

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

God's Pattern for Children, Part 1

Scripture: Ephesians 6:1-4

Code: 1948

Tonight we continue in our study of Ephesians chapters 5 and 6 on God's marvelous design for the family. And we come to God's pattern for children, God's pattern for children. I neglected in the first service this morning to mention the subject, but did in the second that we're going to be moving from the parents now to the children. We've talked about wives and husbands and now we turn, as does the text, to children.

Chapter 6 verses 1 to 3, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." It's not an easy world for children, by any means. The home is not an easy place. The society is not an easy place. A letter from a teenager came to U.S. News and World Report. Here's the letter.

This is what this young teenager wrote: "The economy is shot. The family unit is in trouble. Respect for authority is a joke. For the right price you can buy yourself a senator or a judge, or he is out buying himself a 16year-old to use for a couple of hours. Money is worthless and you're worthless without it. Stop worrying about why your son needs a drink before he can face his morning classes, or why your daughter went out and got pregnant. Just help them cope with the reality of life.

Before throwing us into categories, just remember that we have to run this joint in thirty years when you die off or retire or starve on your Social Security. I leave it up to you, either give us a little help and understanding, or put the world out of its misery and send up the missiles and hope Mother Nature has better luck with the next thing that crawls up out of the slime."

How sad that somebody's little baby came to that so soon. But it does reflect something of the fear and something of the distrust and something of the chaos and confusion and disorientation and lostness of a generation of children and young people.

An old Chinese proverb says, "One generation plants the trees, and another gets the shade." We in this generation are still living in a little bit of shade. Our grandparents, and perhaps even our parents if we're old enough, planted some trees in the past and we are still enjoying some of the shade. But this generation is not planting any trees for the next. And they're going to find themselves in a blistering world with nowhere to hide. The young person who wrote that letter feels no shade, no place of comfort, no place to hide, no place of security, just a fearsome reality both in the present and

in the future.

We must plant some trees to shade the future generation. We must do something or the next generation will be frighteningly worse than this one, and the one after that even worse, and those are horrible things to think about. And if we think about them very long we would have to conclude that it can't be too long until Antichrist world because of the direction we're going.

How can we plant those trees? How can we give shade to our children and their children and their children? The answer is to go back to the standards of God's Word. And that's what makes it so frightening. Our society realizes where it's going, to some degree realizes the chaos of its children; certainly the children realize it. They realize that there has to be some provision for hope and security. But at the same time they vociferously reject the Bible. They don't want, as we've been noting, its moral impingement on their lifestyle. They're not willing to submit themselves to the standards that it establishes for their own behavior. And so they throw out the only hope for the children.

Scripture is very clear, by the way, on what the Bible has to say revealing the will of God with regard to the family. And just reminding you, way back in the Pentateuch, for example, in Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verses 6 and 7 we read, "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." Our part is very simple. Teach the Word of God to your children. Teach them the Scripture. That's our part, Deuteronomy 6:6 and 7. God's part is given a little earlier in Deuteronomy 5:29, "O that there were such a heart in them that they would hear Me and keep all My commandments always that it might be well for them and their children forever."

I can't give them that kind of heart; you can't give them that kind of heart, but God can, and God longs to do that. God has to give them a heart for His commandments, a heart for His Word. God has to call them to Himself and we must teach them. That teaching of God's Word is part of the process by which they are called to God. And once called, that teaching becomes the pattern in which they live. God is calling then for families to teach His Word, to present His Word to their children. Parents are really forced to do that. That is the only alternative if they desire to raise their children to love the Lord and to know the blessing that comes to those who obey.

In Joshua 24:15, again in the Old Testament, we read this, "If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, or the gods in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And that is the decision that you have to make as parents. Who will you serve? Will you serve the gods that are around you, the gods of your fathers, the gods of the present age? Or will you serve the true and living God? And serving Him means that He takes the priority place in your life, in your family and you teach His truths and precepts to your children.

By the way, in that text of Joshua 24:15 there was a parent making that decision. And he made a right decision in regard to his family when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And that's the decision that every family has to make. That's the crux of the issue facing the family. There's really no hope for the family politically. As much as I would agree with the emphasis and the moral thrust of the Religious Right, as they are called, I understand that politics cannot bring back the order of the family. Politics cannot bring back righteousness in the home. That is a spiritual issue. It can't be done through politics.

It can't be done through education. Educators are working very, very hard to try to achieve that apart from the spiritual dynamic of a transforming revolution in the heart wrought by the Spirit of God through faith in Christ. They are endeavoring to educate children somehow back to some level of morality, the standard for which they can't agree on. You have those who are aggressively politically attempting to do that, some doing it educationally and neither succeeding.

