up according to how he *should* be raised (e.g. hearing the gospel, godliness, godly example), then that child will inevitably trust in Christ and live a godly life even into old age.

- **The verse is not a blanket guarantee, but a general observation consequent of godly parenting.**

In other words, if a parent raises a child in godliness, though it is not guaranteed that the child will embrace Christ and live accordingly into adulthood, it is likely that they will. This interpretation maintains the correct idea that Proverbs are not absolute guarantees in life, but observations generally true to life.

- **The verse encourages parents to train children in age-appropriate ways and according to their specific giftedness.**

In other words, the verse is an implicit encouragement to raise a child according to his/her respective God-given gifts and abilities. Thus, the child should be trained in the way that he/she, specifically, should go as God has sovereignly wired them. If they do “not depart from” that “way,” then they will thrive in to those particular gifts and abilities.

- However, it is doubtful that these interpretations for Proverbs 22:6 are correct. The verse is not likely a general promise of blessing consequent of godly training and parenting, but a general warning consequent of letting a child live according to his/her natural, selfish desires.

Thus, a more likely translation is something like, “Raise a child/young man in his own way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The idea of the verse would be, “If you raise your child in a way that allows them to continue in their natural, self-centered desires, getting their own way, then they will grow up to be a self-centered person.”

Several reasons clue us in as to why the verse should be understood in this way.

1) The view which sees “his way” as giftedness and ability does not seem to fit the context.

Often parents do not know their child’s particular vocational knack. How many times have parents said things like, “I think Johnny will grow up to be an athlete?” and Johnny ends up writing code? This approach almost says, “Well, hopefully you can identify their existing giftedness, according to their personality traits, and raise them accordingly.”

Further, the context of parenting in Proverbs seems to focus less on identifying vocation and skills, and more on shaping character and discipline. Similarly, this understanding of the verse seems to be colored by an overly psychologized interpretation that is inconsistent with Scripture.

2) The phrase “he should go” does not exist in the original language, nor is it implied.

Then why is it included in many English translations?

It’s possible that the word “should” first appeared in the KJV. Why did they include the word? In my opinion, it’s hard to say exactly. But, Proverbs 22:6 does not occur in some traditions of the Septuagint.

When Jerome produced the Vulgate translation late in the fourth century, he prefaced the verse with, “It is a proverb:”, translated it, “A young man, according to his way, even when he is old, will not depart from it.” Douglas Stuart proposes that Jerome included the preface due to the missing Proverb in various Septuagint translations (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 171, p. 269).

Further, Stuart suggests that the KJV translators inserted the phrase, “in the way he should go” in an effort to clarify what they supposed was the meaning of the verse. In any case, once the phrase made it into the KJV, it seems that many other English translations followed in step (e.g. ASV, NIV, GNT, HCSB, NET, CEB, NKJV, ESV, NASB). Translations in other languages, for example, in French, have rendered the verse similarly (e.g. BDS, LSG, NEG1979).

Whatever translational reasoning occurred, the phrase “he should go” does not occur in the Hebrew text. Consequently, it should not be inserted into the English. Instead, the Hebrew phrase, עַל־פִּי דַרְכּוֹ, literally reads “according to,” or, “in,” “his own way,” or, “his way.” Thus, the verse is better rendered something like, “Train a child/young man in his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

3) The interpretation as a general warning seems to be more contextually consistent with the many cautions regarding depravity in Proverbs.

The book of Proverbs has the gravity of depravity running through nearly every verse. In the book, the way of the fool is not unlikely, but inevitable, apart from diligent exertion in godly wisdom and discipline.

To end up as the fool in Proverbs, one must simply do nothing; go the way of their nature.

Thus, the fool is the individual who goes his own way, or according to his way, in life. He does things his way. He is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly (Prov. 26:16). He cannot receive reproof (cf. Prov. 15:5, 12) because he trusts in his own way and in his own heart above his God (cf. Prov. 3:5-7, 28:26).

Everything in Proverbs cries out to us, “Do not let yourself or your children follow the natural human inclination.” To “let go and let God” in Proverbs would be catastrophic.

In that context, the many Proverbs pertaining to children and parenting make sense. For example, Proverbs begins with an introductory exhortation to sons, warning them to not go the way of the wicked (Prov. 1:8-19).

Children desperately need the wise, godly counsel of their parents because (cf. Prov. 2:1-11) children come pre-packed with utter foolishness (Prov. 22:15). All of us enter the world as hard-wired fools. Thus, their own way will lead to destruction of self, family, and society.

Parental correction, then, is commended in Proverbs as God's means of grace for children (cf. Prov. 19:18, 22:15b). By means of God's delegated discipline, though not bringing regeneration, parents do a real work of deterring foolishness (Prov. 20:30, 23:14).

Their own, foolish way needs to be driven from them. And, as Derek Kidner writes, "It will take more than words to dislodge it" (*Proverbs*, 47).

Parental love will mean the infliction of pain (Prov. 13:24b) (Lesson 3). To refuse the child the rod is a form of hate (Prov. 13:24a). God's merciful implement to bring significant restraint to the catastrophe of human depravity is the biblical administering of the rod. A child who gets his own way will end up a living disgrace to his family (Prov. 29:15).

So, the context of parenting in Proverbs leans more towards warnings pertaining to depravity's consequences. The interpretation as a general warning seems to be more contextually consistent with the many cautions regarding depravity in Proverbs.

4) The interpretation as a general warning seems to be contextually consistent with the biblical understanding of human depravity.

Every human being enters the world opposed to God (Ps. 51:5). When God observed the pre-flood population (whose nature is identical to ours), he saw that "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

Biblical books such as Judges do humanity great good by answering the question, "What will a population look like who gets their own way?" Apart from the grace of God's effectual call in regeneration, all humanity will do and seek unrighteousness (Rom. 3:10-12). Therefore, anyone left to themselves will only deepen in sin.

Consequently, the phrase, "according to his/his own way" in Proverbs 22:6 could not be referring to a righteous way, but unrighteous. It stands to reason, then, that the absence of the phrase "the way he should go" and the presence of "according to his way" in Proverbs 22:6 would favor a meaning which warns against the sinful direction which a child will naturally take into adulthood when left unhindered.

5) Other exegetes have understood Proverbs 22:6 as a warning in light of depravity.

