



Session 3 – Authority Enforced (discipline)

1. “Bring them up”

- a. We are commanded by Paul in Eph. 6:4 to “bring [children] up” through discipline, and through “instruction of the Lord”.
- b. The two main functions of “bringing up” in biblical fatherhood: discipline and instruction. Which, really are the two sides of the same coin.
- c. To bring them up is such a loving reality: that they would grow like tender plants deep into the ground of God’s truth and the gospel, in such a way that they grow upward and bear the sweet fruit of faith and godliness.
- d. The promise of the 5th commandment for long life and the Lord’s blessing is built on the premise of faithful fathering. Children will not learn to honor and obey their parents and to walk in the good of wisdom apart from the faithful presence of a father.
- e. Discipline is communicated and understood through its “words” of pain and consequence.

2. *A tale of two books*

- a. Discipline and spanking are controversial subjects, for certain, in our day.
- b. Dr. Spock’s bestselling book, from the 1960s, “*The Commonsense Book of Baby and Child Care*” set forth the claim that spanking was morally wrong and ineffectual to raise children in a loving way.
- c. And so, it should be of no surprise to Christians that should a nation/culture choose to depart from Scripture, that the fruit will be terribly bitter:

- i. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, **disobedient to parents**, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Rom. 1:28–32)
- d. "God, the Rod, and Your Child's Bod", an actual book title from the 80s, written by Larry Tomczak. I wouldn't urge you to read this book (haven't read it, just loved the title) – but it was Tomczak's attempt to push back against the force of the culture against biblical discipline.
- e. The Lord's design is that to bring our children up and to send them in his lifegiving way of wisdom, we must discipline as God commanded.
- f. We do not substitute biblical discipline for worldly methods driven by worldly philosophies for child-rearing and development. We steer clear from attitudes, convictions and methods that the world in its debased mind dreams up.

3. God's way requires a rod.

- a. The rod appears very often in Proverbs. This doesn't include references to "discipline" or "punishment", "stripes" in Scripture.
 - i. Proverbs 10:13, 13:24, 14:3, 22:8, 22:15, 23:13–14, 26:3, 29:15.
- b. The rod is a stick, a small branch, something that inflicts pain on the back of a person (notice that references to rod often include the back, "***a rod for the back of fools***" (Pr. 26:3).
- c. Why physical pain for disciplining a child?
 - i. It is a primary picture of the curse of disobedience which unchecked leads to God's wrath.
 - ii. There are real and terrible consequences for sinners and fools who refuse to obey and go God's way. The rod illustrates the end of disobedience in judgment: "***and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots***

are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.” (Rev. 2:27)

- iii. Pain and suffering comes from disobedience. It is the curse within God’s world upon sinners who refuse his ways. As children get older and into adulthood, the consequences (curses) from disobedience naturally increase in pain and pressure.
 - iv. In God’s world, consequences will, like gravity, come naturally and severely upon sinners and fools. The sacred duty of fathers is to stand in the way as God’s agent of authority, to apply discipline and drive their children away from danger.
 - v. And it is through the discipline of spanking that fathers carry out their enforcement, for the sweet good of their children’s souls.
 - vi. Physical pain can be understood by little minds. The sensory punishment of a spanking is a consequence that infants and young children can grasp.
- d. Physical pain won’t kill them... but it will make them wiser.
- i. God does not delight in disciplining his sons. He understands that the pain inflicted in discipline grieves us:
 - 1. ***“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*** (Heb. 12:11)
 - ii. Discipline as God commands for fathers to their children will not kill them: ***“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.”*** (Prov. 23:13)
 - iii. Much rather, faithfully applying physical pain to disobedient children results in life: ***“If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”*** (Prov. 23:14)
 - iv. In spite popular psychology and the rising ideals of “gentle parenting” (which is merely the therapeutic age’s repackaging of Spock’s thesis and applications), discipline of our children is what drives truth into children’s souls, so far as we’re humanly able to achieve as fathers.

4. *Wielding the rod for good*

a. The method of discipline. How? When?

i. How:

1. Loving. Not harsh/angry. If you are angered and tempted, do not proceed until you have control.
 - a. On anger: we should be angry with sin but not sin in anger. Dispassionate parenting is harmful. God is angry/displeased by our sins, and we must feel his displeasure to make amends and to grow. Same with our children.
 - b. Dignifying child through process: private setting, taking time to show affection during and after discipline, etc.
2. As close as possible to infractions. Must be consistent. This is the single greatest failure of most fathers: that we end up becoming spotty and inconsistent with enforcement. Shoddy law and order in our culture shows the same terrible results of spotty enforcement as in the home.

b. What about alternatives?

- i. Time outs, soap in mouth, hot sauce(!)
- ii. For fathers to be faithful and truly effective: only God's way is the right way.
- iii. But what if it isn't working?
 1. We do not follow God's prescriptions for timely results, but to please the Lord with our faithful endurance and obedience as fathers.
 2. ***"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."*** (Prov. 22:6). We're in this for the long haul, brothers, one spanking at a time.

c. Circumstances and wisdom (in public, etc.)

- i. Public: much caution required. Sometimes it is just better to take child and to leave.
- ii. Foster care situations, etc.
- iii. What about others disciplining our children (grandparents, etc.)?

5. *Wielding the rod poorly: Provocative discipline*

a. Bearing in mind Paul's driving concern in both Colossians 3:20–21 and Ephesians 6:1–4, we must spend some time to consider what it means to "***provoke your***

children", and why it is essential to understand and to avoid if we are to parent in truth.

- b. Recognize it will be a father's **primary** temptation to provoke our children. This is why Paul calls it out in his letters.
- c. To provoke is to stir up, and in Paul's instruction, he tells us to avoid provoking our children to anger.
- d. Provocation is not one specific sinful habit of fathers, but multiple ways that we can wield the rod of discipline that provokes children to anger.
 - i. We provoke by our own sinful anger (raging, or irritated anger) and by the hypocrisy of our sin.
 - 1. If we discipline our child's sin while we are sinning, this is obviously a form of provocation.
 - 2. Examples: a raging father who snaps on a young child when child is acting out.; son catches father sinning in a particular way that he enforces for his children;
 - ii. We provoke by randomness or capriciousness in our parenting. Children require regimented and predictable patterns in discipline. They will be tempted to anger due to our inconsistencies.
 - 1. Ex: a child senses that the goal posts have moved on a particular issue for discipline. If father just leaps in and spansks child after time and inconsistency has passed, it will come across as harsh and unpredictable.
 - a. First, father should address his own disengagement, confess to child (if child can understand) and then draw thick lines for expectation of future obedience: and then ENFORCE!
 - iii. We provoke by goading/teasing or being dismissive to children that presses our children to a point of anger and sin. (A berating father, who makes light of children's weaknesses, mocking them, etc.)
 - iv. We provoke through over-punishment, when punishment didn't fit the crime. Take care that we meet infractions with correct force of discipline.

ASSIGNMENT: Duties of Parents, J.C. Ryle

- Read this book through this course – then answer two questions (with some length and specificity, *involving wife*), and then meet with an older, mature Christian father to discuss:
 - 1. What is the present health and state of my fatherhood?
 - 2. What are the specific actions the Lord is commanding me to grow as a father?