There's only one way to bring the family back to where it needs to be and that is to make the decision that Joshua made, and that is to choose for your house that you will above all other things and first and foremost, serve the Lord. And that means obeying His Word in every aspect of your life. It's as simple as saying we choose God's way as over against the world's way in the matter of our family. And it starts at that point.

You have to make that commitment, then begin to follow it up. The Lord has delineated in Scripture the plan for the family, and we'll see it unfold. It's right there. It's very clear, but at some point you've got to decide that that's the plan you're going to follow. And when you commit yourself to follow it, there's no guarantee of its success unless you follow it wholeheartedly and completely.

Now our text in Ephesians 5 and 6 sums up what Scripture says about God's plan for the family, God's plan for the fulfilled family. We have already studied what God designed for the wife who is called to humbly subject herself in love to her own husband and make him and her children and her home the center and, really, circumference of her life. We have also studied the divine pattern for the husband who is called to loving headship in which he cares for, provides for, sacrifices for, protects, purifies, and loses himself in giving everything for his wife.

And now we come to the children's responsibility and what must be inculcated in them. And it says there in the verses we read that they are to obey their parents, verse 1. Verse 2, they are to honor their parents. Obedience and honor, obedience and respect is their responsibility. May I begin, when I talk about children tonight, by affirming the fact that children are a welcome addition to the family? I need to say that in this day and age. They are a welcome addition to the family in a time when some people are saying they prefer not to have children, as if somehow that was a negative in their lives. Psalm 127 and 128 says children are a blessing from the Lord.

The Holy Spirit said in 1 Timothy 5:14, "I will that younger women marry, bear children and care for the home." Again, children are a blessing, a heritage from the Lord. Job 42, verses 12 and 13, "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning." You remember that? Job had everything and he lost it all, and then the Lord blessed him even more greatly. How? He had seven sons and three daughters. God blessed him with that great blessing of having children.

Children are a blessing given by God. They are an evidence of His love. They are an evidence of His goodness. They are given by God. Although they belong to Him, they are sent to enrich us. They are sent to make our life full and to be raised by us to godliness in order that they, too, might be a witness to the true God and the gospel of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. What a great opportunity to disciple future witnesses.

Now in bringing God's special gifts to maturity and to godliness and to virtue and usefulness and effectiveness for the kingdom of Christ, there are two things that we must teach them. We must teach them to obey their parents and we must teach them to honor their parents. That is simple but very comprehensive. And largely, I think, whether they do that effectively depends on us and our commitment to the Word of God and to what it affirms. Proverbs 22:6 sort of sums it up in very familiar words, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is mature, he will not depart from it."

That is a simple general statement that the way you train a child will show up in his adulthood. That's all it's saying. It's not a promise; it's not a gilt-edged guaranteed pledge. It is simply axiomatic, self-evident that the way you train a child is going to affect what they become. And that is the general truth of that scripture. And when you train them in the things of God, that will have an impact on what they become. If we follow God's plan, we will see that plan bearing fruit. That just makes common sense.

Now admittedly, teaching children to obey and honor their parents is not easy and it's not simple. At least it didn't prove to be so with my children. And it's not proving to be so with my grandchildren. Let me tell you why it's difficult. For the very same reasons that it's difficult for a wife to submit and it's difficult for a husband to express loving leadership, the very same reasons apply to the difficulty of children obeying and honoring their parents, the same basic reasons.

Number one, the curse inside them. They are cursed when they arrive. They are little, selfish, self-centered, rebellious reprobates. Cute, cuddly, but reprobate. That is apparent when they arrive. They scream and they don't share anybody else's pain. They scream only for their own. They have no sympathy. They share no interest in anything going on in the family. They are not at all attentive to the conversation. They make no effort to assist in anything. They just are preoccupied with themselves.

They think that no one exists but them, they're great when they get a little beyond that very infant stage. They're great at disobedience; it is built-in stuff. You don't spend the early childhood saying to them, "Yes, why yes, well yes, yes, yes." You continually say to them, "No, no, no, no." Because all the bent is toward what is counterproductive and disobedient. They're good at disobedience; you don't have to teach them how to disobey. Nobody ever had to teach a child how to disobey.

Nobody ever had a child that they went to at some point and said, "Now I just want to show you what disobedience is so you'll know it when somebody else does it. It kind of works like this." and you do a little role-playing. No, you don't have to do that. They have to be taught to obey; they have disobedience down very well. They're utterly selfish, utterly self-consumed. They want their will whenever they want it. They don't want to wait for anything. They're utterly impatient. They have no regard for anything that you're concerned about. The whole world revolves around them. And that is an initial expression of their depravity which can be simply defined as being self-consumed.