A few English translations render the verse without the phrase “in the way he should go.” For example, the Knox Bible reads, “There is a proverb; a boy will keep the course he has begun; even when he grows old, he will not leave it.” The Lexham Bible reads, “Train the child concerning his way; even when he is old, he will not stray from it.”

Though likely exaggerated a bit, Richard Clifford paraphrases the verse, “Let a boy do what he wants and he’ll grow up to be a self-willed adult incapable of change!” (Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, 196).

Others include Jay Adams, Keil and Delitzsch, Douglas Stuart, J.H. Greenstone, Dan Phillips, John Street, and, ancient Jewish scholar, Saadia ben Yosef.

Conclusion:

- Therefore, the common translation, “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6), should omit the phrase “the way he should go.” Instead, the English translation ought to read something like, “Raise a child in his own way, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
- The verse is not a promise of blessing consequent of godly training and parenting, but a warning consequent of letting a child live according to his/her natural, sinful desires.
- In addition to grammatical reasons, this understanding seems to better fit the context of Proverbs and Scripture as a whole.

So What?

- 1) A parenting method which does not implement biblical discipline and instruction risks leaving the child to his own way. The child’s depraved nature will drive him towards increasingly destructive and enslaving manifestations of self-centeredness. Though not always seemingly detrimental as a youth, the possibilities of such character as a young adult and numerous and catastrophic.
- 2) Parents demonstrate great love towards their children (despite a child’s potential protest) when they implement God’s kind of discipline and instruction. Though parents cannot ensure salvation (see Lesson 1), they can do some damage to the child’s, destructive, self-willed nature. Parents do their children immense good which will last a lifetime as they follow God’s instructions on disciplining the child’s sinful will.

- 3) Provided parents raised their children in godly discipline and instruction, Proverbs 22:6 may not be used to force guilt upon them should a child rebel and depart from Christ. Fathers and mothers are called to parent with the highest goal of parenting in a way that pleases God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31, 2 Cor 5:9), and leave the results up to a good, sovereign God.
- 4) Should a child/children repent and follow Christ, parents can give glory to God for using their imperfect efforts to discipline and instruct the child in the Lord.

2. Two Priorities for a Child's Relationship with His Parents.¹

Ephesians 6:1-3 provides two priorities for a child's relationship with his parents:

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH" (Eph. 6:1-3).

1) Priority #1: Obedient Action in Response to a Parent's God-given Authority

- a. The command: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (cf. Col. 3:20 "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.").

"Obedience" = "listening with a view to submission"

- b. The reason for obedience: "for this is right" (cf. Col. 3:20 "for this is well-pleasing in His sight").

Obedience is "right" in the sight of God. This is sufficient reason; God's absolute view that it is righteous and good. This is the ultimate answer to, "Why should I?"

Disobedience is condemned by God:

¹ I want to thank Todd Murray and Grace Immanuel Bible Church for the help with this section.

- Rom. 1:30 “disobedient to parents” – disobedience is a mark of man’s moral depravity
- 2 Tim. 3:2 disobedient children are a sign of the difficult and catastrophic evil of the “last days”

c. Therefore:

- We must train our children to obey because of God’s command.
- We need not pre-empt command with a description of the command or an exhortation to obey.
- The first time that you speak a command, they must obey.
- Whether they are 4, 8, 12, or 17, God’s desire for our children is simple:

It is not, first, to be an A student, star athlete, most fashionable teen, or stunning singer. God’s desire:

They obey immediately, from a glad heart.

John Calvin: “Obedience is the evidence of that honour which children owe to their parents.”

d. Things to avoid in light of Ephesians 6:1

- Avoid an early warning system or countdown method: “I’m gonna count to three! One, two, three...”

This trains children to disobey until the parent begins the countdown, or another method of warning. Children are trained to think that obedience only matters if a warning or caution is given.

- Avoid repeating a command multiple times: “Come to Mommy. Come to Mommy, I said come to Mommy NOW!”

Repeating commands trains children to disobey. They are conditioned to think that obedience is only important if the

parent raises their voice, repeats themselves, or other exclamatory expressions.

- Avoid giving a command followed by seeking your child's approval. For example, we might replace "Let's stop hitting your sibling, OK?" Replace "... OK?" with, "Do you hear or understand Mommy?"

Scripture does not teach that a parent is to seek permission to ask the child to obey. Instead, Scripture commands children to obey.

2) Priority #2: Honoring Attitude in Response to a Parent's God-given Authority

- a. Command: "Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise)" (Eph. 6:2).

"Honor" = a loving, respect that holds a parent's delegated authority in high regard. Honor has to do with both an inward and outward demeanor (e.g. the thoughts; facial expression; no eye-rolling or frustration).

- b. Outward manifestations of the inward attitude of honor include:

- Eye contact with you and other adults/authority figures
- Respectful word choices and tone of voice
- Honoring facial expression/body language
- Attentive listening
- Soft-hearted submission and compliance
- Tender relinquishing of their desires

- c. Summary definition of an obedience that honors:

- "Obedience is doing what you are asked without challenge, delay or excuse" (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*)
- "All the way, right away, with a happy heart." (Ginger Hubbard)

- d. The reason that children have the role of parent-honoring obedience: "so that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:3).

Paul quotes Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16 as a summary of the rewards, benefits, and protection of obedience. This is not a law of longevity. Rather, it is similar to a Proverb; a general observation about what often occurs in life. Nor does it mean that all childhood sickness or death is the result of sin. Contrast Prov. 30:17.

3. Ephesians 6:4 Provides Two Priorities in a Father's Relationship to His Children

***Note:** These priorities pertain to mothers as well. The idea is that the father is to lead in these priorities, setting the example.

1) Priority #1: Avoid Sinful Provocation and Discouragement of Your Children

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger" (Eph. 6:4) (cf. Col. 3:21 "do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.")

- a. Provoking them to anger has the idea of goading them into perpetual resentment.

Qualifier: That a child appears provoked does not automatically mean that a father was sinfully provoking them to anger.

J.C. Ryle (In Duties of Parents): "Instruction, advice and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the patterns of your own life. Your children will never believe that you are in earnest, and really wish them to obey you, so long as your actions contradict your counsel...to give your children good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head to go to show them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell."

b. 25 Ways to Provoke Your Children to Anger²

1. Lack of marital harmony
2. Establishing a child-centered home
3. Modeling sinful anger
4. Consistently disciplining in anger
5. Scolding
6. Being inconsistent with discipline

² Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger*, pp. 30-51.

