

Is Spanking Biblical? the use of the rod in the Believer's home

A study for the College and Career Class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church by Steve Thomas

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Introduction

Discipline from a scriptural perspective is meant to be Restorative, Corrective, and Preventative but only God's discipline should be Punitive. How are these principles applied when the believer considers the method of corporal punishment in the Christian Home? Are verses found in Proverbs to be applied in the Grace Believer's life? There are times when a spanking is an appropriate form of discipline, if done in the right way, and with the correct motivation. There is a strong New Testament tie-in to support the principle of the use of "the rod" in the Believer's home.

Principles from Proverbs

Pro 13:24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Pro 10:13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding. Pro 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. Pro 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Pro 23:14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. Pro 26:3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back. Pro 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

These verses support the principles that we have seen from scripture regarding discipline. It is Restorative, Corrective, and Preventative. The use of the rod is from a place of love. It is meant to deliver understanding. It is appropriate for the "fool", or one that lacks understanding. The child who grows up with the rod will have access to wisdom, but the lack will bring shame. The suffering that the parent uses at the appropriate times will keep the child from greater suffering later on in life. Spanking is the parental method of rescuing the child from foolishness and a life of rebellion.

Connection to Grace

Hebrews 12:5-11 gives the believer a heavenly perspective of how God rescues the believer from himself. This passage connects the principles from Proverbs to the character of God, and makes a great connection to the parenting that is commanded in Paul's epistles. Every believer in every time period has been saved by Grace, however, not every believer has been asked to approach God based on the provisions of Grace as their rule of life. In the first 7 verses of Ephesians 3, Paul names and describes the current administration that we are living in "the dispensation of the grace of God" (vs 2).

Dangers of inappropriate use of Spanking

Violence is a word that is used in Proverbs as well. Illicit use of spanking is abusive and not a principled way to discipline (Prov 1:19, 3:31, 16:29). The Restorative and Preventative use

of the rod is not meant to bully the child, or create fear of the parent's size and power. These qualities should cause the child to feel safe, and protected.

Spanking should not happen with the hand. Note the use of the word "rod". The hand is for aid, love, and support. The child should not flinch when the parent reaches towards him. There should be an item that carries the stigma of discipline - the belt, a switch, the wooden spoon, or for the adventurous parent - the purple spatula.

Spanking in anger will not bring about the righteousness of God (James 1:20). Spanking with emotion will provoke the child to anger. This is warned about in Ephesians 6:4.

Spanking because of the parent's frustration will have a separating affect on the child. The parents is seeking for the child to give him his heart, not have the heart to become hardened. Spanking should be reserved for rebellion, the rising up of the will in defiance to the parent's authority. The parent should seek out alternative methods of discipline for simple age-appropriate behavior that is to be expected. Giving a negative consequence for a negative behavior is appropriate. The parent should be patient in waiting for the child to "get it" when learning responsibility, maturity, and many social cues. The parent should not take out their lack of patience on a child that is learning to grow up.

There are exceptions to these situations. If the child is in danger and the learning curve must be shorter, spanking could be appropriate to send a message (hot stove, electricity, wandering off in the store, parking lots, dealing with strangers, etc).

Some practical suggestions

Both parents should spank. If the child understands that only one parent is doing the spanking, then they will begin to manipulate the parents. This starts at a young age.

There should be a "waiting period" before a spanking. This often heightens the anticipation and makes the spanking more affective. It also gives the parents time to remove emotion from the equation.

Spanking should be done in private, if at all possible. This will keep the parent free from a lot of unwanted attention, and will not embarrass the child needlessly.

Spanking should always be accompanied by verbal instruction as well as affection immediately after. This enforces the idea that the motivation of the discipline is love.

There should be a standard procedure followed. This should include the instrument, the posture, the expected number of "whacks". This keeps the parent from getting carried away, and prepares the child for what is to come.

Conclusion

Corrective discipline is at the core of God's essence; it is part of His nature (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:20; Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Revelation 12:5) to achieve His intended outcome in thankfulness for His Son's sacrifice for sin! Spanking is not a suggestion, but a required act of a loving parent. God questions the love of the parent who does not use the rod.