

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About...

The Discipline of Children

God's word is abundantly clear that parents must discipline their children. Solomon wrote in Proverbs, "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently" (Proverbs 13:24). This verse teaches us two things: a parent does not love a child if they fail to discipline them, and furthermore, the discipline must be consistent [diligent]. Proverbs also teaches "do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol [God's judgment]". Also, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother," (Proverbs 23:13-14, 29:15).

The rod is a stick or a small branch and was used in Old Testament times to guide sheep. Seldom did a wise shepherd use force to move sheep, but rather nudged the animal with a rod. The rod kept the sheep from going in the wrong direction, and gave the shepherd control over the sheep. The use of a rod in these verses seem to be God's point on discipline. The goal is not to injure or harm the child, but to teach the child the correct direction to go. Clearly God's word teaches parents that there are times and places spanking is the best choice in correcting a child. Many people in our society, even in the church, view the passages in Proverbs negatively because the words of the writer sound abusive. Obviously, not every infraction against the rules in the home have to result in corporal punishment, but if the infraction deems that a spanking is in order, then God's word approves it.

A parent should not abuse a child, or abuse their authority as a parent. Paul wrote, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Paul also wrote, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart" (Col. 3:21). These verses give us insight into God's plan for raising children. First, notice that parents are to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Also, the apostle, through God's inspiration, knew that some forms of discipline would not train, but only embitter the child.

Disciplining children diligently teaches them to respect authority (Heb. 12:9). Many children today are disobedient and disrespectful to teachers in school and to government officials because they have not been taught discipline properly in the home. God also disciplines and reproveth those who are His children "For those whom the Lords loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives...God deals with you as sons; for what son is there that his father does not discipline? Those who have been trained by it yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:6-11).

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