7. Having double standards
8. Being legalistic
9. Not admitting when you are wrong
10. Constantly finding fault
11. Reversing the God-given husband and wife roles
12. Not listening to the Child's opinion or side of the story
13. Comparing them to others
14. Not having time to talk
15. Not praising the child
16. Failing to keep promises
17. Correcting him/her in front of others
18. Giving too much freedom
19. Not giving enough freedom
20. Making fun of the child
21. Abusing them physically
22. Calling them names
23. Having unrealistic expectations [they should never bump into the lamp or drop a dish or always remember their Bible .. childish things]
24. Practicing favoritism
25. Child training with worldly methodologies inconsistent with God's word

2) Priority #2: Pursue Tender Nurture of Your Children

"But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

- "Bring them up" literally means "to feed or nourish" (cf. Eph. 5:29)

Metaphorically, it has the idea of, "to care for," "develop with painstaking care," "to bring to maturity."

- Fathers: This is not strictly a feminine trait.

To be continued in Lesson 3...

Conclusion:

- Parents, there are so many distractions from parenting in the world.

- Today, parenting is often assumed to be filling up your kids' schedule with non-essential activities, run them ragged in them, in doing so, showing them that God's priorities don't really matter.
- We have one shot at this.
- May God help us.

Parenting: A Biblical Strategy Lesson 3: The Doing of Discipline & Training July 2026

LESSON 3: Continued from Priority #2: Pursue Tender Nurture of Your Children

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(See Lesson 2)

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- "Bring them up" literally means "to feed or nourish" (cf. Eph. 5:29)

Metaphorically, it has the idea of, "to care for," "develop with painstaking care," "to bring to maturity."

- Children must see some of the gentleness, compassion, and care of Christ in their fathers and mothers.
- Fathers are to love their children as themselves (Matt. 22:39).

Ways Dads & Moms Can Love their Kids:

- Pray for and with them
- Read Scripture to and with them
- Gently and patiently discuss Scripture with them
- Read good books to and with them
- Share meals with them
- Singing good hymns to and with them
- Playing with them in a way that serves them

- Enthusiastic interest in what they are interested in
 - Giving them uninterrupted, full attention
 - Finding ways to sincerely talk about God and biblical truths in daily life and creation
 - Enjoying God's creation with them
 - Spontaneous surprises (e.g. presents, outings)
 - Sincerely speaking the good news of Christ crucified to them
 - Discipline them biblically
 - Be present for events significant to them
 - Confessing sin and asking forgiveness
 - Telling them things like, "I'm glad God gave you to me as a present," "I'm glad you are my son/daughter," etc.
 - Expressing affection
 - Love their mom/dad
 - Working hard on personal godliness
 - Taking them to church consistently
 - Being excited about church with them
 - Teach them life skills
 - Admit your weaknesses; talk about how you need God too
- Fathers are to create an atmosphere of love and care for the child in the home so that when discipline must occur, he/she understands that it is conducted in that loving context.
- When fathers violate the standard of love, the child's forgiveness must be quickly and biblically sought. This will swiftly restore that atmosphere of care.

a. Discipline

"But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

- The Greek word translated "discipline":

"the upbringing and handling of the child which is growing up to maturity and which thus needs direction, teaching, instruction and a certain measure of compulsion in the form of discipline or even chastisement" (*TDNT*, 5:596).

This includes training of all types by various means: instruction, rules, modeling, rewards.

1. Discipline Includes Proactive Teaching in Life Skills:

- Waiting/Self-control
- Eating/manners
- Naps and bedtime
- Communication (speaking vs. screaming, polite words)
- Helping with chores (finding age-appropriate chores)
- Inside/outside behaviors (running vs. walking)
- Caring for others' property (training in constructive vs. destructive behaviors)
- Sharing and self-control
- Preferring others (Prayer for others' needs; share toys)
- Repeating an event following the rod

2. Discipline Includes Correction and Chastisement

"But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"
(Eph. 6:4).

"Instruction"

Admonish = to verbally place God's truth into the mind

Tragic examples of failure to train children:

Eli 1 Sam 3:13

David 1 Kings 1:5-6

Encouraging examples of diligence to train children:

Lois & Eunice: 2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-15

Israel: Deut 6:4ff

Asaph Psalm 78:1-8

Godly Elders in the church 1 Tim. 3:4

Excursus on Discipline and the Rod

1. Introduction:

Controversy over the rod boils down to a trust in God and his word.

- Do we trust God that he loves us, as we consider the difficulty of the rod?

- Do we trust God that he knows what children need? Do we trust our own wisdom or God's?

2. The Parent's Responsibility to Train Children in Obedience

a. Biblical Support

Deuteronomy 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Proverbs 1:8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching

Proverbs 13:24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

Proverbs 19:18 Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.

Proverbs 23:13-14 Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. ¹⁴ You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.

Ephesians 6:1-2 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise)

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- Reminder: "Obedience is doing what you are asked without challenge, delay, or excuse" (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*)

b. Support from the Family of Faith

- Todd Murray: "Children belong to God. Parents are entrusted with children. Biblical discipline is one responsibility delegated by God."
- J.C. Ryle: "Parents, do you wish to see your children happy? Take care, then, that you train them to obey when they are spoken to, – to do as they are bid."

Believe me, we are not made for entire independence, – we are not fit for it. Even Christ's freemen have a yoke to wear, they 'serve the Lord Christ' (Col. 3: 24). Children cannot learn too soon that this is a world in which we are not all intended to rule, and that we are never in our right place until we know how to obey our betters. Teach them to obey while young, or else they will be fretting against God all their lives long, and wear themselves out with the vain idea of being independent of His control."

"It ought to be a mark of well-trained children, that they do whatsoever their parents command them. Where, indeed, is the honour which the fifth commandment enjoins, if fathers and mothers are not obeyed cheerfully, willingly, at once?"