So they have to be taught to obey through very painful lessons. And they rebel against that to varying degrees, don't they? Some children have to have a myriad of spankings and disciplining while others seem to have a requirement for less. They come with a little bit different personality package, but the training is nonetheless the same. And I suppose David summed it up from the very outset when, in Psalm 51:5, David said, thinking of the time that he was in the womb, "I was shaped in iniquity, in sin did my mother conceive me." He doesn't mean that he was an illegitimate child, he simply means that from the very time of my conception I was sinful.

And there's no training that occurs in the womb. So when the little life bursts out, it is ready to express its sin. You have that inside curse and that inside curse is apparent as children manifest their early behavior. And you know what terrible depravity manifests itself in an undisciplined child, don't you? Then that already sinful bent is exposed, overexposed, to an evil world. Overexposed to evil...other evil children whose speech and behavior becomes a terrible, terrible example for your little ones to see and then you become protective of that.

Your children then are pushed in their depravity too rapidly toward adulthood, overexposed to everything without the maturity or ability to deal with their environment, to deal with their pressures, to deal with their passions. And if there isn't strong, strong control and the teaching of obedience along that path, you get a terrible rebel. Overexposed to sexual sin in music, in literature, in movies, in television, children are pushed into deviated thinking patterns way before they can deal with them or control them. One 12-year-old told his dad...I quote from a letter, "Look, Dad, I've done it all, drugs, booze, sex, there's nothing left I don't know about, so don't make a big deal out of it." Some people call this the "hurried child."

One of the results is that the age of puberty is being pushed down. That's a physiological result of this, quite interesting. It is now two to five years younger than in the past, according to *Psychology Today* magazine surveys. For example, in the 18 century the...one of the popular things in Europe were choirs, boy choirs, little soprano boys. They stopped singing soprano, according to history in the 18th century, at the age of 18 because their voices changed. Now their voices change between the ages of 13 and 14 for the most part. Growth, physical growth, as late as 1900 continued until twenty-six. It now stops at about eighteen. The average age of puberty in 1900 was 14.2, and now it is 12, dropping, they say, about four months per decade. In 1600 the average age of puberty was somewhere over seventeen.

The pressures of overexposure, the pressures of sin cause a child to be accelerated in all kinds of areas, as his soul already bent on evil is overexposed. So you have this depravity in them reacting to this kind of environment that makes it difficult to bring a child into control and into harmony with the standards of the Word of God. Secondly, you not only have the curse in them, you have the system outside of them, to which I've alluded as it effects the curse in them. But talk about the system outside of them. The world continually keeps the pressure on. That's why Romans 12:2 says "Don't be conformed to this world." Don't let your children be conformed to the world. Consumptive materialism teaches them self-indulgence. That's a terrible thing to learn.

In America alone we spend more money on toys than the gross national product of sixty-plus nations. Indulging our children, children are sold a steady diet of self-centeredness. Two hundred hours of ads per year they see on television. Twenty-two thousand commercials endeavoring to make them discontent or to learn the general discontent of not liking what you have and having the desire for something that you see on television. Society teaches them rebellion against authority. It teaches them that the most important thing in their life is self-esteem and self-fulfillment, in getting their own will and their own way when they want it and how they want it.

They watch an average of 30 hours of television per week while they're growing up until graduation from high school. They have seen 20,000 hours of the tube, more than any other activity except sleeping. They're overexposed to everything on television. Children see more sin in a month than their grandparents or their great grandparents probably saw in their entire lifetime. And all that media is pumping out an anti-God life style.

Is it any wonder that ten million children have VD, five thousand more contracted every day? Is it any surprise that one in five uses drugs twice a week? That over a million engage in prostitution before they reach the age of sixteen, and between seven and fourteen million children are alcoholics?

Millions need help in psychiatric clinics, somewhere around two million according to the Children's Bureau of the Health, Education and Welfare group. Nearly two million of them receive help annually from public agencies because of what is classified as psychological or psychiatric problems. And so it

goes. The curse inside. The corruption outside. The third area of debilitating destruction aimed at children is that not only which comes from within them and from around them, but what comes upon them, what comes upon them.

Turn to 2 Timothy 3. In 2 Timothy chapter 3, we go back to this...we commented on it earlier...we read about the difficulty of the last days, 2 Timothy 3:1, "In the last days, difficult times will come." And coming upon the children in our generation is all of the last days' uniqueness in terms of corruption, when men are lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents. One of the characteristics of the last days is a defiance toward parents. And society tolerates it, society teaches them to rebel against authority. It teaches them that.

It wants to pass out condoms and require that no parent have the right to know that so that they cannot push off on that child their own religious convictions. Rebellious, undisciplined, selfish, sexually stimulated, angry, bitter, frustrated, destructive children are the products of a society that is disobedient to its parents and that is without natural affection, without natural affection. They don't have the normal love of family.

