

Lesson 9: The Discipline of Correction

Review – Discipline is simply *training*, involving both development and correction. Let’s now consider correction.

Cultural Context

In society today, we underestimate the severity of sin; therefore, we shy away from biblical means of correction.

“Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it...” (Pr. 22:15).

In the church, we often oppose grace and discipline—a legalistic upbringing may tempt us to be too lenient.

However, due to the body/soul nature of man and the already/not-yet nature of salvation, both are needed.

In fact, grace itself trains us: “For the grace of God has appeared,...disciplining us...” (Titus 2:11-12).

It is the duty of Christian parents to learn from their Father how to be both deeply loving and firmly training.

Love and Discipline

As God loves and disciplines His children (Pr. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19), so do all loving parents:

“He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently” (Pr. 13:24).

Granted, discipline without love is damaging, but so is pseudo-love with no discipline:

“Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death” (Pr. 19:18; cf. 23:13-14).

Child Abuse	Loving Discipline	Child Abuse	(Lessin, <i>Spanking</i> , p. 35)
All “love,” no discipline. (Laziness or Fear)		All “discipline,” no love. (Anger)	

What is real love?

Real love is contemplative and/or benevolent (cf. Mt. 3:17; 5:43ff – God’s Son vs. God’s enemies).

Real love does hard things:

“Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend...” (Pr. 27:5-6).

Real love is obedient to God—no division between what is right and what is loving (2 John 6).

Read and perhaps memorize the lists of real love given in Romans 12:9-21 and 1 Corinthians 13:3-8.

Two Means of Correction

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

Reproof – verbally correcting a child’s thinking (cf. rebuke: “Stop it!”)

Welcoming regular reproof is critical for education and for life (Pr. 12:1; 6:23; cf. 13:1; Ps. 141:5).

Words are powerful: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Pr. 18:21a).

In general, our words should be: *true*, *few*, *slow*, and *apropos* (cf. Proverbs on the Tongue).

Specifically, parental reproof requires exhortation (*how*) and motivation (*why*) (see Pr. 1-9 introductions).

Note: The organic motivation of wisdom is not bribery.

Parents who neglect to give reproofs are held responsible for the sins of their children (e.g. Eli, Samuel, David).

Laziness – “I don’t want to stop what I am doing now to discipline my children.”

Problem: Crossing your desires results in anger and neglect quickly turns to harsh words and actions.

Fear – “I don’t want to lose my children.”

Problem: Lacks faith in God and His ways—rather, obey expectantly and leave the results with Him.

Rod – physically correcting a child’s behavior with pain that smarts but does not injure (controlled spanking)

Culturally, the Hebrews used the “rod” (a thick stick or staff)—the symbol is less important than the act.

Biblical spanking does not injure the child (cf. Pr. 23:13-14):

Know each child and monitor the pain level through crying releasing their defiance.

You must break the rebellion without breaking their will—e.g. the Showdown at age two.

Even if they cannot understand, basic commands like “Come!” or “Don’t touch!” could save their lives

Method of Correction

Have a clear system of rules and expectations: No law, no violation (Rom. 4:15; cf. 5:13). Clear boundaries!

Be prompt and consistent (Pr. 13:24 – lit. “dawns”)—one reproof gives opportunity to repent, then use the rod.

Spank with patience and explanation, citing God’s authority and the Cross, then hug and pray with the child.

Never neglect the proactive side of discipline—those “faithful” only in reactive discipline are failing overall.

Churches must practice the same thing—not just preaching but discipline, not just correction but discipleship.