- Charles Spurgeon: "Soft-hearted mothers rear soft-headed children; they hurt them for life because they are afraid of hurting them when they are young."
- Thomas Fuller: "As for those parents who will not use the rod upon their children, I pray God He useth not their children as a rod for them."
- Joel Beeke & Mark Jones: "Of all callings, parenting is one of the most demanding. The Christian parent is called to lead little ones to God, yet he struggles with their natural rebellion against the things of God...Not only does the parent face the sinfulness of his children, but he must also obey his calling in the face of his own sinfulness. He must expect from his children the very things he is struggling to give himself, and he must discipline them for disobedience in the very areas in which he continues to struggle. This makes him feel like a hypocrite, nags his conscience, and weighs heavily on him every time he has to correct his children. There is no excuse for his sin, but overlooking their sin just because he is struggling too only encourages their sin. He must discipline them." (A Puritan Theology, pp. 957-8)
- Thomas Watson: "Correction is a hedge of thorns to stop children in their full career to hell." (*Godly Man's Picture*, p. 157)
- John Piper: "If parents reward a child for whining, and give in to the manipulation of a child's moodiness, then that child will be trained that a good pout will get pity. And thirty years later, the mastery of his moods will be twice as hard." (*Future Grace*, p. 302)
- J.C. Ryle: "Self-will is almost the first things that appears in a child's mind; and it must be your first step to resist it."

“A parent always yielding, and a child always having its own way, are a most painful sight; painful, because I see God’s appointed order of things inverted...; painful, because I feel sure the consequence to that child’s character in the end will be self-will, pride, and self-conceit. You must not wonder that men refuse to obey their Father which is in heaven, if you allow them, when children, to disobey their father who is upon earth.”

3. The Goal and Benefits of Biblical Discipline in the Lives of Children

- a. Discipline paves the way for learning and wisdom, which is essential for our children. All that is necessary to set a child up for a life of foolishness is nothing. Discipline is a critical, God-given means to deal with the curse of depravity and gift them with wisdom. All humanity needs to be taught the immense value of embracing discipline early on.

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

Proverbs 13:1 A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool rejects his father’s discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible.

Proverbs 15:32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

Proverbs 19:20 Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days.

Proverbs 19:27 Cease listening, my son, to discipline, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.

- b. **Discipline can purge and eradicate a measure of evil.**

Proverbs 20:30 Stripes that wound scour away evil, and strokes *reach* the innermost parts.

- The word “wound” has the idea of a bruise (DBL)
- The Hebrew word translated, “scour away,” has the idea of

- **remove** .. cleanse, i.e., cause a state to no longer exist as a figurative extension of cleansing dirt and impurities from a wound (DBL)
- **The word spoke of** make the metal free of impurities, smooth, and so shiny (DBL)
- Obviously, this does not mean that a parent's faithful, biblical discipline can bring regeneration to the child. However, faithful, biblical discipline is used of God to "scour away evil."
 - Sid Buzzell: "The purpose of corporal punishment .. is .. to veer one's conduct from sin. Such punishment, however, is not merely to change a person's conduct out of fear of physical pain but to help him mature" (BKC, 1:950).

c. Discipline is a means to diminish foolishness (innate and learned).

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

d. Discipline is a means to impart one of the greatest gifts in life; wisdom.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

** In that sense, we remember that the rod is a type of a means of grace (not regeneration or sanctification, but, imparting wisdom and giving them the gift of learning to control the curse inside them .. something which they need for life):

the rod biblically is a means of God-given grace (Prov 20:30 (scours away evil) , 22:15 (removes innate foolishness)).

- Brief comment on the importance of training our children in the necessity of **self-control**:
 - Self-control: The ability to trust God's goodness and sovereignty in a situation, in which we die to ourselves so as to rule and restrain our attitudes and actions; thoughts and words, in a way that seeks to submit to God's word and serve others.

- The internal restraint system of the heart; the conscience responding to the knowledge of self and the knowledge of right that God has given us (P. Tripp).
- We recall from Proverbs, **that part of foolishness is a lack of self-control**; inability to control our emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and actions when the curse hits; when temptations arise; when a strong desire faces us.
- One of the great, great gifts to give our children is self-control, including self-control of the emotions. How important that is; emotional self-control.
- This is a day when lack of self-control is almost a virtue; you don't like something, well, go ahead and riot; throw paint on someone; destroy property, and, to a lesser degree, "Just air your feelings; get it out there; go ahead and vent."
- But, the Proverbs teach something interesting: we are not permitted to explode like a geyser if we do not like how things are going. We are not allowed to unleash on whomever simply because we feel like it.
- No, the Proverbs have firm words against a lack of self-control when it comes to our emotions and feelings and attitudes:

Proverbs 25:28 Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.

Proverbs 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

4. The Heart of Discipline: Love

a. The love of God in discipline

Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproofs, even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights.

Hebrews 12:5-7 My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. ⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. ⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

b. Biblical discipline itself is loving

Proverbs 13:24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who **loves** him disciplines him diligently.

Proverbs 23:13 Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.

Proverbs 29:15-17 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. When the wicked increase, transgression increases; But the righteous will see their fall. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul.

5. The Instrument of Discipline: the Rod

a. What is the rod?

- The Hebrew word מִשְׁבֵּט

The Hebrew word used in context of discipline (e.g. Prov. 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15) speaks of an object like a club, staff, or scepter (*Brown-Driver-Briggs*, 986).

It was used to describe an instrument for beating cumin (Isa. 28:27), a weapon (2 Sam. 23:21), and as a shepherd's implement either to muster or count sheep (Lev. 27:32; Ezek. 20:37), or to protect them (Ps. 23:4; Mic. 7:14)." (Dan Phillips, *God's Wisdom in Proverbs*, p. 274).

The rod was also used as an instrument for either remedial or penal punishment. As a corrective instrument, it was used for a slave (Exod. 21:20), a fool (Prov. 10:13, 26:3), and a son (Prov. 13:24, 22:15, 23:14-14, 29:15). (Bruce Waltke, *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, 2:897).

- The child's discipline

Tedd Tripp: "The rod is a parent, in faith toward God and faithfulness toward his or her children, undertaking the responsibility of careful, timely, measured, and controlled use of physical punishment to underscore the importance of obeying God,

thus rescuing the child from continuing in his foolishness until death." (*Shepherding a Child's Heart*, p. 104)

"Fearing God and acquiring wisdom come through the instrumentality of the rod...The spanking renders the child compliant and ready to receive life-giving words."

b. The rod is not metaphorical

- See the following article for a more full explanation:
<https://thecripplegate.com/is-the-rod-of-proverbs-literal-or-metaphorical>

Proposed rod substitutions are numerous: Hot sauce, time-outs, warnings, withholding cartoons, a flick on the body. However, there is no biblical credence for omitting the rod.