Verse 3, the first word, "Unloving," *astorgos*, without natural family love. We have obviously an abused and an unloved generation of children. Children are seen by many as a burden so that one third of all childbearing-age couples are permanently sterilized. Fathers have forsaken their love for children. Six million children in our country, more than that now...I think the figure is quite more than that. Many millions, we should say, have no father in the home at all. Mothers have gone also in self-indulgent abandonment and the pursuit of their career or whatever it is they want. And there are millions of lonesome latchkey children who sit behind their locked doors with the shades pulled, overexposed to television.

Three-quarter million and upwards live in foster homes, residential facilities, institutions, mental hospitals and are otherwise incarcerated in juvenile facilities for criminal behavior, or even in prisons. It is even possible now, since 1979, to divorce your parents, a precedent set by a Milwaukee court. This is the chaos in the lives of children. The philosophy of the last days is anti-family. We all know that; we've talked about that. The Feminist agenda is anti-family. The homosexual lobby is anti-family. The abortion thrust is anti-family.

One of the authors and lecturers, F.M. Esfandiary, on humanist philosophy said, "To free the child we must do away with parenthood, we must settle for nothing less than the total elimination of the family." Let me tell you how far this has gone. In 1960, one percent of children under eighteen experienced the divorce of their parents. In 1960, one percent of children under eighteen experienced the divorce of their parents. In 1990, fifty percent, half of them. We're talking about liberating the child. What we're doing with the child is liberating him into the humanistic socialistic propaganda of our time. Humanist psychologist Richard Farson advocates the following rights for children. They should be

free from physical punishment, free to vote, have total sexual freedom and economic freedom. What kind of idiocy is that?

The social engineers as far back as 1979 began to celebrate the international year of the child. And they called for children to be freed from four things. They should be freed from traditional morals or values; from parental authority, including any punishment; from religious discrimination, and from nationalism, or patriotism. And it always interests me that 80 percent of the media in America have no religious affiliation. So they carry the agenda very well and very aggressively.

One of our U.S. senators wrote me a letter to say that the anti-family forces are bent on fulfilling the following goals. These are the goals he listed: abortion for the happiness of the mother and father, if there is one in the home. They want to fulfill these goals: abortion, government-controlled family planning, legalization of homosexual marriage...and that will be here very rapidly...equal rights for children, government training for children and minimum wage for children for housework. Can this really happen? Can it really happen?

We face a serious situation. Dr. Michael Novak wrote in Harper's Magazine, I quote, "Clearly the family is the critical center of social force. It is the seedbed of economic skills and attitudes toward work. It is a stronger agency of educational success than the school, and a stronger teacher of the religious imagination than the church. Political and social planning, in a wise social order, begins with the axiom, 'what strengthens the family strengthens society.' Even when poverty and disorientation strike as over the generations they often do, it is family strength that most defends individuals against alienation, lassitude or despair. The world around the family is fundamentally unjust. The state and its agents and the economic system and its agencies are never fully to be trusted. One unforgettable law has been learned through all the disasters and injustices of the last thousand years; if things go well with the family, life is worth living. When the family falters, life falls apart." And Michael Novak is exactly right.

From the standpoint of just somebody observing the family, from the human wisdom viewpoint, it's obvious that all is well when the family is healthy, and when it's not, there's no hope for a society. The only hope then to shade the generation to come is to submit ourselves to what the Word of God teaches about the family and about raising children. And, frankly, folks, it's not that difficult to figure it out. It doesn't take years and years and years. It doesn't take a whole lot of techniques to figure it out. It always amazes me, the amazing economy of words with which the Lord says everything. And what He says is this, "Teach your children to obey you and to respect you." That's the sum of it all.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with promise that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." By the way, these are the only verses in the Bible that command children. Children should be taught these. They should specifically be taught these things. They should be taught to obey. Children, by

the way, the word “children” is *ta tekna*. It’s the general word for offspring. It doesn’t necessarily identify an infant; there’s another word for an infant. It’s just talking about children in general.

No age is in view. From the birth all the way to being young people, as long as they are under parental control and parental care, as soon as they are old enough to know what is right they are to be taught to obey their parents. That strong self-centered depravity has to be harnessed, and obedience is the key to that. They must be taught to obey. The word “obey” is *hupakou*. *Akou* has to do with hearing; *hupa*, under...to get under and listen. Obedience is the issue. Teach your children to obey. And really that’s the issue.

And I’ll tell you something. As you raise your children and you’re consistently doing that, there will be times when they fight against it more aggressively than other times. And those are the battle times, when you have to consistently force the issue of their obedience and make the consequence severe enough so that they get the message. It’s not going to be ten years of battle. It’ll be ten years of teaching, with here and there a few weeks of real warfare as they endeavor to fight to maintain the freedoms of their own evil nature.

