



"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from It" (Proverbs 22:6).

Parental Discipline

Lesson Subject: Parents should encourage their children through instruction and punitive discipline.

L48. Date: August 1982. **Text:** Hebrews 12:4-16. **Topic:** Children; Home.

The very term *discipline* is distasteful to many. It brings to mind the idea of a strong adult abusing a helpless child. That is not what the word means. Discipline means "child training." It is an essential part of being a parent. It is not always easy or pleasant, but it is necessary. The ultimate aim of all discipline is to develop a child into a well-disciplined and self-disciplined person under God.

Hebrews 12:4-17 is one of the most precious passages in Holy Scripture concerning the subject of discipline. It sets out principles of God's discipline of His children which can be followed by human discipline of our children. The lesson comments which follow will review the teachings of the text and then make several practical applications. "Parents should encourage their children through instruction and punitive discipline." Watch for that central truth as you study.

I. IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLINE (Hebrews 12:4, 5)

"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him" (verse 5).

What does that mean? To "*despise not*" means "do not regard lightly, undervalue, or be angry." It recognizes that discipline is of great value to the person being disciplined. It should be received with respect and due response. It is essential to growth and development to full maturity.

That truth must never be forgotten by the Christian, as the first readers of The Epistle to the Hebrews had forgotten (verse 5). Every time a time of trial comes, let the Christian remind himself that it will work out for his good and God's glory if he stays faithful through it (Romans 8:28).

No one will ever grow to maturity apart from discipline. A child left without discipline is like an animal left to run wild in the pasture (Proverbs 29:15). The Christian who is without discipline will neither serve His Lord nor bless others in the name of God.

Each one of us needs discipline. Let us rejoice as God disciplines us as His dear children.

II. MOTIVE FOR DISCIPLINE (Hebrews 12:6) Love is the motive for both divine and human discipline. *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"* (verse 6). If God cared nothing about you, He would let you run unchecked in sin until you destroyed yourself. But He loves you too much to permit that. For your own good, He disciplines you. Proverbs 13:24 applies that truth to human discipline: *"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."* It is not a sign of love to withhold needed discipline.

One parent might say, *"I love my child so much I cannot discipline him."* That is not true love; it is weak sentiment. A parent should say, "I love my child so much I must discipline him." The spirit by which discipline is to be administered is this: "I love you too much to permit you to continue in a way which I know will bring hurt to you later on." Discipline is rendered for the sake of the child, to develop him. It is never to be meted out because the child angered the parent or embarrassed the parent in the presence of friends. The motive for discipline is love.

A parent must discipline himself before he can discipline his child correctly. All selfish motives must be gone from the heart of the parent for discipline to be an act of love.

III. PROOF OF DISCIPLINE (Hebrews 12:7, 8)

A. Divine discipline is proof of salvation. *"God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons"* (verses 7, 8).

Have you ever asked in a time of trouble, *"Why has God forsaken me?"*

That is a misunderstanding of what is happening. God has not forsaken you. He is personally involved in developing you through that time of trouble. He is at work in you right at the time such a question arises. It is the fact that you are a child of God which brings such child-training. Divine discipline is a proof that you are saved. He who receives no divine discipline is not God's child. Therefore, rejoice in your experiences of chastening.

B. Divine and parental discipline is proof of personal interest in you. God desires your development and growth to full maturity. He exercises a personal ministry in you, and He complements that ministry in the lives of children through their parents who are His agents. He is too concerned about us to let us go without training.

How encouraging to know that God is that interested in each of us personally and specifically. He loves us and is involved with us! No true child of God ever grows up uncorrected by his Father. We must learn to be patient under God's child-training, knowing that He is doing in us what any loving father would do for his children. Rejoice in your discipline!

IV. RESULTS OF DISCIPLINE (Hebrews 12:9-11)

A. Human discipline produces respect for parents. *"We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence"* (verse 9). Strange as it may seem, a child will grow up to respect the parent who disciplines him properly; on the other hand, a child will disrespect the parent who neglected discipline. Human discipline is not always perfect (verse 10), but God overrules that and makes it work out for good.