- Hermeneutically, there is no substantiation for a metaphorical interpretation of the rod.
- Metaphors are clearly indicated in Scripture

John 10:7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

- Ultimately, administering the rod comes down to the sufficiency of Scripture and trusting our good God.
- A parent who withholds (in a biblical manner) the rod is hating their child and sinning against God (cf. Prov 13:24).

c. Context of the use of the rod

- The parent-child relationship
- In demonstrable love and tenderness
- Obedience to God: the parent administers the rod in an act of submission and obedience to God

Tedd Tripp: "The use of the rod is an act of faith. God has mandated its use. The parent obeys, not because he perfectly understands how it works, but because God has commanded it.

The use of the rod is a profound expression of confidence in God's wisdom and the excellence of his counsel." (*Shepherding a Child's Heart*, p. 105)

d. Until what age is the rod to be used?

- Scripture does not give a specific age. However, typically until the child would no longer be considered a "child" in Hebrew culture.

6. Occasions for Discipline and Instruction

- When to begin using the rod?

Todd Murray: "Begin as soon as they are old enough to disobey."

- Qualifier:
 - The key here is that we want to discipline in a way which clearly communicates a direct correlation between disobedience and a sinful response,
 - My wife's example: when you become aware that when you indicate "No" for something, they may scream, whine, complain, or defy. Ex: our child crawling towards an electrical outlet, then looking back to see if Leslie was watching, then going to touch it. This indicated that it was time to use the rod.

a. Disobedience

- Defined: failure to comply with a standard.
- Unless a parent is requiring a child to sin, a child is required to obey his/her parent(s). God requires children to obey. Doing so fulfills their role as children.
- Described: Obedience is to be all the way, right away, with a "happy heart."
- Deliberate: disobedience may be intentional.
- Non-deliberate: disobedience may be accidental.

1. Ex: You have shepherded your child to not run into the street w/o looking. One day, he is running around in the front yard, pretending to be an airplane, and, runs into the street.
2. This would still be an occasion for discipline b/c, 1) you have clearly instructed your child that this should not be done and 2) “accidental” disobedience like this can be consequential, and we must learn to be careful.

b. Disrespect

- i. Defined: an attitude of contempt, disrepute.

c. Deceit

- i. Defined: intentionally distorting or concealing the truth; a deliberate attempt to mislead.
- The rod is not for childish immaturity, confusion, irrationality (e.g. pretending to be a mermaid swimming around the backyard, and accidentally knocking over a flowerpot).

7. The Process of Discipline

- Discipline should not be administered in anger.

James 1:19–20 *This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

*We parents might need to take a minute prior to discipline

- a. Ask questions to confirm and convince the child of disobedience, if needed
- b. Gently explain the child’s act of disobedience
- c. Confirm that the child understands how they have disobeyed God by disobeying dad and/or mom

- Recommend: tell the child that dad/mom have also needed the rod many times in their lives and that dad/mom are commanded by God to administer the rod.

d. Discipline

- The idea of the rod is that memorable, unpleasant pain is associated with violating God's order of authority.
- Ecclesiastes 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.

e. Pray with the child

- Recommend: holding the child gently, thanking God for them; for help to obey; to trust in Jesus who forgives all our disobedience; etc.

f. Comfort the child (e.g. with love, the parallels w/ the cross of Christ)

- Recommend: telling the child that no act of disobedience will make you, as the parent, not love them anymore; that you are glad that they are your son/daughter; that you are happy that God gave them to you as a present.
- Just as, once we repent and surrender to Christ, no act of disobeying will make God so angry that we are no longer going to heaven.

g. Affirm the relationship (e.g. "I am glad that you are my child, and even if you disobey, that will not change .. just as God is with us b/c of Christ/the cross ..")

h. Forgive. Teach and practice biblical confession and forgiveness.

i. Restore

- Key principle: Biblical discipline involves teaching children to **RECEIVE** discipline.

We must not only administer the rod but train them to **willingly receive it.**

Receiving correction and discipline is essential to make it through life God's way.

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

Proverbs 13:1 A wise son **accepts** his father's discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.

Proverbs 15:12 A scoffer does not like to be reproved; he will not go to the wise.

Proverbs 15:31-32 He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof Will dwell among the wise. 32 He who neglects discipline despises himself, But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.

Proverbs 29:1 A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

➤ Using the hand? Other instrument?

Some have said, "Well, if I use my hand, the child will associate me / my hand, with pain and negativity, so ..."

Dan Phillips: "The phobia of confusing a child in this way is not biblically warranted. It is not the child who sees love and discipline as coming from the same source who is crippled for life. Rather, that child is crippled who sees love and discipline as being mutually exclusive. Such a child is unprepared for God's kind of love. The first time God brings painful discipline to bear, this person will conclude that God does not love him." (*God's Wisdom in Proverbs*, 275)

Recommend: a regular, consistent instrument which can inflict the memorable experience.

8. The Gospel in Discipline

- Moments of discipline are sacred, God-given episodes to minister the gospel of Jesus Christ to our children. We are only given so many of these opportunities.

Parents: when God makes you a parent, you are also called to be a preacher of the cross to your kids, in all its fullness (cf. 2 Cor 2:2).

- a. God is holy. He requires perfection (Matt. 5:48).
- b. Man is sinful, including dad and mom. Our need is as great as our kids (Rom 3:23).
- c. Christ obeyed perfectly. He never needed discipline (John 8:29, Heb 4:14-16).
- d. In loving submission to the Father and love for his church, Christ willingly took our ultimate discipline in substituting himself on the cross. He appeased the wrath of God (1 John 4:10).
- e. When we confess our sins, repent, and trust in Christ, we are justified (instantaneously declared in permanent right standing with God). We will not be condemned (Rom. 5:1, 8:1). “We are no longer in trouble with God anymore...”
- f. God deals with us from then on as his greatly beloved children, never to be disowned from his family (Rom. 8:32, 38-39, Heb. 12:6).

9. Giving Mercy and the Use of the Rod

- Are there occasions when we should refrain from administering the rod though disobedience has occurred? Give grace or mercy to our kids?

- a. **Parents are commanded to use the rod, rather than withhold it.**

Proverbs 23:13–14 Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.

- Why might Solomon encourage us by saying, “...he will not die”?

- b. **“Giving grace”?**

Using the rod biblically is a means of God-given grace (Prov 20:30, 22:15). Generally, a “means of grace” refers to a practice commanded by God whereby people gain God’s wisdom and/or gain God’s likeness (i.e. sanctification).