This is so serious to God. Listen to what it says in Exodus 21 verses 15 and 17. “And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” Whoa. That’s some serious respect. In the old economy, you hit your mother, you hit your father, you’re dead. And listen to what the rest of it says, verse 17, “He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” Kill those children who don’t show their parents respect. You say, “Whoa. Is God that serious about it?”

God knows that there is no way, as He identifies His people in Exodus, as He calls them out to be a witnessing nation in the world, there is no way to perpetuate righteousness in a family unless there is obedience. And it is so serious that that law of God be perpetuated from Israel and spread around the world that He says if you have any child that won’t obey, just kill him. Disobedience and disrespect, punishable by death. That is how serious an issue this is.

You can’t pass on righteousness to a generation. You can’t even have a society that controls itself. You can’t have anything that is ordered unless you have people who have learned submission, obedience, and the big word, self-control. When you teach your children to obey, you teach them self-control. You teach them how to repress their depravity, how to win the victory over their sinful impulses. You do it by making the consequences severe enough that they won’t do it. It’s the only hope for society. It’s the only hope for the preservation of righteousness. It’s the only hope for the truth of God to be passed on, is an obedient generation of children. So serious was God at the start of this that He said kill the ones that won’t do it.

One can imagine if there was capital punishment for all rebellious children what kind of an impact it would have. We’ve got all these people running around trying to stamp out spanking. If they only

understood this verse, they would really be enraged. Obviously God in His mercy and His grace, at this time in redemptive history, does not repeat this command here in Ephesians. But at the very outset of the foundation of establishing a people and giving them His law and wanting that law preserved and passed from generation to generation, it was serious enough at the beginning and the implications were profound enough that He said if you're going to pass this on, you have to have obedient children, committed to self-control and righteousness and just kill the ones that aren't.

Now turn to the book of Proverbs with me because the book of Proverbs is the heart of the teaching of parents to their children. When you get into Proverbs, you're getting into the book which basically parents taught to their children, something you ought to teach yours. Chapter 1 verse 8, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Indeed they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck." You know what that means? They make you a beautiful person. They make you a gracious person. They will bless you. Listen to what your father and mother teach you.

Chapter 2 verse 1, "My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding." A father is saying, "Listen to what I'm telling you," as he passes on divine truth. Chapter 3 verse 1, "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you, bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart." In other words, listen to what I tell you and wrap it around your body and live it out in every area of your life.

Chapter 4 follows with the same idea. Verse 1, "Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father and give attention that you may gain understanding, for I give you sound teaching. Do not abandon my instruction. When I was a son to my father, tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, then he taught me and said to me, Let your heart hold fast my words, keep my commandments and live." Now that's a faithful father. Chapter 4 again, down in verse 10, "Hear, my son, and accept my sayings and the years of your life will be many." Chapter 5 verse 1, "My son, give attention to my wisdom. Incline your ear to my understanding."

Chapter 7 of Proverbs, verse 1, "My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live and my teaching is the apple of your eye, bind them on your fingers and write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, you're my sister." Chapter 8 verse 32, it just goes on, "Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways." And then just a couple more, chapter 13, "A wise son accepts his father's discipline." Chapter 13 verse 1, "A wise son accepts his father's discipline." Chapter 15 verse 5, "A fool rejects his father's discipline."

Now, there are some samples of how we are to instruct our children, how our children are to respond. Go to Proverbs 30 and you see the opposite. Here is the opposite. When a child does not respond, does not obey, is not properly disciplined, verse 11, “There is a kind of person, a man, a woman, a kind of person who curses his father and does not bless his mother, there is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness.” That’s so typical of children who are rebellious and against their parents. They’ve got their own way, their own wisdom, their own approach to everything; you’re not going to tell them what to do.

They think they’ve got all the answers and the fact is they’ve never been washed from their filthiness. “There is a kind, O how lofty are his eyes, and his eyelids are raised in arrogance.” This is the proud, selfish, self-centered, rebellious child who listens to nothing that his parents say. “There is a kind of person whose teeth are like swords and his jaw teeth like knives, to devour the afflicted from the earth and the needy from among men.” They’re unkind, they’re merciless, they’re brutal children, they’ve never been taught kindness, they’ve not been taught the graces that make them loving people.

Verse 15, “The leech has two daughters. ‘Give! Give!’” That’s talking about a horse leech that had two teeth, if you will, or two prongs that came out of its mouth and it sinks it into the horse and sucks the blood. And he says these kind of children are like a leech that sticks both of his teeth in and sucks the blood out, they’re blood-sucking rebel children. “There are – ” in verse 15 – “three things that will not be satisfied, four that will not say, ‘Enough!’: Sheol, and the barren womb.” That’s very, very graphic language. Hell never has enough. The barren womb is never satisfied. “Earth that is never satisfied with water, and fire that never says, ‘Enough.’”