B. Divine discipline produces reverence for God. Our earthly parents disciplined us *"after their own pleasure"* ("as seemed best to them, according to their own ideas"), but God disciplines *"for our profit"* ("always for our true benefit and best good"). There is no mistake in God's discipline. Christians should stand in greater reverence for Him as they see His work of discipline in their lives. Let us *"be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live"* (verse 9).

C. Divine discipline always produces growth in grace. Two blessed qualities are produced in the life of a person under divine discipline. (1) Holiness results from God's discipline of His children (verse 10). What is His purpose? Various translators have worded it, *"that we might be partakers of his holiness,"* "to enable us to share his holiness, so that we may become holy as he is, in order that we may share His holy character."

What a blessed purpose! It would be worth sharing the difficulties of

divine discipline if that would be the result, wouldn't it?

(2) Righteousness results from God's discipline of His children (verse 11). *"It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness."* Would you enjoy the peace which comes from an upright life? Then submit to the discipline of God. An upright life is the way to have peace, and is the product of God's discipline of His children. Discipline brings righteousness, and righteousness produces peace.

D. Discipline may be unpleasant in its immediate experience, but it always works out what is best (verse 11). That unpleasant part of discipline may cause one to question if God still loves him, but God never leaves one who is bought with the blood of Jesus Christ; Look for the good which will come.

V. RESPONSE TO DISCIPLINE (Hebrews 12: 13-17)

A. Take heart with new resolve. *"Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees"* (verse 12). Brace up! Take a new hold! Renew your resolve. Be firm through the discipline.

B. Walk straight as an example. *"Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but rather let it be healed"* (verse 13). Your wrong response to divine discipline can injure others by turning them out of God's way, but your right response will lead to their healing.

C. Grow up into the likeness of Christ (verse 14). The holiness of a sanctified life will make you more like Christ, and will point others to Him.

D. Go on realizing even further God's purpose in you. Do not *"fail of the grace of God"* (verse 15) by missing the divine purpose of your life. Avail yourself of His loving assistance in grace which enables growth to spiritual maturity. **E. Help others by being pure.** Beware *"lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled"* (verse 15). Your wrong attitude in times of testing will contaminate and poison others toward God. Beware!

F. Inherit the blessing God has for you (verses 16, 17). God will give you a great benefit and blessing if you follow His work of child-training. But you can lose that spiritual "birthright" if you get caught up in sin. Once such blessings are forfeited, they can never be regained (verse 11). Take care that you follow on as God leads you to maturity in Christ.

Remember the first of the text: *"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom*

the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (verses 5, 6). Let God do His perfect work, with the consent of your will, and you will be profited and bless others because of Him.

VI. METHODS OF DISCIPLINE

Here are a few practical suggestions to help parents apply the principles of discipline to their children. They answer the question, "How is discipline to be administered?"

A. Words of instruction and counsel are discipline. A parent should explain to a child why a thing is right or wrong, what its consequences are, and why a behavior is acceptable or unacceptable. Use the Bible. It is "*given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

B. Withdrawal of privilege is discipline. (Young people called it being "grounded.") God used that method when He refused to allow Moses to enter the Promised Land because of his sin (Numbers 20:2-12). It is quite effective today, also.

C. Requiring unpleasant duties is discipline. Chores about the household, which are not usually a part of the child's daily duty, can be added as a form of punishment for wrongdoing. The parent must follow through on the assignment to make sure the work is done, or it will be of no benefit.

D. Physical punishment (spanking) is discipline. Over and again the Bible refers to the "*rod*" in reference to acts of discipline (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13). It does not refer to a "club," but to a "switch" or "paddle." The Bible recommends spanking as a stronger form of discipline.

Parenting is a full-time job, a demanding and difficult job. The parent must discipline himself and his children at the same time he is under the discipline of God. Discipline is as essential as breathing to a good life.

Here is the divine principle for parents: "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6).

QUESTIONS

1. What does discipline mean?
2. Why do we need the discipline of God?
3. How should we respond to God's discipline?

4. How is personal discipline related to divine discipline?
5. How does discipline produce holiness and righteousness in us?
6. Why must we discipline our children?
7. What are some of the methods of discipline we can use?
8. How is discipline a sign of love?
9. How can we produce self-discipline in our children?
10. How can you become a more self-disciplined person?