Though not imparting regeneration, the rod imparts God’s wisdom to the child. Thus, the rod is a means of grace that is not to be withheld from the child who greatly needs God’s wisdom.

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom

c. Mercy can be administered at times.

- Mercy means withholding deserved punishment.
- Since we are commanded to not withhold the rod, mercy must not be the predominant pattern.

Proverbs 13:24 He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

- Mercy should be infrequent; in a significant minority.
- Mercy ought to be well-explained when implemented, pointing towards the gospel, ensuring that the child understands what is happening (e.g. “I am giving you mercy. Do you remember what mercy means? And what is the greatest mercy which we need from God? Jesus took the great discipline we deserved from God so that if we repent, we don’t get the punishment of eternity in hell. I am giving you a mercy that is much, much smaller than that, but I want you to learn something of God’s great mercy through Jesus.”)
- We can begin to use "mercy" out of fear of our child, laziness of enacting the rod, worshipping our children liking us, etc.

d. If a child is not in a good pattern of obedience in a particular area, mercy ought to be reconsidered.

CONCLUSION:

Don Green: "Parents of young children: I encourage you to take a long-term view of parenting, especially when you're fatigued from dealing with the same discipline issues day after day and discouraged by the absence of visible signs of progress. Your ultimate goal in parenting is not so much external conformity when a child is two, but to hold a position of loving influence when he/she is making life-shaping decisions at 20. You attain that future position of enduring strength in part through perseverance in the present times of passing weakness. Love your child enough not to surrender to their stubborn and foolish self-will, even though it's a battle you only win prayerfully by God's grace over time. Consistent, patient correction, not explosive severity, is your key to victory."

Parenting: A Biblical Strategy Lesson 4: Suggestions for Parenting July 2026

1. Teach them to suffer well.

- Our kids will experience trials; even early on. We will not be able to shelter them from that.
- Trials such as, during a play date, a friend snatches away their binkie or breaks their toy; or, hits them; to making fun of them; to not getting invited to something; getting hurt; or friends spreading rumors; isolating them, or worse.
- We want to compassionately minister to our kids during their trials.
- These are opportune times to help build a proper theology of suffering early on

a. Bring God's Compassion

- i. Show them that Jesus knows what it is like to suffer; He compassionately understands what it's like:
 1. to be reviled, 1 Pet 2:23
 2. to be despised, Isa 53:3
 3. to be made fun of (Matt 27:38-43)
 4. to get hurt really, really badly (Matt 26:67-68; 27:26, 35)
 5. to be alone/lonely (Matt 26:56; 27:46)
 6. to have friends severely betray Him (Matt 26:69-75)
 7. to be called names (John 8:48)
 8. to be sad and scared (Luke 22:40-46)
 9. to be hated so badly that people wanted to kill him (Matt 27:22; John 8:59)
 10. to have people lie about him in hateful ways (Matt 12:24, 26:59)
 11. and He even knows what it's like to have to obey his parents! (Luke 2:51)
 12. the various temptations/struggles as a pre-teen and teenager (Heb 4:15, Luke 2:52)

- ii. The Lord's nearness in our suffering (Psalm 34:18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit).
- iii. The Lord uses suffering for good (Romans 8:28 we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose).
- iv. Pray together.

b. Instruct with the Bible.

- We live in a fallen world (Gen. 3:14-19).
- Normal is not an easy life, but difficult, especially when following Christ (1 Pet. 4:12).
- Things will not always be fair, but God is sovereign (Eccles. 7:14).
- In it all, God is good (Ps. 145:3).
- God uses suffering for our good (Jas. 1:2-4), for example, to bring us to Christ, sanctify us, guard us from harm, and deepen our love for him.

c. Model with the life.

- Explain to them how you think through hardship and what you are learning.
- Pray together.
- Discover their struggles and difficulties.
- Dialogue around Scripture.
- Show how Scripture is relevant to their challenges.

2. Teach them to work unto the Lord.

a. Instruct with the Bible.

- Work was created before the Fall, thus, it is good (Gen. 2:15).
- However, because of the Fall, work is against “thorns and thistles” (Gen. 3:17).
- Work is a gift from God, to be used as a means of glorifying him and loving our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-39).
- Work is to be performed as for God (Col. 3:22-24).
- If we are unwilling to work, we should not eat (applies to those of a working age, for the most part, of course; 2 Thess. 3:10).
- Work is a means to provide for the family and give financially (Eph. 4:28).
- Study the sluggard from Proverbs (Prov. 24:30-34, 26:13-16).
- Explain that work usually leads to a measure of provision from the Lord (Prov. 27:23-27).

b. Model with the life.

- Explaining why dad/mom work.
- Practice thanking God for work.
- Praying for God to continue providing work.
- Avoid a negative attitude towards work.
- Give kids age-appropriate jobs to do.
- Give them the ability to give financially to the Lord as a result of their work.

3. Teach them to steward their lives wisely.

a. Instruct with the Bible.

- God owns all things, including us (Ps. 24:1).

- The things we have are entrusted to us temporarily.
- We are to use his things (our bodies, time, possessions, skills, gifts, relationships) for his glory (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will be held accountable.

b. Model with the life.

- Help children demonstrate thoroughness and diligence in small things (e.g. cleaning up toys).
- Show children how to take good care of their own possessions (Prov. 24:30-34).
- Show children how to take good care of others' possessions (Phil. 2:3-4).
- Give and explain generous, joyful, and sacrificial giving to the Lord (Prov. 3:9, 2 Cor. 9:7, Phil. 2:3-4).
- Train your children to both think and plan ahead, showing them how you do so (Prov. 14:23, 21:5).

4. Teach them to make wise choices.

a. Instruct with the Bible.

- God is utterly holy and supreme (Isa. 6:3, 40:25).
- The fear of the God of the Bible is where wisdom begins (Prov. 1:7).
- God's word is inerrant and unable to mislead (Ps. 19:7-11).
- God's commands are for our good (Ps. 19:11).
- Sin will always lead to ruin and hardship (Prov. 13:15, Jer. 2:13).
- Submission to God in Christ is the good life (Matt. 11:28-30, John 10:10).

b. Model with the life.

- Explain why you make the choices you make, as rooted in God's word.
- Explain mistakes and sins; how they deviated from God's word.
- Read good material.
- Be involved in what they are seeing, hearing, and experiencing.