And you can add to that, that leeching child, no matter what you give him, no matter what you give him he never has enough. And that’s good word, you know, to those people who have rebellious children and think they can buy their loyalties, or buy their obedience or buy their respect. You cannot do that because they never are satisfied. They’re like the grave, they’re like the barren womb, they’re like the earth that never has enough water for its parched ground, they’re like the fire that never says enough. “It is the eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother.” And what is God’s response? “The ravens of the valley will pick it out and the young eagles will eat it.” Pretty graphic language.

Where you have a child that doesn’t get the discipline and training and instruction about obedience and honor, you have that kind of leech, blood-sucking child who in the end with all of his merciless unkindness, all of his animosity and filthiness is going to feel the judgment of God. And how sad, how sad. How many parents...how many of you have a child that has fallen under divine judgment? Some have even perished. It’s absolutely heart breaking.

Now, how do you do this process? How do you bring a child to obedience and respect? Let’s go back to Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs chapter 3 verses 11 and 12, “My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord, or loathe His reproof, for whom the Lord loves He reproves, even as a father, the son in

whom he delights.” And by the way, that is quoted in Hebrews 12 verses 5 to 11, where it talks about chastening. The category here is one of discipline. The father who really loves his son, you say you love your child, then you’ll discipline your child. Every son you love you’ll scourge. That’s what Hebrews says. If the Lord loves one, He scourges him, He chastens him. And it’s grievous for the moment, but it has the effect of the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

So, first of all, we learn here that the process of teaching obedience and respect is a process of discipline. Discipline can simply be defined in these terms. Discipline is that function by which parents reward obedience and punish disobedience. That is discipline. Non-conformity to the divine standard results in negative consequences. Conformity to the divine standard results in positive consequences. That is exactly how God disciplines us. You say, “Do you believe in positive reward?” Absolutely, absolutely. I also believe in negative reward.

You say, “Should you try to motivate your children though with a positive reward?” Absolutely. Doesn’t God motivate us with that? Doesn’t He promise good to us? Doesn’t He promise blessing? Didn’t He say that the child who obeys will live long on the earth? In fact, the whole motivation, the only motivation given in Ephesians 6 is a positive motivation. There isn’t a threat there. It’s good to say to your child, “If you do this, I will reward you in this way,” knowing that the child desires that reward. Discipline involves both. Discipline is very simple. It is giving the appropriate reward for the conduct. And when I say conduct I don’t mean simply what they do, I mean also what they say and I also mean their attitude. I can tell you, and so can my children, they were disciplined far more for their attitudes than what they did. And if you start with the attitude, it doesn’t work its way to the act as readily. We tried to catch the discipline at the initial point of attitude.

Now look at chapter 6 of Proverbs, and let’s talk some more about this disciplining process. In 6:20, “My son, observe the commandment of your father, do not forsake the teaching of your mother, bind them continually on your heart, tie them around your neck. When you walk about they will guide you, when you sleep they will watch over you, when you awake –” I love this – “they will talk to you, for the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light and reproofs for discipline are the way of life.” What you do is pour the Word of God into them so that it informs their conscience and it talks to them.

Now, you remember when we were studying conscience at the beginning at our look at 2 Corinthians, and I explained to you that the conscience has no morality. The conscience is only a warning system, it’s a buzzer, it’s a red light, it’s a bell, it’s a whistle. That’s all. The conscience reacts to the moral system in the mind. It reacts to your highest moral standard. Now, a child born into the world has the law of God written where? In the heart. Romans 2, “The law of God is written in the heart,” it’s there. They understand right from wrong, they just love wrong. And they must be trained to do right.

Now that law of God written in their heart can be negatively...listen carefully...can be negatively affected by the messages coming from the culture. The culture wants to reconstruct that moral code.

It wants to come in with lies. It wants to reform their whole moral system, their whole moral ethical system. And if it succeeds in doing that, then the conscience, which is the warning device that should go off when you violate that, is misinformed. It's misinformed. Because if you have a warped theology, if you have a warped moral ethical system, then your conscience will react to that warped system.

So when you come into the world, what happens? This little kid is exposed to television, radio, movies, music, education, the whole process of the culture and it reinforces the great truth that has been placed in that little heart from birth about God and about what is right and what is wrong. Romans 1 tells you they can know about God, they can know His eternal godhead, His power and something of His attributes. Romans 2 says, they know right from wrong and then the society blasts that.

It blasts that with evolution so that all of a sudden they come to a place where they no longer believe that God created everything. They come to the place also, because they're blasted with the immorality of the system, to the point where they no longer know what is right and wrong and relativism takes over. There are no longer any absolutes, and the conscience is helpless. All conscience can do is react to that ethical system, and if that ethical system is warped, then the conscience is going to get misinformed.

