



Setting Up Our Children for Success: Discipline

Text: Proverbs 13:24

Care and Bridging Pastor Dan Slagle

1. All of us who are parents or who have children we love in our lives want our children to be successful.
 - a. What do you consider to be “successful” when it comes to raising your children?
 - b. In what ways are you working to set your children up for success? In other words, how does your definition of success influence your parenting or the way you seek to influence the children in your life?
2. Pastor Dan argued that the greatest gift we can give our children, the greatest marker of success, is wisdom: “competence with regard to the realities of life,” as revealed in Scripture. Read Proverbs 3:13-18. What makes wisdom such a great gift?
3. Dan argued that one of the key means of instilling wisdom in our children is disciplining our children. How can you discipline your child, not just as a form of punishment, but as a way to impart wisdom? If an honest assessment of your heart reveals different motives for disciplining your children, what would change if you came to view wisdom as the end goal?
4. Dan’s first guiding principle for applying discipline was to discipline our children *confidently* because it is an expression of love.
 - a. How does discipline, approached the right way, show the love of Christ to our children?
 - b. There’s a myth out there that the most loving thing we can do for our kids is to remove all discomfort, but how does this philosophy ultimately harm our children? What are some guiding principles for how and when we should lovingly let our children experience a measure of discomfort?
5. Dan’s second guiding principle for applying discipline was to discipline our children *consistently*.
 - a. Why is consistency so important when it comes to discipline?
 - b. Dan gave three helpful steps towards establishing consistency: clarifying the rules, clarifying the consequences, and then sticking with it. Which step do you most need to grow in as a parent, and what is an action step you can take towards that goal?
 - c. Dan also emphasized the importance of making sure mom and dad are always on the same page, to back each other up, and if you disagree about a decision, talk about it in private so that you don’t diminish your spouse’s authority. What have you found to work well in this area and/or where can you grow?

Challenge: Pastor Dan urges us to discipline in *community*. What is a specific way you can support a parent/set of parents in your group towards investing in the lives of their children in the pursuit of wisdom?

Prayer:

Father,

First and foremost we acknowledge you as the source of all wisdom. (Prov 2:6) Therefore we acknowledge you and the wisdom that comes from you as the greatest good we can seek for the children in our lives whom we love.

Reveal in our hearts the false definitions of success we have for our children. We ask for your forgiveness as we repent of those false definitions and the influences they have had on our parenting.

We thank you that you have not left us on our own to find our way through the world, but you have given us a wealth of instruction to lead us into wisdom through your Word.

We pray for ourselves that we would live lives of wisdom expressed in righteousness, justice, and equity (Prov 1:3) that would serve as models for the children in our lives. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7, 9:10) so we pray for hearts that love you and are in awe you for ourselves and our children.

We acknowledge that we and are children are fools at heart so we ask for your wisdom to come into our hearts and your knowledge to be pleasant to our souls. (Prov 2:10) May we walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. (Prov 2:20)

Help us pursue wisdom for ourselves and our children as the source of blessing far greater than any other measure of success we might be tempted to use. (Prov 3:13-24) Give us and our children ears to hear your words of wisdom that we might find life and favor with you. (Prov 8:35)

Finally, give us wisdom on how to be confident and consistent as we discipline our children, and help us be a blessing to each other as we lovingly guide our children towards wisdom in community.

Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

Punishment Versus Discipline

By Chip Ingram

The idea of punishment implies repaying someone with what he or she deserves. That's the antithesis of the gospel. Punishment produces a child laden with guilt and determined to get out from under it, and Christlikeness is never the result. An effective parent has to learn the difference between punishment and discipline.

	PUNISHMENT	DISCIPLINE
Purpose	To inflict penalty for an offense	To train for correction and maturity
Focus	Past misdeeds	Future correct acts
Attitude	Hostility and frustration on the part of the parent	Love and concern on the part of the parent
Resulting emotion in the child	Fear and guilt	Security

As you can see, although the actions parents take to correct their children may look the same, understanding the difference between discipline and punishment makes all the difference in the world in terms of attitude and results.

The Gospel of Grace

We love the gospel of grace when we come to God with our sins. None of us wants justice in the sense of God giving us what we deserve. But as much as we love His mercy when applied to us, we have a really hard time applying it to others – especially when the "other" is someone who can wound our hearts as deeply as our child can. The closer the relationship, the more betrayed and frustrated we feel. And those kinds of feelings can lead to ill-conceived punishments.

When we've put our faith in Jesus, God doesn't punish us for what we did. The focus of punishment is always past tense: "First you did this, then you did this, and now you have to pay the price." In His mercy, God wiped away all eternal, spiritual implications of our pasts; He doesn't treat His children according to the rules of punishment.

Very simply, the gospel is that God became a man, came to earth, lived a perfect life, died on a cross to pay for the sins of all mankind, rose again from the dead on the third day, and was seen by over five hundred witnesses. Those who want that redemption applied to themselves must understand that we have a sin problem – we've all violated the commands of a holy God – and that there's no way to the Father except through the Son. Salvation means receiving the gift of Jesus' work on the Cross.

What does all this have to do with parenting? If Jesus took all the punishment for you and me, He also took all of it for our children. I don't want to teach my kids that I need to pay them back for the bad things they've done. I want them to understand that the only way to make right what they did is to trust that when Jesus died on the cross, He paid for their sins. **It makes no sense for me to fellowship with God on the**

basis of mercy and with my children on the basis of judgment. Since Jesus took the punishment, my role as a parent is not to punish them. My role is to provide appropriate consequences and instruction to help them see how their behavior displeases God and to teach them how to cooperate with God's work in their lives. The Bible calls this discipline.

Punishment produces some very negative characteristics in your children: guilt, shame, bitterness, resentment, regret, self-pity, fear, and more. Because it's focused on the past, children feel helpless. They can't undo what they've already done, and they can't change the circumstances that their behavior has produced. Punishment doesn't give them a means to right their wrongs; the tools they need to understand redemption aren't included in the punishment package. It is simply retribution that leads to a lot of negative emotions.

Discipline, on the other hand, is future-focused, always pointing toward future acts. It has nothing to do with retribution and everything to do with redemption. Whereas the purpose of punishment is to inflict a penalty for an offense, the purpose of discipline is to train for correction and maturity. Whereas the origin of punishment is the frustration of the parent, the origin of discipline is a high motivation for the welfare of the child. And whereas the result of punishment is fear and shame, the result of discipline is security. Discipline always holds the child's best interests, not the parent's anger, in the forefront. It is never out of control.

Parenting Myth: *Discipline requires parents to penalize their child as payback for an offense.*

Parenting Reality: *Discipline means applying appropriate consequences to encourage a child to make better choices in the future.*

Adapted from <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/effective-biblical-discipline/effective-child-discipline/punishment-versus-discipline>