5. Teach them to live Christ-centered lives.

a. Instruct with the Bible.

- Even if not converted, parents must instruct and point to Christ.
- Teach them that the greatest wisdom and knowledge is in Christ (Col. 2:3).
- Explain that Christ's saving work cannot be added to or earned (Rom. 3:28, 4:4-5).
- Teach them that all bragging and boasting in life is due Christ and his finished work on the cross (Gal. 6:14).
- Explain that salvation must be received by repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 20:21).
- Teach that, if they merely come in humble faith, Christ will not turn them away ever, even if they have committed the worst external sins (Luke 5:32).
- Explain to them that he gives true rest to the soul (Matt. 11:28-30).

b. Model with the life.

- Explain how Christ obeyed where we have failed (John 8:29).
- In times of sin, failure, and mistakes, explain to them that God both forgives and uses our failures for his glory (Gen. 50:20).
- Avoid explosive response to big sins.

- Demonstrate God's grace to them.
- Explain how you repent.
- Encourage and model evangelism.
- Comfort them when persecuted for their faith.

2. **Evangelizing Children**³

All Christians are given the immense privilege and mission of making disciples. For parents, that also includes children.

Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

While we cannot save our children, we always want to encourage a child's interest in the things of the Lord.

a. **Cautions When Evangelizing Children**

1) **Oversimplifying and Diluting the Gospel**

- Since a child's comprehension ability is developing, it is possible for parents to lean towards oversimplifying the gospel.
- Motivated by love, a parent is searching for ways to speak the good news of Christ crucified for sin so that their child may be saved.
- For regeneration to occur, the biblical gospel message must be comprehended and embraced. Parents are to teach thoroughly (Deut. 6:6-7).
- Therefore, parents must not compromise thoroughness and accuracy when explaining the gospel. Details should be explained:

³ Prepared with the help of *Grace Community Church Distinctive: Evangelizing Children* at gracechurch.org/about/distinctives/evangelizing-children.

God as Creator, our Judge, God as holy, sin (disobedience and rebellion against God), God's wrath against sin, the deity of Christ, the perfect obedience of Christ, the substitute death of Christ for our sin, resurrection, repentance, the new heart, and the lordship of Christ.

- Parents will need to find various ways to explain these rich truths in a way that kids can comprehend. This requires parents to be all-the-more acquainted with gospel truths.
- "Oversimplification is a greater danger than giving too much detail. It is truth – found in God's word – that saves, but that truth must be understood." (GCC Elders)

2. Coercing Children to Profess Faith

- Salvation is a supernatural gift by the regeneration work of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 37:1-10, John 3:3-8).
- We can no more coerce regeneration than we can the wind (cf. John 3:8).
- Coercing external responses to the gospel (e.g. "just repeat after me and pray this prayer," "ask Jesus into your heart," "walk forward," "raise your hand if you want to go to heaven") should be avoided.
- Most children will want to respond positively to "going to heaven," follow Jesus, and become a Christian.
- "On the one hand, there's the danger of leading children to think they are saved when they are not. On the other, there's the risk of discouraging children who express a genuine desire to follow Christ." (GCC Elders)
- Biblical pressure can be used when communicating the need to repent. This is not synonymous with coercing presumptuous external responses.
- Instead of coercing external response, parents ought to accurately and lovingly explain the gospel often, pray, and

patiently trust the Lord to do the work of regeneration.
"Salvation is from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

3. Giving Premature Assurance of Salvation

- Jesus cautioned that many will be present in the judgment who presumed they were regenerate but were not (Matt. 7:21-23).
- Therefore, parents ought to give assurance of salvation cautiously, based solely on biblical evidences.
- Children may demonstrate enthusiastic, external responses to the gospel for reasons unrelated (e.g. pressure from friends, desire to please parents) to those of true conversion (e.g. deep awareness of personal sinfulness before God, deserving of God's wrath).
- Things that are not automatic assurance of salvation:
 - A profession of faith in Christ, an initial joyful response to the word of God (Matt. 13:20-21), listening to Bible teaching (Matt. 13:20-21), Bible knowledge, ability to repeat Christian things, external morality.
- Evidences of regeneration:
 - #1 – A profession of faith in Christ (Rom 10:9)
 - #2 - The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).
 - #3 – A deep sense of, and sorrow over, one's sinfulness before God (Isa. 66:1-2, Matt. 5:3-4, Rom. 8:13-14).
 - #4 – Perseverance in the faith; though not perfect, a pattern of obedience to God's word from the heart (John 14:15, 1 John 2:3-4).
 - #5 – A sincere trust in Christ and his finished work on the cross alone for acceptance with God (Rom. 10:4, Gal. 1:8-9, 2:16).

- #6 – A love for Christ and his word (Ps. 119:97, 1 Cor. 16:22).
- #7 – A love for the church (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-14, 18)
- Children, like anyone, need time to test their beliefs and convictions in the heat and circumstances of life. It is during this time that those who appeared regenerate will fall away, proving never to have been converted (Matt. 13:20-23).
- Enduring fruit is the demonstration of the regenerate life (Matt. 13:23).
- Ultimately, it is not the role of parents, but the Holy Spirit, to give the individual assurance of regeneration (Rom. 8:15-16).
- Children should be encouraged when they demonstrate a love for Christ, Scripture, the church, and obedience, while lovingly encouraging their children to keep trusting Christ, learning about him, growing, bearing fruit.

4. Rushing Baptism

- Understandably, parents can rush baptism immediately following a child's profession of faith and expression of desire for the things of Christ.
- Though Scripture commands baptism (Matt. 28:19, Acts 2:38), baptism should not be rushed with kids.
- Children need time to demonstrate saving faith through the normal battles of life and maturation (e.g. Matt 13:20-23).
- Baptism may do the child a disservice if done presumptuously, for example, when the child cannot articulate a thorough gospel and demonstrate time of enduring fruit.

a. Considerations When Evangelizing Children

1. Setting an Example of Personal Holiness

- “When parents are faithful not only to proclaim, but also to live out the gospel, the impact is profound.” (GCC Elders)

2. Frequently Speaking about the Gospel of Christ

- “The wise parent will be faithful, patient, and persistent, being careful to look at every moment of the child’s life as a teaching opportunity.” (GCC Elders)

3. Comprehend the Biblical Evidences of Conversion

- See above, #3.