So what do you have going on in our culture today? Two things. A massive effort to sell children and young people a non-Christian ethical system. It's massive. Get rid of God, there's no creator, there's no God, there's no moral law. Whatever you want is for you, everything is purely a life style choice. I told you when we went through that in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 that even MTV had a two-hour series, which showed on PBS, where I saw it and got the material. And that was on the seven deadly sins and they interviewed the contemporary sort of MTV rock generation about the seven deadly sins and they basically denied them all. Totally reversing everything.

In fact, one rock singer was asked if he thought lust was a sin and he said, "Lust, a sin. Are you kidding? That's what I get into this business for, to lust after little girls." They asked rock singers if they thought pride was a sin, another of the deadly sins listed by medieval monks, and they said, "Pride, a sin? The problem with our society is we don't have enough pride." Everything twisted, everything perverted. They asked another, "Is greed a sin?" "Greed a sin? That's what makes us rich." Everything perverted.

So what the society wants to do is create an ungodly, satanic system of values, first of all, so that what is being said in the heart is wrong. Second thing it wants to do is dull the conscience. How does it do that? By telling you you shouldn't listen to you conscience. In effect it says, "You shouldn't feel guilty, you shouldn't feel shame. You didn't do anything wrong. What really happened was you were abused; your mother did something to you, your father did something to you. You're just a victim; it's

not your fault. You shouldn't feel guilty, you shouldn't feel responsible. Society is to blame for this," and dispossess the person of any need to listen to the voice of conscience. So you assassinate, as it were, the function of conscience; you rewrite the script for moral values and you have a potential disaster. And that's the kind of young people we have in our generation.

Now you've got to back to the very beginning, right here in Proverbs 6, and you've got to teach them the commandments of the Word of God. You've got to bind them continually on their little hearts, tie them around their neck. That just means attach them so they can't get away from them, and so that when they walk around, they're functioning in their little minds. When they're sleeping, those truths, even in their sleep are guarding them, as it were, because they're so deeply imbedded, and as soon as they wake, they're their first conscience thought. That little child ought to walk into the kitchen and the first conscious thought of the morning is whatever mother says, immediately they respond. Whatever dad says, immediately they respond because it's in the fabric of their life.

Now, chapter 10, that then becomes the lamp and the light for their life. In chapter 10 of Proverbs in verse 13, we get a little further into this process. It says in verse 13 of chapter 10, "A rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding." Now very simply, folks, how do you get this little guy or this little girl to obey? Bottom line, you hit them with something. It's here called a rod. You say, "You sure that's what it means?" Well, what's the point in just saying, "Look, here's a rod. Would you please obey?" If the rod has never been applied, I don't think they understand the picture. You basically are called to use corporeal punishment. That's what it says. A rod is for the back of him who lacks. And isn't it interesting the Lord even tells you where to hit them? Not on the front and not on the top, on the back, where they've been designed to be hit.

You know, I really think...I really think there's more back there than is necessary, and I know some of you would affirm that. And part of it acts as padding for the discipline process. God knows. Proverbs 13:24 gets a little deeper into this stuff. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares his rod—" What? – "hates his son." I don't know that it could be said any stronger. If you love your child, hit him on the backside with a rod. And if you don't, you hate your son. Why? Because you're content to let that child grow into sinful life patterns. Is that what you want for your child? "He who loves him, disciplines him diligently." Stay after him. Stay after him.

"Oh," you say, "but you can't just be hitting your children. Um, you sure God wants us to do that, to hit them?" Um, I'm positive. That's what it says. Let's go a little further, chapter 19 verse 18. "Discipline your son while there's hope." What does that say? You can wait too long. You can be too inconsistent, "Discipline your son while there's still hope and do not desire his death." Literally, do not desire to cause him to die. If you don't discipline your child, you're really potentially spelling his death warrant because anti-social, undisciplined behavior can lead rapidly to death. We see that in our society, don't we? Death through drunkenness, death through drugs, death through criminal behavior, death through venereal disease, all over the place. Children dying, young people dying, teenagers

dying. Somebody didn't know the truth of God. Somebody didn't discipline them enough while there was still hope and they wished death on them because that's what comes through irresponsible, sinful, wicked people who never learn self-control.

Chapter 22 takes us further. Chapter 22 verse 15, and this sort of sums up what we've been saying. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, the rod of discipline will remove it far from him." To me I just think this is so great. Now if we were to take fifteen secular psychologists out of whatever university you want to pick and just bring them up here and say, "Now, we want to raise a responsible, moral quality citizen, who's going to make a positive contribution to the world, maybe change the quality of life in some way, who's going to be a noble person of high moral values. What do you suggest we do?"

