

Training In God's Family

Key Verses

Hebrews 12:5-8

⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “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? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Ephesians 6:1-4

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Principles

There are a number of passages in the Bible that speak to training in the context of parenting. As we will see, biblical training is both proactive (instruction) and reactive (discipline)¹. We need to understand that these two aspects must be balanced if we are to see our children “trained up in who they are, so they will not depart from it when they are older.” The most common error in parenting is reaction out of emotion, which exposes our natural bent as parents to focus primarily on ourselves and our own comforts. This causes us to react negatively to our children when they misbehave. A biblical mindset leads us to proactively build up our children, consistently preparing them to live as children of God in His family. This “building up” requires both instruction in Truth (in the framework of KNOW-CONSIDER-PRESENT as is appropriate for their age level) to promote positive growth and discipline in love to help our children learn from their wayward choices.

¹ When we use the term “training” in this document, we are always referring to both the instruction and discipline aspects of parenting.

For our purposes in this boot camp, we want to highlight the foundational passages that address the three most important components of training: understanding, convictions, consistency. Simply stated, without understanding, conviction, and consistency, we will never train (instruct or discipline) our children well.

Consider deeply the following principles derived from these passages, with a specific aim to their application toward you as a parent in how you train your children.

1. **“He disciplines/chastises those He loves.”** This connection must be considered deeply if convictions are to begin to form as parents. Culturally we face a contrary narrative that tells us that discipline and correction, especially corporal punishment, cause damage to the child. When following God’s values, instilling his principle in HIS manner into our children, we are demonstrating God’s love to our children. Conversely, when we do not discipline them, we are not demonstrating God-like love. When we withhold discipline, we are unfortunately believing the lie that love can only exist in the parent-child relationship when the child feels good about the parent. We are not willing to experience the discomfort of our child not liking us even though it is a benefit to the child.
2. **“God is treating you as sons/If you are left without discipline...then you are illegitimate children.”** To discipline our children is to fundamentally treat them as real children. Discipline is used here as an indicator to the child that he/she is really a loved son or daughter. When we consider the negative implications of this, we realize that to NOT discipline our children is to confuse them at the deepest level of their personal identity.
3. **“What son is there whom his father does not discipline?”** It appears as though God is sharing with us, as parents, that all children have an intrinsic expectation of and need for discipline. Not only this, but a lack of discipline confuses the child and can lead to doubt in the parental relationship.
4. **“Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”** Here we see the two key components of training converge: discipline and instruction. To properly train our children, we must discipline them in their rebellion against righteousness, and we must instruct them into righteousness. Both of these activities form their understanding of God and both are vital to a balanced training of a child. When we are deficient in one area, we will find that the other area is also lacking.

What To Discipline, What To Instruct

This is an abbreviated list of the key biblical convictions that a parent must focus on, plan for, and implement in the area of discipline.

1. *Honesty* (Dishonesty destroys relationships with God and people; while honesty helps to foster the deep and authentic relationships with God and other people that our children will need.)
2. *Obedience* (Disobedience is the fruit of independence from all authority and leads to a life of foolishness; while obedience brings wisdom and guidance toward a meaningful life.)
3. *Respect* (Disrespect fosters isolation, leading to relational death, while respect builds bridges of trust and sacrificial love with other people.)

Not only are convictions in the area of discipline important, but, as parents, we must also have a plan for what to instruct our children in. Here is a brief and introductory list of some areas of focus in the category of instruction.

1. *The Person and nature of God.* A growing knowledge of God through regular learning from the Bible must be established.
2. *Their relationship to God* (as an unbeliever or believer). Children must know where they stand with God based on what God's word says. Lying to them by implying that they are already "God's child" when they have not personally believed in the work of Christ is both damaging and confusing.
3. *How they can pursue a deepening relationship with God.* Once they are redeemed children of God, children need to learn the basics, by example and teaching, of how a relationship with God is cultivated.

Questions/Discussion

Here are a few discussion questions that might assist you as you lead others into a meaningful discussion/ journey through the topic of training. These are intended to bring deep consideration and discussion. Make sure to allot ample time to think through them prior to discussion.

1. As you reflect on your upbringing, with a specific view toward discipline and instruction, how do you think that your upbringing has shaped your view of, and present pattern of, training as a parent? (Keep in mind that, in many cases, this discussion could bring up some sensitive and emotional memories. It is important to prepare for talking through these memories and possibly even counseling toward forgiveness and healing in the more sensitive cases. Ultimately, this exercise is designed to help parents acknowledge the reality of their past in shaping their present-tense views of, and actions in, training their children.)
2. From what other sources did/do you get most of your parenting influences, specifically in the area of training and discipline?
3. What are your biggest personal challenges as a parent when you consider the need for convictions and consistency in the areas of discipline and instruction of your child?

Further Study/Discipleship

Growing as parents, and discipling others in this particular area, is not for the faint of heart. Nor is it accomplished through one short video and discussion. Below is a list of a few additional passages that can be used to further discuss with and disciple others through this content.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

This is another passage where God gives specific thoughts to us about the issue of instruction.

1. Consider the word "diligently" and how this might practically look for you as a parent, both in your convictions and in your practices.
2. Consider the various ways that parents are to instruct their children in the Word (not formally, but

in all aspects of life).

3. Consider the practical results offered in the phrase, “you shall bind them...you shall write them...” and how you might incorporate similar ideas in your family context based on these principles.

Psalm 127:3-5

This passage is also a helpful one to consider as you delve more deeply into the topic of training children. It is best to view this passage as a “balancing” passage that helps parents to keep their children in a proper view as they navigate challenging, disciplinary circumstances.

1. Consider the analogy of children to a quiver of arrows and how parents can view their children as a treasure in need of protection in one’s family. This clearly had specific application to the Jewish audience who lived at a time of seemingly endless battles with enemies, but it still applies in principle today.
2. Children are directly linked to a parent’s legacy in a way that is beneficial for child and parent. This is the nature of love relationships and this is why the analogy of arrows in a quiver is used.

Proverbs 13:24, 29:15

If necessary, go back to Genesis 1-3 to build a foundational understanding of your child’s need for salvation and restoration into God’s family. Here are some key principles in the Genesis narrative:

1. Discipline is a parent’s responsibility, it is not optional.
2. Corporal punishment is a biblical necessity. (This is a broad topic with much to consider in terms of how and when it should be implemented, but nevertheless the Bible is clear in its use as a parent for the benefit and love of the child.)
3. Discipline must be consistent and faithful. What does it mean for discipline to be faithful?
4. Love is demonstrated to a child through Godly discipline. (Our discipline is patterned after God’s love, so, when administered properly, it trains the child’s heart to know, appreciate, and properly respond to God’s discipline.)
5. Wisdom is attained by a child through Godly discipline. (This principle is so important in establishing the conviction for discipline in parents. The inference is quite clear: without discipline in a child, they will not attain to the wisdom they need for life.)