4. Encouraging Potential Evidences of Conversion

- “Even if parents conclude it’s too early to regard their child’s interest in Christ as mature faith, they must not deride a profession of faith as false, for it may be the seed from which mature faith will later emerge.” (GCC Elders)

5. Trust in the Sovereignty of God

- “The salvation of children, then, cannot be produced by the faithfulness or diligence of parents, but only by the sovereign work of God Himself.” (GCC Elders)

3. Miscellaneous Remarks

a. Love without Spoiling

J.C. Ryle: “Love is one grand secret of successful training. Anger and harshness may frighten, but they will not persuade the child that you are right; and if he sees you often out of temper, you will soon cease to have his respect...Try hard to keep a hold on your child’s affections. It is a dangerous thing to make your children afraid of you. Anything is almost better than reserve and constraint between your child and yourself; and this will come in with fear.”

Charles Spurgeon: “Those children who are doted upon by their parents are greatly to be pitied, for they are apt to be allowed to have their own way, and a youth’s own way is sure to be a wrong one.”

b. Children and the Means of Grace

i. Church Attendance

Parents are preparing their children to live lives pleasing to God so that when they leave the home as young adults, they are not wondering what to do (cf. Heb. 11:24-25, 13:17).

Thus, when it comes to plugging into a sound, New Testament kind of church, modeling now what they are to do when out of the house cannot be overemphasized.

ii. Young Moms & Corporate Prayer Meetings

Charles Spurgeon: “You are a mother with little children, and it is probably your duty to be at home rather than to be at the prayer meeting. It may sometimes be your business, as a husband, to take turns with your wife, and let her come...instead of always taking the privilege yourself.”

iii. Baptism

See above, “Rushing Baptism”

iv. Communion

Charles Spurgeon: “Especially in things connected with religion, keep your child back from any form until he has a right to be a partaker of it. Never encourage him to come to the Lord’s Table unless you really believe that there is a work of grace in his heart; for why should you lead him to eat and drink his own damnation?”

Use a child’s inquiry as an opportunity to explain the gospel.

Children should not partake of the Lord’s Supper until they have been biblically baptized and are showing clear evidence of conversion.

v. Local Church Membership

Meaningful membership is a great joy and step of obedience for all Christians. Teach and model enthusiastically what it means to belong, and not merely attend, a local church.

Membership is for those who are converted members of the Body of Christ. Thus, once children are converted, they should be encouraged to become a member of the church, even if their parents attend. However, some churches have an age minimum on membership for legal reasons (e.g. 18).

vi. Prayer

Teach them to pray as early as possible. Doing so does not automatically mean that we are affirming their salvation. Instead, we are recognizing God as the giver of all things who is worthy to be praised.

c. How Many Children Should We Have?

i. No prescriptive word from Scripture

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward” (Ps 127:3).

ii. Conscience issue

“Let each man be convinced in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5)

iii. Considerations:

1. The blessing of children; they are gifts to be received
2. The Fall; thorns and thistles.
3. Resources
4. Sickness
5. Personal maturity; the ability to biblically steward and train children

d. Considerations for Children and Questionable Faith

- i. Often, sadly, kids will rebel, especially in later years. This is a matter of great sorrow.

- ii. The purpose here is not to instruct on how such situations are to be handled in detail, so much as to consider matters of conversion.
- iii. A few thoughts to consider avoiding:

1. "They are a Christian but haven't made Christ their Lord yet."

Sometimes the idea is phrased in other ways: "They are a believer, but have not yet decided to follow the Lord." "They prayed the prayer, but do not follow Christ or live out their faith."

Avoidance of this saying is needed for several reasons. Christ is the absolute, Sovereign Lord whether we have acknowledged it or not (John 13:13, 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 1:8, 4:8, 11, 19:16). He is Lord of all humanity, regardless of our spiritual persuasion on the matter (Phil. 2:9-11). History will see a day when every person born will affirm the objective title of Jesus as "Lord," whether redemptively or wrathfully. Thus, we can no more correctly say, "They are a Christian but haven't made Christ Lord yet," than one could say, "I'm French but haven't made Francois Hollande [[or whoever is the French president]] my president yet," or, "I am a dolphin, but have not decided to make water my surroundings yet."

Sometimes when people say this, they mean, "I am a Christian, but am not living as if he is my Lord yet." But this is equally erroneous. It's a peculiar, but far-too-common idea. No such saying or idea is observed in Scripture. In fact, it seems that Christians in the NT understood that becoming a Christian was a radically privileged transfer from under the lordship of sin and Satan to under the lordship of Jesus Christ (e.g. Luke 19:8, John 20:28, Rom. 6, Col. 1:13, 1 Thess. 1:9). That a disciple of Christ is one who is taught to obey everything Jesus commanded indicates the concept that to be a Christian is to operate under his lordship (Matt. 28:18-20, John 14:15, 1 John 2:3-6). In the first century, individuals of whom this saying was spoken would have been re-evangelized.

On a related sidenote, I once had the opportunity to ask a Christian who had lived through communist USSR if, prior to 1991, this kind of no-lordship theology existed there. He answered with a serious, "No."

This is not to say that one will exhaustively comprehend the implications of Christ's lordship the moment of salvation. But it is to say that he is our Lord, even prior to regeneration.

2. "I was saved pretty young, but sowed my wild oats, and did not follow Christ until many years later."

Similar to the above, this idea is foreign to Scripture. This is not to say that someone cannot be regenerate at a young age, or that sanctification will not be a bumpy ride. But it is to say that upon conversion, the Holy Spirit will begin to illuminate and enable both the idea and reality of following Christ. Good works have already been ordained (Eph. 2:10).

God is too good to leave us in the wild oats (1 Cor. 6:11). The Holy Spirit, who indwells his people, loves them too much to allow them another day under Satan's lordship (Eph. 5:8). Regeneration by faith in Christ is the moment our Father takes our hand and instantly begins raising us up into the image of his Son (Heb. 12:5-11). Those without child-training are not yet his children (Heb. 12:8). God is no fickle, forgetful father. Thus, we ought to bury the saying and instead, say something like, "I remember giving some ascent to the facts of the gospel as a child. But, I lived for many years with no evidence of regeneration, so, biblically, I would have to say that I was not converted until later."

6. CONCLUSION:

- a. Pray often
- b. Model it
- c. Plug into the local church
- d. Saturate life with Scripture
- e. Trust God