I think they could probably go on for months with their psychological nuances and talk about all of the stuff that psychologists talk about. And, you know, parents can get pretty paralyzed about it, too. I mean, even Christian parents can get pretty paralyzed about all the stuff you're supposed to do to work this little deal out. Can I suggest to you, it really isn't that hard? What it says here is pretty straightforward. You have a depraved and foolish child. If you want him not to be so foolish, spank him. That's it.

Now if you stood up in the midst of some great conclave of psychologists on child behavior and said that, they'd throw you out the door and then sue you for abuse. But that's what the Bible says, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of the child." It's part of his depraved nature. And the way to get rid of it...isn't that wonderful that God has made it so simple...just inflict pain on them and they'll finally say, "I don't think I'll do that because when I do that, it hurts." It took a lot for me to get the message growing up. But I finally got the message that pain was not particularly enjoyable. My mother says to me that she would feel guilty because she spanked me so often and so hard. Listen, I can only thank my mother for that. If she had not, who knows what kind of criminal person I might have been?

You say, "But oh, you might, you might hurt your child. You might somehow wound your child, or you might leave some emotional scars on your child." Look, the Bible says you've got a foolish child; it's deep in his heart. Isn't it wonderful that you don't have to do some psychological training with the kid for fourteen years to get it out? All you have to do is spank him? I mean, you don't even need to go to college to do that. You say, "Oh, but it might hurt him, it might...." Look at chapter 23. This is for all of you who have a little fear. Verse 13, "Do not hold back discipline from the child." Don't hold it back. I mean, it's so direct. "Although you beat him with a rod, he will not die." It's not going to kill him. He'll survive.

Because that's the typical response, "Oh, I don't want to hurt him. I'm afraid if I hurt him he won't like me." Oh, you hear that all the time, "I wouldn't dare do that, he won't like me." Now he'll love you

because you'll show him the path of righteousness. No, go ahead and spank him. "He will not surely die." I love that. It even indicates that the writer of Proverbs had a sense of humor. You're not going to kill him. Tell you what you will do, you'll beat him with a rod and deliver his soul from hell. How important is spanking your children? Would you say it's a major thing? I think it's the major thing. I think that's what this is all about. What a promise. You know, we're always looking for promises in the Bible that are practical. That's practical. I mean, you don't have to go out and wonder what I meant by what I said, do you?

What are we saying here? We're saying children have to be made to obey because their depravity resists it. Okay, go to chapter 29 and we'll take our last look at this. Verse 15 does permit you to give a little speech while you're spanking them. It does say, "The rod and reproof gives wisdom." And, frankly, my own kids would rather have the spanking than the speech. That's kind of tough when your dad's the preacher and you have to listen to a long sermon. "Just hit me and let me out of here." But you are free to give that speech. The rod and reproof, you want to make sense out of it, explain to them what's going on, give them wisdom. But listen, "A child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother." You cannot let your child get his own way. Verse 17, "Correct your son, he'll give you comfort, he'll delight your soul."

How clear is it? Discipline, correction, the rod. The key is the children must be made to obey by suffering painful consequences when they don't. They must be made to honor and respect their parents so that they're punished not only for disobedience but for disrespect, dishonor. Consequences for disobedience. Now the reason that we do this is because we have to guide our children. We have to bring them to a place of righteousness. How do we do that? Well, we'll talk about that a little more next time.

We'll talk about what it means "in the Lord," in the spirit of pleasing Christ. And I'm also going to talk about how to evangelize your children. When you want to evangelize your little children, how do you do that? Do you say, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life?" Or do you preach them a sermon on hell? Do you frighten them with the realities of hell, or do you woo them with the bliss of heaven? Let's pray together.

Lord, You have given us such a clear word on this. O Lord, help us to be able to plant the trees that will give the shade for the precious children of the future. I thank You for these wonderful families in our church who have done this, who are raising a godly generation. I thank You for the joy in my own heart to be in this church long enough to see a third generation coming along. How wonderful. How wonderful so many families have disciplined their children and they're being raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

How wonderful to see children learning Bible verses, children loving the Scripture, children loving Jesus, children loving mom and dad and grandma and grandpa, children loving each other, children

who want to serve You, who want to honor You, who want to obey You as they do their parents. Lord, how wonderful and how important this is, how crucial.

Help us to be faithful parents in the discipline process and realize as well that it is our obedience that becomes the model for their obedience. It is our respect for one another, as mom and dad, that shows them what respect for us should be. It's when I respect my wife and she respects me that they understand what respect is. And it's when we both together obey You that they understand what obedience means.

And, Lord, make us to be faithful in this area that You might be honored in our lives and in our families, and another generation of godly children can become key witnesses should Jesus tarry to the generations ahead. Give us families, Lord, like You've designed. And may we not get so sucked up into this culture that we fail to provide shade for the children to come. We commit ourselves afresh and anew to this as parents and grandparents, and as a church. Collectively may we serve in this way for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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