

FIRST COMES LOVE
Not Far from the Tree
Hebrews 12:5-11

Do you want GOOD KIDS? I bet you do. No one that I know wants their kid to be the one that is causing all of the trouble in the neighborhood; the one who bullies all the little kids on the block and tortures the neighbor's cat. Is that your kid? I hope not. But what do we mean when we say that we want "good kids?" Is this just a general term, or do we have a specific meaning in mind? For some, I think that it just means that they don't want their kid to turn out to be a THEIF or a MURDERER. (That is setting a pretty low standard!). I also see parents who spend countless hours grooming and goading their child to be a GRADE-A STUDENT, or a STAR BALL-PLAYER or a FASHION MODEL. These might all be really good things, but are they worthy of the great majority of our energies and influence as a parent? **Sadly, I think that many parents focus more on their kid's SKILLS than they do on their SOULS.** This is an extremely important truth. We must remember that, in parenting, OUR GOAL DETERMINES OUR DESTINATION. **If we set SKILL-DRIVEN GOALS as our highest priority, then we just might create a host of adults who simply become SKILLED FOOLS.** One only has to look at some of the greatest SPORTS STARS in the spotlight today to see how a really skilled athlete can be a TERROR both on and off the court. I also want to remind you that as parents we can only INFLUENCE our kids toward the development of the right QUALITIES in life. I pray that we do not waste that influence on LESSER GOALS.

Great discipline is always focused on ROOT and FRUIT! Hebrews 12:7-11 NLT
 7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. 9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? 10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. 11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening--it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are **trained** in this way.

*This is NOT just about BEHAVIOR (Fruit). It is about CHARACTER (Root)!

What ROOT and FRUIT do you want to help develop in your children's lives? What will bring GOD the greatest glory, YOU the greatest JOY, and THEM the greatest BENEFITS in their lifetime? Before you discipline your children, you MUST DETERMINE what it is that you are trying to PRODUCE WITHIN them and FROM them so that you can FIRMLY CARRY OUT your purpose in that discipline. If you do not, then your disciplinary actions will just be RANDOM OUTBURSTS that send out CONFUSING SIGNALS.

*NAME THE ROOT and FRUIT YOU WANT TO HARVEST IN YOUR KIDS

[Need a List? Galatians 5:22-23 NLT]

Key Character Qualities:

*Respect for Authority

*Wisdom

- Andy Stanley – The QUESTIONS that we ask are the FILTERS that we use to make DECISIONS!
 - What questions are you asking your children? [Has anyone hurt you today?]
 - What questions are you teaching your kids to ask?
 - *What's WRONG with _____? How FAR is too far? OR . . .
 - *What is the WISE thing to do?
 - *Where will this LEAD? What are the CONSEQUENCES of this choice?
 - Help them to THINK BIBLICALLY. The Word is the foundation for decisions.

*Self-Control

- Learning to DENY themselves of legitimate desires
 - *Ability to IDENTIFY illegitimate desires!
- Learning to ACKNOWLEDGE and DEAL WITH emotions
 - *Understand the importance of emotions as a SIGNAL
- Learning the ART of SELF-DISCIPLINE [Practice the Disciplines]
 - [Fasting/Solitude/Silence/Prayer]

*Humility: Putting others FIRST

- Saying "Please" and "Thank You."
- Going second (or last) in lines!

*Generosity

- Gratitude
- Tithing as a PRACTICE
- Sharing [My story of Halloween candy]

Great discipline requires great SELF-DISCIPLINE.

Too often, our focus in discipline is our own emotional state. "YOU KIDS ARE DRIVING ME CRAZY!" We are caught up in the power of our own emotions and we simply LASH OUT at our kids in order to stop the madness. But the madness will not be stopped in this way. **Truly, do you think for one moment that your LACK of SELF-CONTROL is going to help to develop self-control in your kid's lives?**

REACTIVE DISCIPLINE:

- *Is very SELF-Centered! [More about our frustrations than their fruit!]
- *Is extremely INCONSISTENT – Is based on your current MOOD!
- *Is UNCONTROLLED
- *Is INAPPROPRIATE

We should learn to use the tools of discipline at the APPROPRIATE times. Do you tend to REBUKE your child about things that you have never taken the time to

INSTRUCT them in? Do you tend to LASH OUT with HARSH WORDS or even with the WHIP when your child is simply guilty of childish behavior rather than overt REBELLION? Chuck Swindoll wrote a great article about the difference between abuse and discipline in his book Growing Wise in Family Life. I want us to see that contrast today so that there is NO CONFUSION about this.

ABUSE	DISCIPLINE
Unfair and unexpected	Fair and expected
Degrading and demoralizing	Upholds dignity
Extreme – too harsh, brutal	Balanced – Within limits
Torturous – leaves scars	Painful – but leaves no scars
Results from hatred/resentment	Prompted by love and concern
Creates terror, emotional damage and resentment of authority.	Leads to healthy respect for authority.

If you are guilty of abusing your children, then I plead with you to get some help with your ANGER so that you can bring your own heart under God's control. Remember, great discipline requires great discipline!

Discipline without RELATIONSHIP leads to REBELLION.

-The first rule of discipline is that it must BEGIN with a healthy relationship.
[Josh McDowell]

***Know your child's BENT: Proverbs 22:6 AMPC**

6 Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.

-Pay attention to the UNIQUE aspects of their character and personality.
-Give honor to their development and needs.

***Know the power of DISAPPOINTMENT**

-Your children view YOU as their greatest source of wisdom
-They WANT to PLEASE you. **[My dad's disappointment CRUSHED me!]**

***Understand the PROGRESSION of discipline.**

Hebrews 12:5-6 NLT

5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the LORD's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. 6 For the LORD disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."

- It starts with INSTRUCTION [Discipline=Chastening or TRAINING]
- It is followed by CORRECTION [Also called REBUKE and REPROOF]
- It is FINALLY brought to PUNISHMENT (if needed) [SCOURGING]

Learn the ENEMIES of great discipline: Fear and Guilt.

***FEAR** – Discipline will not drive your kids further away; it draws them IN!
[Dobson – Power of a fence for kids on a playground]

***Guilt** – Discipline is not about your failures, but their success!

- Too often, parents fail to discipline because they think the child has “been hurt enough already!” REMEMBER THIS VERSE: **Proverbs 19:18 NASB**

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

3 Ways to Kill Your Kids:

***Give them whatever they want.**

- Build your home around THEIR desires and demands.
- Never say “NO!”
- Grant them PRIVILEGES without demanding RESPONSIBILITY.
 - *Use privileges as BRIBES for simple BEHAVIOR rather than tying them to CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT and MATURITY.

Refuse to establish BOUNDARIES for your children.

- in media [Cell phones/Computers/Music/Movies]
 - *Establish PARAMETERS for this. [Plugged-In Online]
- in dating [Don’t follow common culture]
 - Help them THINK about CORE VALUES
- in friendships [Pay attention to SOCIAL MEDIA]

***Never let them feel the PAIN of any punishment.**

- Protect them from all forms of FAILURE!
- Let GUILT keep you from discipline!
 - [Divorce does not exempt you or them from the need for discipline!]**
- Make excuses for their foolishness instead of dealing with it.

Proverbs 22:15 NLT

15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

- When you learn that your kids have done wrong, DO NOTHING! **[David, Eli]**

I know that I would prefer for my child to experience the measured, purposeful pain that I deliver to him in loving discipline rather than for him to experience the UNLIMITED, POINTLESS pain that comes with foolishness!

Let’s pray.